

Walla Walla Public Schools

BOARD POLICY

Policy No. 4218

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LANGUAGE ACCESS

The Board of Directors is committed to improving meaningful, two-way communication and promoting access to District programs, services and activities for students and their parents and families. The Board recognizes that students whose family members are multilingual English learners are assets to the community. It is crucial that the District seek to address language barriers and do so free of charge. To that end and as required by law, the District will develop and adopt a plan for implementing and maintaining a language access program that is culturally responsive, provides for systematic family engagement developed through meaningful stakeholder engagement, and is tailored to the District's current population of students and families who are considered multilingual English learners.

At a minimum, the District's plan for a language access program will adhere to the principles of an effective language access program for culturally responsive, systematic family engagement, which are:

- Accessibility and equity. This means that schools provide access to all; two-way communication is a priority and is woven into the design of all programs and services.
- Accountability and transparency. This means that the language access program and decision-making processes at all levels are: Open, accessible, and usable to families; readily available; continuously improved based on ongoing feedback from families and staff; and regulated by a clear and just complaint process.
- Responsive culture. This means that schools are safe, compassionate places where each family's opinions are heard, needs are met, and contributions are valued. School staff are humble and empathetic towards families.
- Focus on relationships. This means that schools seek to understand families without judgment on an individual level, building trust through respectful relationships that recognize the unique strengths that each family and student possesses.

Identification of Families Needing Language Access Services

The District will accurately and in a timely manner identify parents/family members of students who are multilingual English learners and provide them information in a language they can understand regarding the language service resources available within the District.

Oral Interpretation

The District will take reasonable steps to provide parents/family members who are considered multilingual English learners with competent oral interpretation of materials or information about any program, service, and activity provided to parents who are multilingual English learners and to facilitate any interaction with district staff significant to the student's education. The District will provide such services upon request and/or when it may be reasonably anticipated by District staff that such services will be necessary.

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Written Translation

The District will provide a written translation of vital documents for any group that constitutes at least 5 percent of the District's total parent population or 1000 persons, whichever is less. For purposes of this policy, "vital documents" include, but are not limited to, those related to:

- registration, application, and selection;
- academic standards and student performance;
- safety, discipline, and conduct expectations;
- special education and related services, Section 504 information, and McKinney-Vento services;
- policies and procedures related to school attendance;
- requests for parent permission in activities or programs;
- opportunities for students or families to access school activities, programs, and services;
- student/parent handbook;
- the District's Language Access Plan and Program related services or resources available;
- school closure information; and
- any other documents notifying parents of their rights under applicable state laws and/or containing information or forms related to consent or filing complaints under federal law, state law, or District policy.

If the District is unable to translate a vital document due to resource limitations or if a small number of families require the information in a language other than English such that document translation is unreasonable, the District will still provide the information to parents in a language they can understand through competent oral interpretation.

Staff

The Superintendent will designate a staff member to serve as the Language Access Liaison/Coordinator, who will monitor and facilitate compliance with state and federal laws related to language access and family engagement. The Language Access Coordinator's name and contact information will be widely shared so parents, school staff, and community members may contact them to inquire about language access services.

All school administrators, particularly those who have the most interaction with the public such as registrars and enrollment staff, certificated staff and other appropriate staff as determined by the Language Access Liaison/Coordinator, will receive guidance on meaningful communication with parents/family members who are considered multilingual English learners, best practices for working with an interpreter, how to access an interpreter or translation services in a timely manner, language services available within the District and other information deemed necessary by the Language Access Liaison/Coordinator to effectuate the language access plan and program.

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Appropriate district staff, as determined by the Language Access Liaison/Coordinator, will also receive guidance on the interaction between this policy and the District's policy on effective communication with students, families, and community members with disabilities.

The superintendent is authorized to establish procedures and practices for implementing this policy.

Cross references:

Board Policy 3210	Nondiscrimination
Board Policy 4129	Family Involvement
Board Policy 4217	Effective Communication

Legal references:

RCW28A.642	Discrimination prohibition
RCW 49.60	Discrimination - Human Rights Commission
WAC 392-400	Discipline
WAC 392-400-215	Student rights
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964	

Adopted: October 18, 2016
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