

**Serving English Language Learners in  
Preschool Programs  
in Illinois Public School Districts  
23 Ill. Adm. Code Part 228**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

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## **Introduction**

Under 23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 228 Transitional Bilingual Education, public school districts must uniformly identify children who are English language learners (ELLs) by administering a home language survey to all children new to the district and conducting an English language proficiency screening process for children who come from a language background other than English. Preschool programs must offer a language instruction program for ELLs consistent with the requirements of Part 228 to all preschool children identified as ELLs.

An ELL student in preschool:

- (a) comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken by the student and/or by the student's parent, guardians, or anyone else who resides in the household; and
- (b) does not demonstrate English language proficiency during a research-based English language proficiency screening procedure that is developmentally appropriate for the student.

## **Preschool Programs Governed by These Rules**

### **1. Which preschool programs are included under the Part 228 Transitional Bilingual Education rules?**

All preschool programs for children ages 3 -5 that are **administered by a public school district** must adhere to the rules under Part 228. This includes preschool programs that are subcontracted by districts to community organizations and preschool programs that districts administer regardless of the source of funding for the programs.

## **Identification and English Language Proficiency (ELP) Screening of ELL Students**

### **2. How are potential ELL students identified in preschool?**

The district must have families of all children new to the district, including preschool children, complete the home language survey (HLS) by the first day the student starts to participate in the program. The HLS contains two questions. If the answer to one or both of the questions is "yes" then the district must screen the child for English language proficiency.

**3. How does the program screen potential ELL students in preschool to determine whether they are proficient in English?**

The district must establish standard English language proficiency (ELP) screening procedures that are research based to determine each potential ELL preschool student's English language proficiency level, minimally in the domains of listening and speaking. The procedures may include use of an established assessment such as the pre-IPT or other screening procedures. State rules indicate that the screening procedures must:

- ❖ Be age and developmentally appropriate;
- ❖ Be culturally and linguistically appropriate for the children being screened;
- ❖ Include one or more observations using culturally and linguistically appropriate tools;
- ❖ Use multiple measures and methods (e.g., home language assessments; verbal and nonverbal procedures; various activities, settings, and personal interactions);
- ❖ Involve family by seeking information and insight to help guide the screening process without involving them in the formal assessment or interpretation of results; and
- ❖ Involve staff who are knowledgeable about preschool education, child development, and first and second language acquisition.

Screening procedures may be modified to accommodate the special need of students with IEPs.

**4. If ELL students are enrolled in preschool for more than one year, must the district re-screen the students in the second year of participation?**

No, the district is not required to re-screen preschool ELL students in their second year of participation. The student is considered ELL and eligible for the ELL program services in the second year of participation based on the initial ELP screening results. However, the district may choose to assess students' progress in English acquisition and modify the level of ELL services provided in the second year based on assessment results.

All potential ELL students are screened with the WIDA MODEL™ to determine their English proficiency level and placement in kindergarten (see #15 below).

**5. Are staff who administer the preschool screening required to participate in online training and to pass a test?**

ISBE does not require that preschool staff who administers English language proficiency screenings participate in a particular online training course. However, it is recommended that these staff participate in training specific to the screening procedures used by their program to ensure consistent administration and valid results.

**Establishment of Programs**

**6. What type of language instruction program must be offered when there are 20 or more preschool ELLs who have the same home language in an attendance center?**

An attendance center that enrolls 20 or more preschool ELLs who have the same home language must offer a **Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Program** which includes instruction in the home language and in English as well as English as a second language to these preschool children. TBE services may be offered by the classroom teacher or by another teacher who pushes into the classroom. A pull-out model for language support may be used in some circumstances but generally is not recommended for preschool. Some of the program models allowed under TBE are described in #8 below.

**7. What type of language instruction program must be offered when there are fewer than 20 preschool ELLs who have the same home language in an attendance center, including situations in which there are more than 20 preschool ELLs but they come from different language backgrounds?**

An attendance center that enrolls 19 or fewer preschool ELLs who have the same home language must offer either a **Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI)** or a TBE program for these students. This attendance center may have more than 19 ELL students enrolled who have different home languages. TPI programs provide language instruction which typically includes English as a second language and may include home language instruction or support based on the needs of the students. Some of the program models allowed under TPI are described in #8 below.

**8. What program models may be used to serve ELL students in preschool?**

The district may select the program model(s) best suited to its preschool population. Many configurations meet the requirements of TBE and TPI. Models most commonly used include:

Appropriate for TBE or TPI

**Dual Language/Two Way Immersion:** Instruction is given in English and another language to English-speaking students and students who speak the other language together in the same classroom with the goal of developing proficiency in both languages for all students in the class.

**Transitional Bilingual Education** - Instruction is in the students' home language to enable them to transition into English. The goal is to help students transition to mainstream, English-only classrooms as quickly as possible, and the linguistic goal of such programs is English acquisition only. English as a second language is provided in addition to content area instruction.

**Developmental Bilingual** – Instruction is in the child's home language for an extended duration, accompanied by education in English and English as a second language. The goal is to develop bilingualism and biliteracy in both languages.

Appropriate for TPI only

**English as a Second Language** - The language of instruction is English but some support may be provided to students in their native language. Teachers focus on building English language skills. Classes may be composed of students who speak many different languages but are not fluent in English.

**Sheltered English Instruction** - Instruction is entirely in English. Teachers with training in modifying instruction for ELL students use clear, direct, simple English and a wide range of scaffolding strategies so that students develop English language skills and comprehend learning area content. Classes may be composed of students who speak many different languages but are not fluent in English.

Language instruction may be delivered by the classroom teacher or by a pull-out or push-in teacher. ELL students may be integrated with non-ELL students in the classroom as long as the preschool program provides the ELL children with daily language instruction that specifically addresses second language acquisition and making the curriculum accessible for ELLs.

Whenever possible, the preschool program should offer a program model that aligns with the program model that the child will enter in kindergarten to provide continuity and best prepare the child for successful entry into kindergarten.

### **Parent Notification**

#### **9. What communication with parents is required when a student is identified as an English language learner?**

The district must notify the parent in writing that the child has been placed in a TBE or TPI program for English language learners within 30 days after the beginning of the school year or 14 days after enrollment in the program during the middle of the school year. The notification letter must be in English and the home language of the student and must address the areas required under Section 14C-4 of the Illinois School Code. A parent may withdraw a student from the TBE/TPI program at any time by submitting the request in writing to the school or district.

Prior to July 1, 2014, a district may be offering language support services to preschool ELL students without having properly endorsed bilingual and/or ESL teachers in place. In this case, the parent notification letter should contain the elements required under Section 14-C-4 of the Illinois School Code and stipulate the specific nature of the language support services being offered.

### **Annual English Language Proficiency Assessment**

#### **10. Are preschool students required to participate in the annual state ELP assessment?**

No, there is no annual ELP testing requirement for ELLs in preschool programs.

### **Teacher Certification**

#### **11. What type of certification is required to teach ELLs in preschool?**

Preschool teachers must hold the proper certification to teach preschool students. Preschool teachers must hold an Early Childhood certificate. By July 1, 2014, preschool teachers who provide native language/ESL instruction to ELL students must also hold the English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual endorsement or approval that corresponds with the teaching assignment. A teacher who provides bilingual instruction, which may include instruction in the home language, in English and ESL, must hold the bilingual endorsement or approval. A teacher with the ESL endorsement or approval may provide ESL instruction to help ELL students learn English. The teacher who provides the native language/ESL instruction may be the classroom teacher or another teacher who pushes into the classroom for part of the day. A pull-out model is not generally recommended for preschool but may be used in some circumstances.

- To provide **bilingual instruction** to preschool children, a teacher must hold an Early Childhood certificate with a bilingual endorsement or approval or both an Early Childhood certificate and a Type 29 provisional certificate.
- To provide **English as a second language instruction** to preschool children, a teacher must hold an Early Childhood certificate with a bilingual or ESL endorsement or approval or both an Early Childhood certificate and a Type 29 provisional certificate.

**12. By July 1, 2014 are all preschool teachers required to hold a bilingual or ESL endorsement or approval?**

No, only preschool teachers who are providing native language/ESL instruction to ELLs must hold the appropriate endorsement or approval.

**TBE/TPI Program Director**

**13. Who is the TBE/TPI Program Director in the district?**

The TBE/TPI Program Director who oversees the program in the district should meet the requirements for administrator qualifications included under 228.35(d). This individual may often be someone other than the Early Childhood Director in the district. **As such, implementation of a successful preschool ELL program will require ongoing communication and coordination between the TBE/TPI Program Director and the staff who oversee the Early Childhood Program.**

**Counting Years in the TBE/TPI Program**

**14. Does preschool count toward the three years in the TBE/TPI program provided for under Article 14C?**

No, enrollment in preschool does not count for the purpose of determining the number of years a child has been enrolled in the TBE/TPI program.

**English Language Proficiency Screening and Placement in Kindergarten**

**15. How does a child's ELL status in preschool affect placement in kindergarten?**

Preschool screening results may not be used to determine placement in kindergarten. All children identified as coming from homes where a language other than English is spoken on the home language survey must be screened with the WIDA MODEL™ to determine ELL status and placement in the TBE/TPI program in kindergarten. Children who were identified as ELL in preschool but meet the State English proficiency standard when screened for kindergarten should be enrolled in the same manner as other students who demonstrate English proficiency on the WIDA MODEL™. No parent permission is required to place these children in the general education program.

### **Professional Development**

#### **16. What professional development requirements apply to preschool TBE/TPI programs?**

Districts must offer professional development opportunities to all staff in the TBE/TPI program including certified and non-certified staff in the preschool TBE/TPI program. The district must offer at least two professional development activities a year that focus on at least one of the following topics related to the education of ELL students: current research in bilingual education; content-area and language proficiency assessment of students with limited English proficiency; research-based methods and techniques for teaching students with limited English proficiency; research-based methods and techniques for teaching students with limited English proficiency who also have disabilities; and the culture and history of the United States and of the country, territory or geographic area that is the native land of the students or of their parents.

Districts must also provide newly hired TBE/TPI program staff with an orientation that includes information about the TBE/TPI program requirements.

Districts should offer professional development that is relevant and addresses developmentally appropriate practices for preschool teachers who work with ELL students.

#### **17. Should preschool staff be included in the training related to the implementation of the Spanish language arts standards that districts must offer beginning in 2012-13?**

Preschool staff may be included in the Spanish language arts standards training, and the training should include information about how preschool programs can use developmentally appropriate practices to help prepare children for Spanish literacy.

### **Program Funding**

#### **18. May districts receive state TBE/TPI funding for preschool ELL programs?**

State TBE/TPI funding is available to reimburse school districts for the excess costs associated with providing ELL students with five or more periods of TBE/TPI instruction a week in accordance with the Illinois School Code Article 14C and the corresponding state rules. As such, districts may receive funding for preschool students who receive TBE/TPI instruction from a teacher who is properly certified to provide bilingual or ESL instruction to preschool students.

