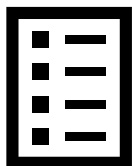




Quick Reference Guide: District Level Thriving in High School

Districts Plan for English Learner Inclusion in School Life



The district has a clear action plan to ensure the inclusion of ELs in all aspects of school life.

To ensure English Learners (ELs) thrive in high school it is critical to have an action plan with strategies that support EL participation and engagement in all aspects of the school community. These plans are supported by clear expectations that all staff, leaders, and educators support this type of EL involvement. In practice this means instructional coaches, advisors to clubs, classroom teachers, specialists and external community partners working with high schools are all working towards including ELs in the range of services and activities provided by the district. Promoting full EL inclusion begins during the student enrollment process, when staff identify EL families' preferred language and distribute important information about school life. This includes information about the importance of engagement, extracurricular offerings and specialized programming. Because ELs may have different understandings of engagement, staff should be ready to explain the [importance of student participation](#) and engagement for success. For ELs, the [initial notification and placement letter](#) may be another way to communicate opportunities for engagement. District plans can also include goals about ensuring school level policies and procedures support EL inclusion. For example, this could be developing goals around providing daily announcements and information about extracurricular activities in EL families' preferred languages. It could also mean implementing proactive strategies for recruiting ELs for activities rather than expecting them and their families to know how to navigate processes, and ensuring extracurricular offerings match EL interests.



Remove Barriers to English Learner Participation in School Life

District leaders are committed to removing linguistic, economic, and social barriers to ELs' participation in school life.

District leaders [set targets](#) for EL participation in school life, and establish mechanisms for evaluating whether targets are met. Establishing targets for EL participation in a wide variety of programming, extracurricular activities, and outside-of-school experiences communicates high expectations and commitment to an equitable and inclusive high school experience for ELs. To ensure achievement of targets, district leaders systematically analyze and remove barriers to EL participation in school life. ELs may not participating in activities due to language issues, cultural expectations, feelings of not belonging, financial issues and other barriers. District leaders regularly gather and review data about EL participation and dig deeper into reasons why participation rates for ELs may be different from those of non-ELs. Once barriers are identified, district leaders are diligent in systematically removing them. For example, they ensure information about activities is shared in ways that are accessible and understandable to ELs and their families. They ensure activities and programs are staffed by well-prepared educators and staff who know how to support ELs in their respective activities.

... participation in afterschool, summer learning, and other community-based programs has been associated with improved academic achievement and improved linguistic and social development of ELLs.

[Supporting English Language Learners: In-School, Afterschool and Summer](#), p. 2

District leaders also invest in ensuring enrollment processes and policies are not unnecessarily cumbersome for ELs and partner with community organizations to provide funding to subsidize activities when financial barriers prevent ELs from participating. In all these ways district leaders ensure that their approach to supporting EL involvement is culturally responsive and focused on equity, rather than on expecting that the same processes and strategies that work to promote student engagement for non-ELs will support EL participation in school life.

Actions-at-a-Glance: Thriving in High School

Thriving in High School: What can educators at the district level do?

- Create a process for translating documents that explain high school offerings and why student engagement is important for success; highlight ways in which participation benefits ELs specifically
- Create procedures for increasing regular communication about activities with EL families and ensure communication occurs in a language they understand
- Evaluate programming and extracurricular offerings and update selections to fit ELs' interests
- Set targets for EL inclusion in programming that mirrors the demographic of the school

- Provide professional learning focused on EL-specific strategies for educators and staff (coaches, activity leaders, etc.) in SEI strategies and culturally responsive practices and set norms for recruitment and engagement in activities
- Collaborate with community agencies to eliminate financial, linguistic and social barriers that may interfere with an ELs opportunity to participate in after school activities

Planning Resources

DESE Practical Tools and Resources

[Early Warning Indicator System](#) (EWIS) provides districts with data on dropout statistics and other early warning indicators.

[Planning for Success](#) provides an inclusive, hands-on planning process designed to build district and school capacity and coherence while also building community understanding and support. It includes a multi-year improvement plan and annual action plan for implementation.

[District Planning Process](#) provides a guide for developing a multi-year district plan grounded in analysis of a wide array of district data. Steps include setting specific, measurable outcomes and identifying objectives and initiatives to accomplish them.

DESE Guidance

[Guidance on the Initial Identification of English Learners](#), January 2019, is a document that explains the procedures and timeline required for districts to identify English Learners and communicate their programming options and placement.

[Career Vocational Technical Education](#) is a pathway to high school graduation that meets all of the academic expectations of a district-defined high school graduation benchmark and the competencies that pertain to the career path the student chose.

[Guidance for English Learner Parent Advisory Councils \(ELPAC Guidance\)](#) outlines the state expectations for these parent organizations as well as a vision for supporting and monitoring English Learner programs and programming in a district.

Federal Resources

[Ninth Grade Counts: Strengthening the High School Transition for English Language Learners](#) provides insights and research-based strategies for strengthening support programs for ELs, including a self-assessment protocol, brief vignettes of real high schools that have adopted innovative practices for ELs, and four “planning roadmaps” to help schools identify best practices for their ninth-grade EL programs.

Additional Resources

[Extracurricular Participation and Student Engagement](#) presents research connecting extracurricular participation and student success.

[Supporting English Language Learners: In-School, Afterschool and Summer](#) provides information about the benefits of expanded learning opportunities for ELs.