

**Serving English Learners
in Preschool Programs
in Illinois Public School Districts
23 Ill. Adm. Code Part 228**

Frequently Asked Questions

March 2023

Illinois State Board of Education

**Multilingual Department
555 W. Monroe, Suite 900
Chicago, IL 60661
312-814-3850**

Introduction

Transitional Bilingual Education requirements in 23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 228 specify that public school districts must uniformly identify children who are English learners (ELs) by administering a Home Language Survey to all children new to the district and conducting an English language proficiency (ELP) screening process for children who come from a language background other than English. Preschool programs must offer a language instruction program for ELs consistent with the requirements of Part 228 to all preschool children identified as ELs.

An EL student in preschool:

- (a) Comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken by the student and/or by the student's parent, guardians, or anyone else who resides in the household; and
- (b) Does not demonstrate English language proficiency during a research-based English language proficiency screening procedure that is developmentally appropriate for the student.

Preschool Programs Governed by These Rules

1. Which preschool programs are included under the Part 228 Transitional Bilingual Education rules?

All preschool programs for children ages 3 to 5 that are **administered by a public school district**, including charter schools and Regional Offices of Education, must adhere to the rules under Part 228. This includes preschool programs that are subcontracted by districts to community organizations and preschool programs that districts administer regardless of the source of funding.

Identification and English Language Proficiency Screening of EL Students

2. How are potential EL students identified in preschool?

The district must have families of all children new to the district, including preschool children, complete the [Home Language Survey](#) by the first day the student starts to participate in the preschool program. The survey contains two questions as outlined in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 228.15(a). If the answer to one or both of the questions is "yes," then the district must screen the child for English language proficiency.

3. How does the program screen potential EL students in preschool to determine whether they are proficient in English?

The district must establish standard ELP screening procedures that are research-based to determine each potential EL preschool student's English language proficiency level in the domains of listening and speaking. The procedures may include use of an established assessment or other screening procedures. Examples are available on the Multilingual [webpage](#). [State rules](#) indicate that the screening procedures must:

- ❖ Be age and developmentally appropriate;
- ❖ Be culturally and linguistically appropriate for the children being screened;
- ❖ Include one or more observations using culturally and linguistically appropriate tools;
- ❖ Use multiple measures and methods (e.g., home language assessments; verbal and nonverbal procedures; various activities, settings, and personal interactions);
- ❖ Involve family by seeking information and insight to help guide the screening process without involving them in the formal assessment or interpretation of results; and

- ❖ Involve staff who are knowledgeable about preschool education, child development, and first and second language acquisition.

Screening procedures may be modified to accommodate the special needs of students with Individualized Education Programs.

4. If EL students are enrolled in preschool for more than one year, must the district rescreen the students in the second year of participation?

No, the district is not required to rescreen preschool EL students in their second year of participation. The student is considered to be an EL and eligible for the EL program services in the second year of participation based on the initial ELP screening results. However, the district may choose to assess a student's progress in English acquisition and modify the level of EL services provided in the second year based on assessment results.

All students whose parents answered "yes" on the Home Language Survey are screened with [the prescribed screener](#) to determine their English proficiency level and placement in kindergarten (even those who were screened proficient when entering preschool). (See Question 16.)

5. Are staff who administer the preschool screening required to participate in online training and to pass a test?

ISBE does not require that preschool staff who administer preschool English language proficiency screenings participate in a particular online training course. However, it is recommended that these staff participate in training specific to the instrument and to the screening procedures used by their program to ensure consistent administration and valid results. See the [Multilingual webpage](#) regarding who can administer the pre-K screener. ***Please note that Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion recipients are required to train any qualified preschool staff who are administering the specific screening tool.

Establishment of Programs

6. What type of language instruction program must be offered when there are 20 or more preschool ELs who have the same home language in an attendance center?

An attendance center (administered by a district) that enrolls 20 or more preschool ELs who have the same home language must offer a **Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program** that includes instruction in the home language and English as a second language (ESL) for these children. Some of the instructional designs allowed under TBE are described in the answer to Question 8.

7. What type of language instruction program must be offered when there are fewer than 20 preschool ELs who have the same home language in an attendance center, including situations in which there are more than 20 preschool ELs but they come from different language backgrounds?

An attendance center that enrolls 19 or fewer preschool ELs who have the same home language or 20 or more preschool ELs that came from different language backgrounds must offer either a **Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI)** or a TBE program for these students. TPI provides language instruction that typically includes

English as a second language and may include home language instruction or support based on the needs of the students. Some of the instructional designs allowed under TPI are described in the answer to Question 8.

8. What instructional designs may be used to serve EL students in preschool?

The district may select the instructional design(s) best suited to its preschool population and to meet compliance. Many configurations meet the requirements of TBE (full time and part time) and TPI.

Instructional Designs

Appropriate for TBE full time or TPI

Transitional Bilingual Program (Self-Contained)

Instruction is in the students' home language and English (via ESL) in a self-contained bilingual classroom. The goal is to assist students in English language development through connections and continuing development of the home language in preschool and beyond.

Dual Language Models -- Instruction is provided in English and a second language with the goal of achieving bilingualism and biliteracy over many years. (Not to be confused with dual language learners.)

- **Two-Way Immersion:** Instruction is given in English and another language to English-speaking students and students who speak the other language together in the same classroom with the goal of developing proficiency in both languages for all students in the class.
- **One-Way Immersion:** English learners receive instruction in their home language for an extended duration, accompanied by education in English and ESL. The goal is proficiency in English and the home language.

Transitional Bilingual Program (Collaboration)

Collaboration serves English learners who are placed in classes with non-ELs and/or ELs from various language backgrounds. Home language instruction occurs through a co-teaching, push-in or pull-out model, or a classroom teacher who has a bilingual endorsement differentiates language instruction and provides some small group instruction in the home language for part of the day to TBE ELs.

Appropriate for TPI only

Transitional Program in English (Self-Contained) and Transitional Program in English (Collaboration)

Teachers focus on building English language skills via ESL. The language of instruction is English, but some support may be provided to students in their native language. Teachers also use strategies to integrate language and content to modify instruction for English learners to facilitate student comprehension of learning area content. Classes may be composed of ELs from many different language backgrounds who do not share the same home language.

Language instruction may be delivered by the classroom teacher or by a pull-out or push-in teacher, depending on licensure held. EL students may be integrated with non-EL students in the classroom as long

as the preschool program provides the EL children with daily language instruction that specifically addresses second language acquisition and makes the curriculum accessible for ELs.

Whenever possible, the preschool program should offer an instructional design that aligns with the instructional design that the child will encounter in kindergarten to provide continuity and best prepare the child for successful entry into kindergarten. This is with the understanding that English language development takes multiple years beyond pre-K.

9. What criteria qualifies preschool EL students for part-time TBE?

Districts need to establish part-time criteria based on the following:

- A native language proficiency test documents that the student has minimal or no proficiency in the home language and a parent provides written confirmation that English is the primary language spoken in the home.
- Any student with a disability whose Individualized Education Program developed in accordance with 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226 Subpart C identifies a part-time TBE program as the least restrictive environment for the student.
- The parents have clearly indicated in writing that they are refusing full-time TBE components for their child and prefer that their child only receives part-time TBE services.

Parent Notification

10. What communication with parents is required when a student is identified as an English learner?

The district must notify the parent in writing that the child has been placed in a TBE program or TPI for English learners within 30 days after the beginning of the school year or 14 days after enrollment in the program during the middle of the school year, according to Section 14C-4 of the Illinois School Code [105 ILCS 5/14C-4](#). The [notification letter](#) must be in English and the home language of the student and must address the areas specified in Section 14C-4 of the Illinois School Code. A parent may withdraw a student from the TBE program/TPI at any time by submitting the request in writing to the school or district.

Annual English Language Proficiency Assessment

11. Are preschool students required to participate in the annual state ELP assessment?

No, there is no annual ELP testing requirement for ELs in preschool programs.

Teacher Certification

12. What type of certification is required to teach ELs in preschool?

Preschool teachers must hold the proper license to teach preschool English learner students.

To provide **bilingual instruction** to preschool children, a teacher must hold (1) a Professional Educator License (PEL) with endorsements in Early Childhood and Bilingual Education or (2) Educator License with Stipulations with a Transitional Bilingual Education (ELS-TBE) endorsement.

However, to use an ELS-TBE for children being served in Preschool for All (PFA) and/or Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) programs, a teacher will additionally need to possess a PEL with an Early Childhood endorsement.

To provide **English as a second language instruction** to preschool children, a teacher must hold (1) a PEL with endorsements in Early Childhood and either Bilingual Education or ESL or (2) ELS-TBE.

However, to use an ELS-TBE for children being served in PFA and/or PFAE programs, a teacher will additionally need to possess a PEL with an Early Childhood endorsement.

Combinations of staff arrangements, depending on who has the various certifications, can be utilized to meet the needs of the students and achieve compliance. Such situations could include stand-alone, co-teaching, and push-in services. Refer to the [Licensure Matrix](#) for further details.

13. Are all preschool teachers required to hold a bilingual or ESL endorsement?

No, only preschool teachers who are providing native language and/or ESL instruction to ELs must hold the appropriate endorsement or approval.

TBE/TPI Program Director

14. Who is the TBE/TPI program director in the district?

The TBE/TPI program director who oversees the program in the district should meet the requirements for administrator qualifications specified in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 228.35(d). This individual may often be someone other than the early childhood director in the district. **As such, implementation of a successful preschool EL program will require ongoing communication and coordination between the TBE/TPI program director and the staff who oversee the early childhood program.**

Counting Years in the TBE Program/TPI

15. Does preschool count toward the three years in the TBE program/TPI provided for under Article 14C?

No, enrollment in preschool does not count for the purpose of determining the number of years a child has been enrolled in the TBE program/TPI.

English Language Proficiency Screening and Placement in Kindergarten

16. How does a child's EL status in preschool affect placement in kindergarten?

Preschool screening results may not be used to determine placement in kindergarten. All children initially identified as coming from homes where a language other than English is spoken on the Home Language Survey must be screened with the [prescribed screener](#) to determine EL status and placement in the TBE program/TPI in kindergarten. Children who were identified as an EL in preschool but meet the state English proficiency standard when screened for kindergarten should be enrolled in the same manner as other

students who demonstrate English proficiency on the WIDA MODEL™.

Professional Development

17. What professional development requirements apply to preschool TBE programs/TPIs?

Districts must offer professional development opportunities to all staff in the TBE program/TPI, including certified and non-certified staff in the preschool TBE program/TPI. The district must offer at least two professional development activities a year that focus on at least one of the following topics related to the education of EL students: current research in bilingual education; content-area and language proficiency assessment of students with limited English proficiency; research-based methods and techniques for teaching students with limited English proficiency; research-based methods and techniques for teaching students with limited English proficiency who also have disabilities; and the culture and history of the United States and of the country, territory, or geographic area that is the native land of the students or of their parents.

Districts must also provide newly hired TBE program/TPI staff with an orientation that includes information about the TBE program/TPI requirements.

Districts should offer professional development that is relevant and addresses developmentally appropriate practices for preschool teachers who work with EL students.

18. Should preschool staff be included in the training related to the implementation of the Spanish Language Arts Standards in districts that offer Spanish language arts?

Preschool staff may be included in the Spanish Language Arts Standards training, and the training should include information about how preschool programs can use developmentally appropriate practices to help prepare children for Spanish literacy. (Spanish Language Arts Standards are applicable in kindergarten so while professional development may be offered, teaching Spanish language arts in preschool is not required.)

Program Funding

19. May districts receive state TBE/TPI funding for preschool EL programs?

State TBE/TPI funding has been included in Evidence-Based Funding calculations since August 31, 2017. This funding is available to school districts for the excess costs associated with providing EL students with TBE/TPI instruction in accordance with the Illinois School Code Article 14C and the corresponding state rules. As such, districts may receive funding for preschool students who receive TBE/TPI instruction from a teacher who is properly certified to provide bilingual or ESL instruction to preschool students.

The Evidence-Based Funding for Student Success Act requires the Illinois State Board of Education to notify school districts of the total EL funding generated by each district's students. Prekindergarten students are included in a district's total EL count.

ISBE maintains a list of the [Fiscal Year EL funding totals per district](#). Districts are reminded that state funding attributable to ELs is to be spent on EL services per the requirements of [Article 14C](#) of the School Code. [Article 14C](#) also requires that at least 60 percent of EL funds must be spent on instructional costs of ELs.

20. May districts receive federal Title III funding for preschool EL programs?

Yes, districts can apply for Title III funding that includes their preschool population in district preschool programs. The district must include preschool EL students in their data to be considered when they intend to apply for Title III funding.