

Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee FAQ

Introduction to the BPAC

A Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) represents the interests of English learner (EL) students in Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program(s), parents of EL students in TBE program(s), and community members of a school district. Its purpose is to ensure the district recognizes their voices and acts to meet their needs. This committee's role is advisory; it focuses on helping bilingual parents and community members better understand how bilingual programming works so they may advocate for the academic needs of their students. Additionally, it offers a detailed overview of the bilingual programs available, provides access to important resources, and encourages continued involvement in the school district. Through such efforts, a BPAC can strengthen a community's investment in the outcomes related to EL students in TBE program(s).

[105 ILCS 5/14C-10; Ill. Admin. Code title 23, 228.30 \(c\)\(4\)](#)

Common FAQ:

1. What are school district responsibilities regarding a BPAC?

- Ensure the establishment of a BPAC.
- Provide annual training needed to develop the BPAC in the language that the parent members understand. It shall encompass, but need not be limited to:
 - Information on the basic requirements of the BPAC.
 - Information related to instructional approaches and methods in bilingual education.
 - Provisions of state and federal law related to students' participation and parents' rights.
 - Accountability measures relevant to students in bilingual programs.
- Ensure the BPAC is meeting at least four times a year.
- Provide the BPAC with the Bilingual Service Plan; the EL portions of the Evidence-Based Spending Plan; and other documents, such as Consolidated District Plan or Title III applications, that are requested for review.
- Provide a space and materials for the BPAC to meet.
- Provide technical support, as needed, for the BPAC to conduct meetings.
- Ensure meeting minutes are filed properly and documentation is available, as needed.
- Provide interpreters and translators for each meeting to ensure meaningful access for parents/guardians who do not speak English.

It is recommended that a district representative attends each BPAC meeting.

2. When is a district required to have a BPAC?

It is mandated that a school district establish a BPAC when:

- One (or more) attendance center has 20 or more EL students who share the same home language in any grades from K-12.
- One (or more) attendance center has 20 or more EL students who share the same home language in pre-k.

The 20 or more number includes students whose parents/guardians have refused services.

Once a BPAC is established, it is recommended that a district maintain the BPAC even if its numbers fluctuate below the mandated 20 to ensure consistency and continuity in bilingual programming. Districts with fewer than 20 EL students in an attendance center who share the same home language may choose to initially establish a BPAC, but it is not required.

3. What are the responsibilities of a BPAC?

Once established, a BPAC is tasked with the following:

- Operate autonomously -- including the election of officers and establishment of documented internal rules and procedures.
- Receive training from the district to make informed decisions.
- Meet at least four times per year.
- Record minutes of all meetings, which shall remain on file with the school district.
- Review the district's program applications for each school year (Bilingual Service Plan and the EL portions of the Evidence-Based Spending Plan).
- Collaborate with school district leadership regarding bilingual programs.
- Provide recommendations for bilingual programs.
- Participate in the planning, operation, and evaluation of the EL program within the district.

4. What are the requirements for BPAC membership?

BPAC members must be parents or legal guardians of children enrolled in a TBE program or Transitional Program of Instruction, transitional bilingual education teachers, counselors, and representatives from the community.

5. How many members are required for a BPAC?

Membership requirements are met when the BPAC consists of individuals who are representative of the various home languages of students receiving TBE services in the district, to the extent possible. Committee sizes will vary depending on the sizes of districts and the number of TBE programs represented, with a minimum of three members (majority of parents/guardians of children in the TBE program).

6. Does a BPAC need to have representatives from all languages that have a TBE program?

It is recommended. If the EL student enrollment number in the district's TBE program dictates the requirement for a BPAC, the district should attempt to include all the languages represented in the TBE program(s) as well as other languages of students receiving EL services in the district. The BPAC has an advisory role in a district's bilingual programming; therefore, the linguistic needs of all EL students receiving services, as well as social determinants of learning, shall be given equitable consideration.

7. Must the majority of BPAC parents be the parents of EL students who are currently enrolled in the TBE program, or can they be just any EL parents?

Any EL parents may join, but the BPAC majority must consist of parents or legal guardians of students currently enrolled in the TBE program(s). Additionally, teachers, other school staff members, and community members may join the committee. Community members may include parents/guardians of non-EL students in two-way dual language program(s).

8. Can parents continue as BPAC members after their child/children exit services?

Yes. However, the majority of the BPAC membership must be parents/guardians of students currently enrolled in the TBE program(s).

9. What is the role of the BPAC in a two-way dual language program?

The BPAC's role is to represent and advocate for the needs of a school district's EL students being served in a two-way dual language program. The list of action items that fall under the role/responsibilities of a BPAC are otherwise unchanged. Parents/guardians of non-EL students in dual language program(s) can serve as community members on the committee.

10. Is the BPAC's role advisory? Does the BPAC have the authority to approve or disapprove district plans?

A Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee does not have the authority to make decisions for the school district or approve/disapprove district plans. Members of a BPAC offer insight into the needs of its bilingual community and students in TBE program(s). Their role is to advise the district and give recommendations for bilingual programming. Additionally, the committee may explore new opportunities that may benefit the community and present its findings to district leadership.

11. Can BPAC meetings be supported by Title III funds?

Yes, Title III funds may be used if they are allocated for supplemental activities. Title III funds may be used for activities and strategies, including supplemental EL parent/family and community engagement activities, cultural events, guest speakers, etc., that enhance or supplement language instruction educational programs for English learners.

12. What does it mean to function autonomously?

To function autonomously means the BPAC shall operate independently without control or influence from the school district. It may make internal decisions and carry out actions on its own, without reliance on district intervention or approval.

13. The BPAC is to function autonomously once established. When is a BPAC considered to be established?

The BPAC is considered established when the committee has consistent membership that includes parents/guardians of EL students attending TBE program(s) who actively participate in leading and autonomously managing the committee. This involves electing officers and creating documented internal rules, guidelines, and procedures.

14. Can the district's school personnel such as principal, bilingual program director, superintendent be the chairperson of a BPAC?

It is recommended that the BPAC chairperson be a parent or guardian of a student who is currently enrolled in an EL TBE program to avoid a conflict of interest.

15. Does a BPAC need to have a bylaw or a written standing rule and procedure for the election of officers and to conduct its business?

BPACs should document their autonomously produced rules and procedures, which may include bylaws. All BPAC meeting minutes shall be recorded and filed with the district.

16. Should BPAC meetings be made open to the public (EL parents)? Are school districts required to notify the EL parents of BPAC meetings and share the agenda?

Per the [Open Meetings Act](#), the actions and deliberations of a public body are to be conducted openly. It is also the policy of the state that its citizens be notified in advance and afforded the right to attend all meetings.

Districts should consult with their attorneys regarding whether the BPAC for their district falls under the definition of "public body."

17. When a district has TBE programs in multiple languages in different attendance centers, is the district required to have more than one BPAC?

A single BPAC should be established; it is recommended that it have members representing the various TBE programs across multiple attendance centers in the school district. Depending on the district's size, there is an option to have parent committees at the school level that cater to the specific needs of the local population. These school-level committees can then provide feedback to the main district-level BPAC. Additionally, a district may choose to hold multiple meetings for the district-level BPAC to accommodate the language requirements of committee members.