

Superintendent Procedure 4218SP Speakers of Diverse Languages



Approved by: s/Larry Nyland Date: 10/4/17

Dr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent

Introduction

Seattle Public Schools (SPS) serves students from 147 countries of origin, representing 143 primary languages. We are committed to facilitating educational access and empowerment for all students, while honoring their diverse language backgrounds and the primary languages of their parents/guardians. The Board and Superintendent recognize the necessity of providing consistent language access for speakers of diverse languages, those parents/guardians whose primary language is not English. Oral and written communication of vital educational information in the primary language of the parent/guardian is not only mandated by state and federal legislation: it contributes to robust family engagement and has a positive impact on student achievement, ultimately reducing opportunity gaps.

The intent of this procedure is to create and sustain systems to implement Policy No. 4218, and thus establish and maintain meaningful communication among the District, school staff, and parents/guardians who are speakers of diverse languages, thereby facilitating access for such parents/guardians to the services, programs, and activities of the District and the schools. Furthermore, this procedure reinforces and extends the considerations and intentions of Superintendent Procedure 4129SP, Family Engagement, which sets forth the implementation of a District-wide climate of welcome for family involvement to support student learning and youth development in all schools.

Definitions:

“**Primary language**” refers to the principal language in the student’s home; the language spoken most by parent/guardian of a District student. Parents/guardians may speak more than one primary language.

“**Language services**” means the range of services used and/or required to facilitate communication and promote understanding amongst speakers of different languages, including (but not limited to) interpretation and translation services.

“**Interpretation**” is the process by which the spoken word is used to transfer meaning between languages. It refers to contemporaneous oral communication between two or more speakers of different languages, wherein the words of one person are communicated orally in another language. In the context of this District, it specifically refers to communication between an English speaker and a speaker(s) of another language.

The District will make a reasonable effort to use interpreters who have demonstrated language proficiency. Such interpreters employed by the District in the capacity of a

bilingual student services facilitator or a bilingual instructional assistant will demonstrate proficiency through a combination of education, professional experience, training, assessment, and/or certification. Other interpreters may be employed by an outside vendor contracted to offer interpretation services.

“Translation” is the process of communicating ideas expressed in writing from one language to another. It refers to written communication between speakers of two different languages. Generally, a speaker of English and a speaker of another language wherein the written words of one person are expressed to others in written form in another language.

The District will use translators who have demonstrated language proficiency. Such translators employed by the District in the capacity of a bilingual student services facilitator or a bilingual instructional assistant will show proficiency through a combination of education, professional experience, training, assessment, and/or certification. Translators for languages not represented amongst District staff will be provided via an outside vendor contracted to offer interpretation services.

“Parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages” are the parents/guardians of a student or students enrolled in the District who benefit from access to interpretation and/or translation for communication in English. The language access needs of parents/guardians are independent of the student’s fluency in English. This term does not refer to any family members of the student besides the student’s parents/guardians.

Other entities refer to “limited English proficiency” (“LEP”) to define the experience of these parents. SPS honors and values our multilingual parents and families, and understands their ability to speak languages other than English as an asset, rather than a deficit. SPS uses “parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages” to recognize the parents/guardians who speak primary languages other than English and do not communicate fully in English orally, in writing, or both. We recognize that such parents may need language access services to support communication in any area of language expression: speaking, listening, reading, and/or writing. We understand that a parent/guardian may have the English fluency to understand, communicate and/or exchange foundational information with school or District staff (i.e. greetings, contact information, etc.), but may require language support in order to communicate detailed, specific information needed in a context such as an IEP meeting, a 504 meeting, or a student discipline meeting.

Implementation:

The Department of Student Support Services, English Language Learners (ELL) and International Programs, shall oversee the implementation of this procedure. Effective implementation of the procedure requires 1) clear identification of parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages, 2) notification of parent/guardian rights to language access, 3) consistent and comprehensive delivery of translation and interpretation services, and 4) collection and analysis of data on services provided. Together these activities facilitate opportunities for parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages to engage in informed decision-making for the educational achievement of their student(s).

The procedure will be implemented through the following:

A. Parent/Guardian Identification

No later than thirty (30) days from the time of enrollment, the District will determine 1) the primary language spoken by the parent/guardian of each student enrolled in the school, and, if such language is not English, 2) whether the parent requires language access services to communicate effectively with the District. At the time of student enrollment, Seattle Public Schools will use the enrollment form to identify such parents empowered by language access and the languages in which they need assistance.

1. Seattle Public Schools' [Enrollment Form](#), "Information for Parents/Guardians": The SPS Enrollment Form allows the parents/guardians to indicate the language used for spoken communication and (written) correspondence. Besides English, the Admission Form is also available in the top four (4) languages spoken by District parents and guardians: *Spanish, Somali, Chinese, and Vietnamese*.¹ Enrollment staff will be oriented, via annual trainings, to assist parents/guardians in indicating the preferred language for communication, and to identify those parents/guardians who may be considered parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages. Language access information, derived from parent/guardian responses on the Admission Form, will be captured at the time of enrollment and stored in student records on PowerSchool, in order to be readily visible to District and school staff who view a given student's profile on PowerSchool.
2. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) [Home Language Survey \(HLS\)](#): The OSPI Home Language Survey asks the parents/guardians, "In what language(s) would your family prefer to communicate with the school?" and thus allows the parents/guardians to indicate the preferred language. However, the HLS does not distinguish the preferred language for oral communication and written correspondence. The survey will be translated and made available in the nine (9) most commonly spoken languages in the District: Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, Oromo, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrigna, and Vietnamese, at minimum. The survey will be part of the standard enrollment process completed by all District parents.
3. The District will maintain a current record of the primary language spoken by a student's parents; such record will be available to the school staff via PowerSchool Demographics. Periodically, and at minimum annually, the District will remind parents/guardians to update the PowerSchool information indicating languages for which parents/guardians may need assistance. This will be accomplished as follows:
 - a. The language access flyer (translated in top 9 languages) will be included in the first-day packet sent home to families with the option for parents to send updated information back to the school;

¹ The top four languages spoken by District parents/guardians, in order of prevalence, are determined to be Spanish, Somali, Chinese, and Vietnamese, according to District data as of 1/09/2017.

- b. If a parent/guardian expresses a need for language access services, the parent/guardian may update the parent language information accordingly, in PowerSchool, or may solicit the assistance of school staff to update the record in PowerSchool.

B. Notification of Parent Rights to Language Access

1. The OSPI Home Language Survey notifies parents/guardians of their right to translation and interpretation services, provided by the District and free of charge to the student and parent(s). It will be used by the District at the time of student enrollment, in addition to facilitating the identification of parents/guardians who need language access services, as well as the languages in which they may need assistance.
2. At the time of enrollment, the District will also ensure that information regarding available interpretation and translation services and the District's complaint process is provided to all parents/guardians. District staff will take steps to provide such information in the primary language of the parent/guardian.
3. A Language Access flyer, translated in the top nine (9) languages spoken by the parents/guardians of District-enrolled students, will be provided annually and sent by all schools to parents/guardians in the first day packet.
4. All District buildings will display a Language Access poster, translated in the top nine (9) languages spoken by the parents/guardians of District-enrolled students, to notify parents/guardians of their right to translation and interpretation services, provided by the District free of charge to the student and parents/guardians.
5. The District website will display readily-accessible information in the top nine (9) languages regarding the rights of parents/guardians to translation and interpretation services under federal and state law, including clear instructions for parents/guardians to access such services.

C. Interpretation and Translation Services

1. In order for parent/guardian speakers of diverse language to communicate effectively with District and school staff in any interaction significant to the student's education, and consistent with Policy No. 4218, every school and District office will provide interpretation services to all parents/guardians, free of cost to the student, parents/guardians or family. Furthermore, each school and District office will provide free translation of vital documents as required and detailed below (*see Section 8*).
2. Interpretation and translation will be provided by District staff in the top nine (9) languages spoken by the parents/guardians of students enrolled in the District, which are as follows: *Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, Oromo, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrigna, and Vietnamese*. Whenever a request emerges for a language beyond the aforementioned, interpretation and translation services will be provided via an outside agency on contract with the District, such as Linguistica

Language Line (telephonic interpretation) or World Language Services, LLC (in-person interpretation), or Dynamic Language Center (translation).

3. Whether an interpreter or translator is employed by the District or an outside agency, the District will provide interpretation and translation by competent and fluent speakers of the language in need, as evidenced via education, professional experience, training, assessment, and/or certification. The District will also take steps to ensure that:
 - a. District bilingual student services facilitators and instructional assistants who serve as interpreters and translators exercise knowledge of specific terms or concepts to be used in the given communication in both languages; and
 - b. District bilingual student services facilitators and instructional assistants who serve as interpreters are aware of and have participated in training on the:
 1. Role of an interpreter;
 2. Ethics of interpreting and translating; and
 3. Need to maintain confidentiality.
4. Parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages may *voluntarily* elect to decline the District or school's offer of an interpreter, and instead may refer to an adult friend, companion, or relative for language and interpretation support, but *school staff may not suggest this as an alternative to providing appropriate language and interpretation services.*

Furthermore, *students and other minor children under the age of 18 may not serve as interpreters for school staff and parents/guardians during any formal or informal meeting or process.*

5. On behalf of the District, the Bilingual Family Coordinator will facilitate staff access to appropriate interpretation and translation services in order to communicate with parents empowered by language access consistent with federal and state law, and this policy and procedure. If no interpreter can be present, the Bilingual Family Coordinator will help District and school staff use a Linguistica Language Line to communicate with parents/guardians.
6. The following interpretation and translation services are currently available in the District:
 - a. Interpretation:
 - Bilingual Student Services Facilitators & Bilingual Instructional Assistants (IAs) – *Interpret in the top nine (9) languages spoken by parents/guardians of students enrolled in the District. Staff should initiate request by contacting IAs in their building, or request coordination assistance from the Bilingual Family Coordinator; see details below.*
 - Contracts with Outside Agencies – *When interpretation requests involve a language other than the top nine (9) District languages, or when no Bilingual IA can be located to interpret, the Bilingual Family Coordinator will facilitate access to interpretation from an outside agency either by phone or in-person.*
 - b. Translation:

- Bilingual Student Services Facilitators & Bilingual Instructional Assistants (IAs) – *Translate in the top nine (9) languages spoken by parents/guardians of students enrolled in the District. Staff should initiate request by contacting IAs in their building, or request coordination assistance from the Bilingual Family Coordinator; see details below.*
- Contracts with Outside Agencies – *When translation requests involve a language other than the top nine (9) District languages, or when no District translator is available, the Bilingual Family Coordinator will facilitate access to translation via an outside agency.*

District staff may contact the Bilingual Family Coordinator by phone at (206) 743-3545 or languages@seattleschools.org with questions or concerns, or to obtain information and support in order to access interpretation and translation services.

7. District staff, including administrators, registration and enrollment staff, ELL certificated staff, bilingual instructional assistants, and other appropriate staff designated by the Superintendent, will receive information and access to training on:
 - a. Parent rights to District language access services, in accordance with state and federal law;
 - b. The vital need for meaningful and effective communication with parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages;
 - c. Ways to notify parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages of language services available through the District;
 - d. The need to use competent translation and interpretation services for communication with parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages;
 - e. The availability of translation and interpretation services within the District, whether through in-person interpretation or telephonic services;
 - f. The processes for accessing translation and interpretation services when working with parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages, including ensuring the correct language service is being accessed, checking parent understanding once interpretation has commenced, and appropriate vetting of translations for audience-appropriate content; and
 - g. The process for reporting concerns and complaints.

8. **Interpretation Services:** The District will provide interpretation services according to this procedure whenever a parent/guardian requests interpretation, or when school staff or District officials expect that interpretation services are necessary to communicate meaningfully with parents regarding vital information about their child’s education or school activities.

With a minimum of three days’ notice that such services are required, the District will provide interpretation services at public meetings organized or sponsored by the District (e.g., board meetings).

9. **Translation of District Vital Documents:** The District will identify and disseminate translations of vital documents which are distributed to all or most

parents/guardians and which contain important information regarding a student's education, including but not limited to:

- a. Registration and enrollment in school;
- b. Grades, academic standards, student performance, and graduation;
- c. Safety, discipline, and conduct expectations;
- d. Student/Parent handbook;
- e. Policies and procedures related to attendance, absences, and withdrawal;
- f. Parent permission for activities or programs;
- g. School closure information;
- h. Opportunities to access programs or services—including highly capable, advanced placement, and English language learner programs;
- i. Special education and services for students with disabilities, Section 504 information, and McKinney-Vento services; and
- j. All other documents which notify parents of their rights under relevant state legislation, or which contain information or forms that pertain to “consent or filing complaints under federal law, state law, or District policy”.

The District will provide written translations of vital documents for the top four (4) languages, at minimum, spoken by the parents/guardians of District-enrolled students. The District may regularly provide translation of the top nine (9) languages spoken by parents/guardians. If limited resources prevent the District from translating a document, or if the total number of parents who require the information in another language is so small that translation of the document is unreasonable, the District will make the information available to parents in a language they can understand, i.e. through oral interpretation of the document.

The District will not rely on written translations of vital documents by machine/computer translation programs, nor will these be distributed to parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages without review by a District-approved translator.

Vital documents that are newly issued or updated by the District for parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages will be accompanied a notice that free translation and/or interpretation services are available with instructions for how to request a free translation or interpretation of the document.

10. Translation of Student-Specific Documents: The District will provide parents/guardians, in a language they can understand, a translation of any document that contains information specific to an individual student regarding, but not limited to, a student's:

- a. Health;
- b. Safety; and
- c. Legal or disciplinary matters.

11. Alternatives to Translation: When translation for a document otherwise required to be translated is unavailable, or cannot reasonably be achieved, such as in an emergency situation, a school or District office will provide an attached notice to parents that free translation and/or interpretation services are available with instructions for how to request translation or interpretation of the document.

D. Staff Awareness and Compliance Regarding Parents' Right to Language Access

1. All District buildings will visibly display signage, at or near the primary entrance to the school or office, in the top nine (9) languages spoken by parents/guardians of District students, concerning the rights of parents/guardians to translation and interpretation services and how to access such services.
2. District staff will be made aware of this policy annually. Staff will be provided the written Language Access Guide indicating the availability of interpretation and translation services and processes for requesting such services. The guide will be updated as needed to communicate services available to District staff and parent/guardian speakers of diverse languages.
3. Parents/guardians will also be annually notified regarding the process for filing complaints through the District's nondiscrimination policy and procedure if they believe that such services have not been appropriately provided.

E. Collection and Analysis of Language Access Data

The District will periodically collect and analyze data related to language access in order to document a list of primary languages spoken predominantly in the homes of students and their parents/guardians. Such information will assist in guaranteeing the provision of appropriate language access services, and guide the District in the effectively planning and budgeting for services required to communicate with students and their parents/guardians.

Approved: October 2017

Revised:

Cross Reference: School Board Policy No. 4218