

## Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee FAQ

### Introduction to the BPAC

A Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) represents the interests of English learners (ELs) who participate in Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program(s), as well as their parents and community members within a school district.

Its purpose is to ensure that the district hears their voices and meets their needs. Although its role is advisory, the committee plays a crucial role in helping bilingual parents and their community better understand how bilingual programs work, enabling them to effectively advocate for the academic needs of their students.

In addition, a BPAC provides a detailed overview of the available bilingual programs, facilitates access to resources, and encourages family participation in the school district. Such efforts enable the committee to strengthen the community's commitment to bilingual education and contributes to improving outcomes for 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 in relation to a BPAC?

A school district has the responsibility to ensure the proper establishment and function of the BPAC, ensuring its development and providing equitable access to information for parent members.

**Required:** Certain responsibilities are explicitly mandated by legislation. They include:

- Establish a BPAC in compliance with state and federal requirements. Provide annual training in the language understood by parent members. Required topics for training include:
  - Instructional approaches and methods in bilingual education.
  - State and federal legal provisions related to EL students' participation and parental rights.
  - Accountability measures of academic achievement relevant to students in bilingual programs.
- Ensure the BPAC is meeting at least four times a year to encourage the active participation of parents.
- Provide the BPAC with key documents for review, including:
  - The Bilingual Service Plan.
  - The EL section of the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) Spending Plan.
  - Other relevant documents, such as Consolidated District Plan or Title III applications.
- Ensure interpreters and translators are at each meeting to ensure meaningful access to non-English speaking parents or guardians.
- Ensure transparency and documentation by accurately filing meeting minutes and ensuring documentation is readily available when needed.

**Recommended:** Recommended supports districts must provide to ensure BPACs grow and become autonomous include, but are not limited to:

- Provide annual training in the language understood by parent members. Recommended topics include, but are not limited to:
  - Basic requirements of the BPAC.
  - How to run formal meetings (e.g., setting an agenda, keeping minutes, etc.).
  - Understanding the American school system.
  - Navigating the school district's policies and procedures.
- Provide logistical and technical support, such as ensuring that the BPAC has a suitable space and materials for meetings.
- District representatives attending each BPAC meeting to strengthen communication and collaboration with parents and the community.

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

A school district is required to establish a BPAC when at least one of the following conditions is met:

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

It should be noted that this number includes students whose parents or guardians have refused bilingual education services.

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

### **3. What are the responsibilities of a BPAC?**

Once established, a BPAC has the following responsibilities:

- Operate autonomously by electing its own officers and establishing internal rules and procedures in writing.
- Receive training from the district to make informed decisions.
- Meet at least four times per year.
- Keep a record of all meeting minutes and file a copy with the school district.
- Review the district's program applications annually, including the Bilingual Service Plan and the EL sections of the EBF Spending Plan.
- Participate in an advisory capacity by providing input on the planning, operation, and evaluation of the EL program within the district.

BPACs do not have decision-making authority over district decisions but may offer recommendations to district leadership. They may also assist in planning parent-focused events and provide feedback on program effectiveness if requested by the district.

### **4. Who can become a BPAC member?**

BPAC members may be:

- Parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in a TBE program or Transitional Program of Instruction
- Teachers
- School staff members
- Community members

Please note: A majority of BPAC members must be parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in the district's TBE program(s).

### **5. How many members are required for a BPAC?**

The BPAC should be composed of individuals, to the extent possible, who are representative of the various home languages of students receiving TBE services in the district.

The size of the committee will depend on the number of TBE programs and the size of the district, but it is recommended that the committee have a minimum of three members.

Please note: A majority of BPAC members must be parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in the district's TBE program(s).

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

Yes. It is recommended that this be the case. If the number of ELs in the district requires the formation of a BPAC, the district should include representatives of all languages present in TBE programs to the extent possible, as well as other languages of the students in the district who receive EL services.

Since the BPAC has an advisory role in the development of bilingual programs, it is important that the language needs of all EL students are equitably considered, as well as the social factors that influence their learning.

## **7. Do most BPAC members have to be parents of EL students currently enrolled in a TBE program, or can they be any parents of an EL student?**

Yes. The majority of the committee must consist specifically of parents or legal guardians of students currently enrolled in the TBE program(s). However, any parent of an EL student may be a member of the BPAC, In addition, the committee may include:

- Teachers
- School staff members
- Community members

Community members may include parents or guardians of non-EL students who are enrolled in two-way dual language programs.

## **8. Can parents continue as BPAC members after their children exit services?**

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

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

The BPAC has the responsibility of representing and advocating for the needs of EL students participating in the bilingual education programs in the district, including those in a two-way dual language program.

The roles and responsibilities of the BPAC do not change within these programs. Additionally, parents or guardians of non-EL students who are enrolled in dual language program(s) can serve as community members on the committee.

Please note: A majority of BPAC members must be parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in the district's TBE program(s).

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

Yes. The role of a Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee is exclusively advisory. The BPAC does not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the school district or to approve or reject the district's plans.

The BPAC's primary responsibility is to advise and provide recommendations based on the needs of the bilingual community and students enrolled in TBE programs.

In addition, BPAC members can:

- Offer valuable insight into the district's bilingual programs.
- Explore new opportunities that can benefit the community.
- Present suggestions and findings to district leaders for consideration.

Through this collaboration, BPAC helps strengthen bilingual education programs without assuming an administrative or decision-making role within the district.

### **11. Can BPAC meetings be financed with Title III funds?**

Yes. Title III funds may be used to fund BPAC activities if they are supplemental and aligned with the purposes of the program.

These funds can be used to provide:

- Complementary activities for the participation of parents, families, and the EL community.
- Cultural events that promote bilingual education.
- Guest speakers and strategies that strengthen the learning of EL students.

It is important to remember that Title III funds should be used to supplement and enhance language instruction programs for English learners, not to replace funds or activities that the district is obligated to provide.

### **12. What does it mean to function autonomously?**

Operating autonomously means that the BPAC operates independently, without being under the directive of the school district.

This means that the committee can:

- Make internal decisions about its structure, leadership, and activities.
- Organize meetings and establish rules and procedures without the need for district approval.
- Independently advise and make recommendations on bilingual programs.

However, although the BPAC is autonomous in its operation, its role is advisory, so it collaborates with the district to improve bilingual education without assuming an administrative or decision-making role within the school system.

### **13. The BPAC must 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 or guardians of EL students enrolled in TBE program(s) and who are actively involved in decision-making and management of the committee. This involves electing officers and creating documented internal rules, guidelines, and procedures.

This means that the BPAC must:

- Elect its own officers.
- Create and document its internal rules, guidelines, and procedures.

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

No. To avoid conflicts of interest, it is recommended that the BPAC president be a parent or guardian of a student who is currently enrolled in a TBE program. This ensures that the voice of parents is the primary focus of the committee and that its recommendations reflect the needs of the bilingual community.

**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?**

Yes. The BPAC must establish rules and procedures autonomously, which may include the creation of bylaws.

All BPAC meeting minutes shall be recorded and filed with the district to ensure transparency and the continuity of its work.

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

Yes. The actions and deliberations of a public body must be conducted in a transparent and accessible manner, according to the [Open Meetings Act](#). It is state policy that its citizens be notified in advance and afford the right to attend all meetings.

Because the application of this law may vary by district, it is recommended that a district consult with its attorneys to determine whether its BPAC meets the definition of "public body."

It is recommended that EL parents be notified of BPAC meetings to encourage participation in the BPAC and to develop a pool of potential candidates for BPAC leadership. The majority of members of the BPAC must be parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in the district's TBE program. As students transition out of English learner services, current BPAC leadership may no longer qualify under that requirement and additional BPAC members may need to be added in order to maintain compliance.

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

No. A single BPAC must be established at the district level. However, it is recommended that the committee include representatives from various TBE programs in the schools where these services are offered.

Depending on the district's size, the following options may be considered:

- School-level parent committees: These can focus on the specific needs of each school community and provide information and recommendations to the district's main BPAC.
- Multiple district-level BPAC meetings: A district may host additional meetings to accommodate the different languages and language needs of committee members.

This allows for equitable representation of all language communities without the need to create multiple BPACs within the same district.