

SUPPORTS FOR

PARENTS &
GUARDIANS

OF

English Learners



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

The Mississippi Department of Education wishes to welcome diverse families to our communities. We value families as important partners in the education of children and are happy to share this document with parents and guardians of **English learner (EL)** students. Our hope is that it will serve as a valuable resource as you seek to support your child and better understand the **English learner** supports available through Mississippi schools.

English learners

are students who are learning to speak, read, write and understand academic English and whose ability to use and understand the English language affects their ability to meaningfully participate and succeed in school. English learners are generally students who speak a language other than English at home.

Academic English

is the English that is used in schools, in textbooks, and on tests.



How does the school identify children as English learners?

Every parent who registers his or her child in a public school completes a **Home Language Survey**. This form is used to determine which students may need to be tested on their ability to use and understand the English language.

Mississippi schools are required to identify students who are **English learners** by using the following steps:

1

Having parents or guardians complete a **Home Language Survey**. If you, as parents or guardians, do not read or understand English, this must be provided to you in a language that you understand.

2

Students who speak a language other than English are then tested to check their English language skills using the state's screener for English language proficiency.

3

If the test shows that your child is not yet English proficient, he or she will be classified as an **English learner**.

Home

Language Survey

the form given to all parents or guardians that is used to determine which students may need to be tested on their ability to use and understand the English language; it is completed when the student is registered for school.



Who will guide me to better understand my child's progress?

You are a part of the **Student Evaluation Team (SET)**. This team is made up of parents, teachers, **principals**, and **counselors**. The team will meet at the beginning of every year to develop your child's **Language Service Plan (LSP)** (see pages 11-12) and throughout the school year to make any needed adjustments.

These **SET** meetings are an opportunity for the team to discuss your child's English language progress, classroom progress, and other areas of concern.

You are a **VERY IMPORTANT** part of this team. Mississippi schools value your input as you participate in the meetings and the decisions that are made regarding your child's education.



Student Evaluation Team (SET)

the team of parents and school personnel who work together to develop the **Language Service Plan**

Counselor

is a member of the education team, and is someone who gives valuable assistance to students, helping them with their academic goals, their social and personal development, and with their career development

Principal

serve as the leaders of their schools and have many responsibilities, including leading the teachers, students, and staff members; handling student discipline; developing and implementing school programs; hiring and evaluating teachers; and communicating with parents and guardians about school programs and specific issues related to their children

Language Service Plan (LSP)

is a document that identifies the EL services, language goals, and **accommodations** your child will receive when he or she is identified as an EL student



Will my child be in a special class?

In most schools, your child will be taught by both an **English learner (EL) teacher** or EL support staff member and a **general education classroom teacher(s)**. The **EL teacher** or EL support staff member will focus on teaching English language skills. The general education **classroom teacher(s)** will teach the academic subjects such as math, science, English language arts, and social studies and will provide additional supports as needed. The general education teacher and the **EL teacher** work together to provide the best possible support for your child's academic and English language growth.

In some schools, your child's general education teacher will be responsible for teaching both academic subjects and English language skills. You can get more details from your child's school about who will be providing these services.

English learner (EL) teacher

focuses on English language development; works with the general education teacher to provide the best possible support for students' academic and English-language growth

General education classroom teacher

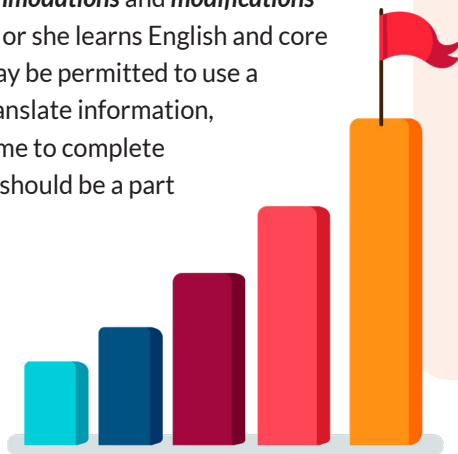
teaches academic subjects (such as math, science, English Language Arts, and social studies) and provides differentiated instruction as needed





What supports is my child eligible for as an EL student?

Your child may be eligible for certain adaptations to help them master their grade-level content material. These adaptations are called **accommodations** and **modifications** on the *Language Service Plan* (see pages 11-12) and they support him or her both in the classroom and on assessments. There are many types of **accommodations** and **modifications** that may be used to support your child as he or she learns English and core content material. For example, your child may be permitted to use a word-to-word glossary to help him or her translate information, or he or she might also be permitted extra time to complete assignments. Discussion of these adaptations should be a part of every **SET** meeting.



Modifications

are changes made to the core content so that learning objectives are different and more accessible for the student

Accommodations

tools and strategies used to help students demonstrate their understanding of taught skills and/or alternate ways students are allowed to show what they know



Will my child have a specific teacher to help him/her learn English?

Some schools provide specific teachers who work with EL students to help support their acquisition of English. In schools where **EL teachers** are not available schools may provide teacher's assistants or tutors who will work with your child to support their learning of the English language. These teachers, assistants, and tutors are a great resource to you and will also be in attendance at **SET** meetings.



QUESTIONS for my child's EL teacher

English language proficiency test

the assessment used to determine both the growth and level of English language proficiency of EL students each school year; the test is given in the spring of each school year and results will be provided to parents or guardians in the fall of the following school year

- What type of program will the school use to teach my child English?
- What are my child's most recent scores on the state's **English language proficiency test**?
- How is my child progressing in his or her English language acquisition, and when do you expect him or her to exit the EL program?
- What **accommodations** can my child receive in the classroom to help him or her learn English and grade-level material?
- What supports do you provide for my child to help him or her in other subjects?
- How can I support my child's acquisition of the English language?
- What resources are available for our family to use at home to support English language acquisition?



When will I be able to talk to the classroom teacher about my child's academic progress?

Parent/teacher conferences are an opportunity for parents and/or guardians to meet and discuss with teachers the academic and behavioral progress of their child. Teachers will also discuss the **Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards** that students are expected to learn for that academic year. These conferences are an important opportunity to share your child's strengths and areas for growth and to work with the teacher on understanding ways to help your child succeed. Most schools schedule one or two special conference days during the school year for all parents/guardians. If you would like to schedule an additional time to meet with your child's school, simply contact your child's teacher to make arrangements for a meeting time.

Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards

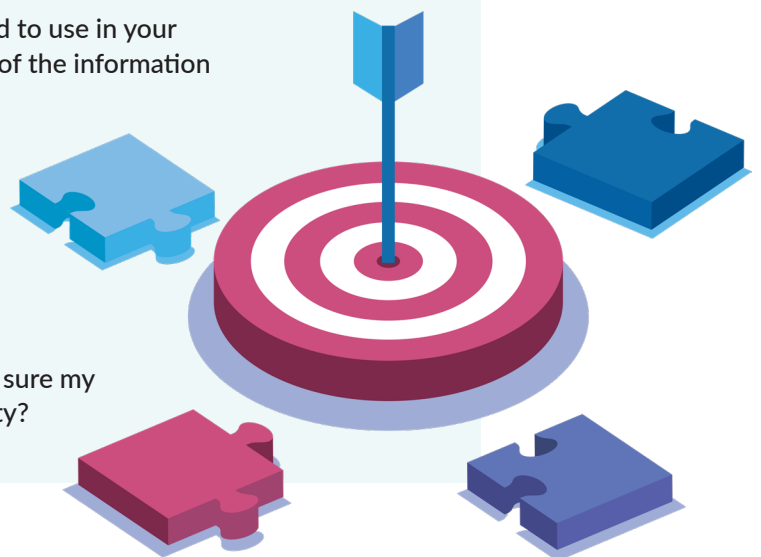
these outline the skills and knowledge expected of students for each grade and in each subject

Attending parent/teacher conferences can be stressful for both parents/guardians and teachers. If you are concerned that your ability to understand the teacher and/or the teacher's ability to understand you may make it difficult to fully participate in the meeting, contact the school to learn about the different options available for interpreting the meeting. This will ease the stress during the meeting and help you and the teacher to fully understand each other in order to determine the best ways to support your child.



QUESTIONS for my child's classroom teacher

- What is my child expected to learn this year?
- How is my child progressing with his or her learning in this class?
- What can I do at home to help my child?
- What supports does my child receive in your class to help him/her to understand and speak English?
- What supports does my child receive from you to help him/her to learn grade-level information?
- Does my child receive academic supports in his or her home language?
- What **accommodations** are available for my child to use in your classroom to support his or her understanding of the information covered in class?
- Will my child be able to use these **accommodations** on their classroom tests and on end-of-year state tests?
- What kind of homework will my child be expected to complete?
- Where is homework posted so that I can make sure my child completes it to the best of his or her ability?





Who should I contact regarding questions about the school in general?

Principals in Mississippi schools serve as the leaders of their schools and have many responsibilities, including: leading the teachers, students, and staff members; handling student discipline; developing and implementing school programs; hiring and evaluating teachers; and communicating with parents and/or guardians about school programs and specific issues related to their children.



QUESTIONS for the principal

- How can I request an interpreter at the school?
- Who do I talk to if I think my child is gifted?
- Who can I talk to if I think my child has a disability?
- What support will my child receive while he or she is in and after he or she has exited the EL program to ensure academic success?
- Who should I talk to about community resources that may benefit my family?
- Where is homework posted so that I can make sure my child completes it to the best of his or her ability?

The **secretary** and the school **counselor** may also be able to provide you with important information about school events and services.



QUESTIONS for the secretary or school counselor

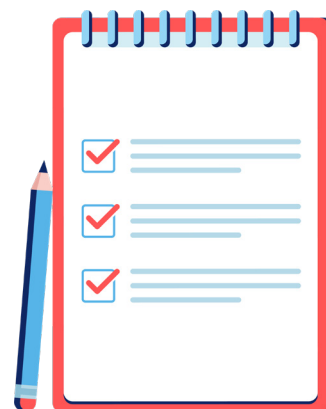
- Who should I talk to about my child's allergies or medical conditions?
- Who should I talk to about medications my child may need to take at school and the proper procedures for administering them?
- How can I volunteer for school/classroom events?
- How can I get involved with or join the school's parent organization?
- What is the school's procedure for reporting absences?
- Who can I talk to about helping my child to better adjust to school?

Secretary greets students and parents and provides them with general school information, they also schedule appointments, answer phones and give administrative support to teachers and school officials, they also help maintain student records



How can I find out about important announcements from the school or teacher?

Many schools communicate through an agenda or planner that you should read daily to help your child to keep up with homework. It will also help you to stay informed about all important school activities and announcements. Check with your child's teacher to find out what method of communication the teacher and school use (such as Remind 101, Class Dojo, a digital or printed newsletter, a daily planner, etc.).





What are my rights as the parent of an EL student?

NOTIFICATION

Schools are required to meet with parents or guardians to provide updates on his or her child's English language development. This information is generally provided in meetings that discuss the **LSP** and results from state and school assessments (a sample of the **LSP** is provided on page 11).



COMMUNICATION

Schools must ensure that there is meaningful communication with parents or guardians in a language that they understand. You have the right to request an interpreter at school meetings and to have school materials translated to a language that you understand.



CHOICE

You have the right to decline EL services offered by the school for your child. This will mean that your child will not participate in EL classes or programs to support his or her acquisition of the English language.



Please note that even if you decline EL services, your child is still classified as an **English learner** and will be required to take the **English Language Proficiency Test** each year until he or she meets the required levels to be considered English proficient.



What are the rights of my child as an English learner?

ACCESS

EL students have the civil right to be taught both the English language and grade-level content without being segregated from their classmates. This access must be provided in all learning situations, such as during the regular school year and during distance learning situations.



SUPPORTS

Depending on your child's level of English proficiency, the **SET** will determine what type of supports will best meet your child's needs. Check with your child's school to understand what type of language development program(s) are being used.



SCHOOL SERVICES

Your child has the right to all additional school services such as gifted, special education, honors, advanced placement, and the **Multi-Tiered System of Supports** to ensure that he or she is successful in the classroom and is learning the **Mississippi College- and Career-Ready Standards**.



Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

levels of academic and behavioral supports to promote the success of all students



How can I help my child at home to be academically successful?

In order for your child to be academically successful, we encourage you to become familiar with the academic standards that your child will be learning in school. Mississippi schools teach the **Mississippi College and Career-Readiness Standards** (<https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/college-and-career-readiness-standards>). Your child will be required to learn the **Mississippi College and Career-Readiness Standards** while learning the English language. This can be challenging for children, which is why, as parents/guardians of ELs, it is especially important to become familiar with what your child will be learning.

The Mississippi Department of Education has created books for each grade level from Pre-K to 8th grade to help parents/guardians understand the **Mississippi College and Career-Readiness Standards** in Math and English Language Arts. The books also provide activities that you can do at home to support your child's understanding of the content being taught in class. These books are available in multiple languages.

- English versions: <https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/OEER/FamilyGuidesEnglish>
- Spanish versions: <https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/OEER/FamilyGuidesSpanish>



How will I know how my child is progressing in English?

Each district is required to send a report home to parents or guardians that explains their child's progress in the English language. Most districts will send a **home report** at the beginning of the school year which indicates how your child did on the previous year's **English Language Proficiency Test**.

Home Report

provides information on the student's proficiency level in English in four areas, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.



How will I know what skills my child is working on to improve his or her use of the English language?

Each school is required to complete an individualized **Language Service Plan** to indicate the type of EL program your child is enrolled in, basic information about your child's academic progress, English language progress, and goals for the upcoming year. More information about the **Language Service Plan** is explained on pages 11-12.



What can I do at home to help my child learn the English language?

There are four areas of language (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). It is important to help your child to find ways to practice all of them at home.



SPEAKING



LISTENING



READING



WRITING

One of the most important ways you can support your child as they learn the English language is to encourage your child to read at home in English or in your home language. Reading in English or in the home language will help to

- build vocabulary knowledge,
- support decoding skills, and
- increase reading fluency and comprehension.



You can also work with your child to

- practice vocabulary flash cards,
- label items around the house, and
- use free language apps such as Duolingo or other language-learning resources to help build word knowledge and correct usage.



Visiting the local library and signing your child up for a library card is another good way to support your child's language skills. Library cards are free and enable your child to borrow books, audio books and other materials at no cost. The library also offers many free programs in which families can participate.



Talk to your child's teacher about specific programs that are being used with your child and ways you can help your child at home.



It is important to talk daily with your child about school activities (in any language). Communication between parents and children, can have many lasting positive effects on your child's education. You can learn a lot about school simply by having conversations with your child about the school day, assignments, and other related activities. This also builds both listening and speaking skills for your child that will help him or her to be more successful at school and in life.



Encouraging your child to join extra-curricular activities such as school clubs or teams is another way to support your child's English language skills. These activities provide your child with opportunities to interact with and talk to other students with the same interests.





What is a Language Service Plan?

A **language service plan** is a document that identifies the EL services, language goals, and **accommodations** your child will receive when he or she is identified as an EL student. This plan is developed by the **SET** which includes you and various school personnel.

SAMPLE LANGUAGE SERVICE PLAN

Please note that not all districts use the same **Language Service Plan**. However, the basic information from the sample that follows should be included.

APPENDIX B Language Service Plan (for Students with Limited English Proficiency)

This form should be completed by the individual responsible for providing the instructional program for the EL students and the classroom teacher. This form should be updated annually. **Person completing this form**

STUDENT NAME															
PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN		LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN IN HOME													
ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE(S)		DATE FIRST ENROLLED IN A U.S. SCHOOL	IMMIGRANT STATUS (< 3 yrs)												
PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME															
PHONE	(home)	(work)	(cell)												
HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION to parent/guardian is requested in:		☐ English OR ☐ Native Language: _____ ☐ Oral OR ☐ Written													
ACADEMIC HISTORY PRIOR TO ENTERING CURRENT DISTRICT															
Age Started School	Years in Preschool/K	Years in grades 1-5	Years in grades 6-12												
Last grade completed	☐ Interrupted Formal Education ☐ Limited Schooling ☐ No Formal schooling														
Has the student been referred for Special Education?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Does the child have an IEP?	☐ Yes ☐ No												
		Does the child have an 504 Plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No												
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL HISTORY															
SUBJECT	BELOW GRADE LEVEL	ON OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL	METHOD USED TO DETERMINE LEVEL	INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE											
Example: Math	X		Course grade from previous year (D)												
Math															
Reading															
Writing															
Social Studies															
Science															
ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TEST INFORMATION															
TEST	Date	Score	Level	Date	Score	Level	Date	Score	Level	Date	Score	Level	Date	Score	Level
ELPT Speaking															
ELPT Listening															
ELPT Reading															
ELPT Writing															
Composite SCORE															

The **Language Service Plan** contains important information about your child's academic background as well as information on how to contact you for meetings.

EL SERVICE

STANDARDIZED TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

ACCOMMODATION(S)	CODE #	TEST(S)

Also listed are ***accommodations*** for state testing that may be used to help your child to be more successful in understanding the content taught in each grade level.

All members of the team should sign the ***language service plan*** once all details are finalized.

All testing accommodations are classroom accommodations, however not all classroom accommodations are state testing accommodations.

To meet the needs of this child, the following are recommendations for use in regular classroom instruction:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Paraphrasing or repeating directions in English
☐ Personal cueing
☐ Read the test directions (but not the test items) to individual students or in a small group – repeating and/or paraphrasing the directions, if needed
☐ Dictation of answers to test administrator/proctor (scribe) in English only
☐ Reader (oral administration)
☐ Native language word-to-word dictionaries/electronic word-to-word dictionaries (no definitions)
☐ Present questions in same phrasing as learning/review
☐ Reduced and/or modified class & homework assignments
☐ Modified assessments (i.e. oral)
☐ Break tasks/directions into subtasks
☐ Increase wait time
☐ Additional time to complete assignments and tests
☐ ESS (Extended School Services)
☐ Provide questions for classroom discussion in advance
☐ Label items in the room
☐ Previewing of academic content | ☐ Provide shortened assignments
☐ Face student when speaking – speak slowly
☐ Print instead of using cursive; type all notes, tests, handouts
☐ Use high interest/low vocabulary test material
☐ Use overhead and provide students with copies of teacher instructions/notes/lectures
☐ Make instruction visual – use graphic organizers, pictures, maps, graphs, etc. to aid understanding
☐ Highlight/color code tasks, directions, letters home
☐ Pair ELs with an English speaking “peer partner” for assistance
☐ Provide preferential seating or seating with a peer partner
☐ Check for comprehension often
☐ Ask questions that allow the student to answer successfully
☐ Allow the student opportunities to read aloud successfully
☐ Use manipulatives
☐ Use audiobooks
☐ Record material for student listening
☐ Vocabulary matching/fill-in-the-blank exercises w/ words
☐ OTHER: |
|--|---|

By signing this form, I am indicating that I have read and understood the Language Service Plan information.

PRINCIPAL Signature	PRINTED NAME
PARENT Signature	PRINTED NAME

EL COORDINATOR <i>Signature</i>		PRINTED NAME	
PARENT <i>Signature</i>		PRINTED NAME	

EL TEACHER Signature	STUDENT Signature
PRINTED NAME	PRINTED NAME

TEACHER Signature	PRINTED NAME	INTERPRETER Signature	PRINTED NAME
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TEACHER Signature	PRINTED NAME	DATE
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What tests will my child be required to take?

In addition to all academic tests given to all other students, your child will be tested using the Mississippi **English Language Proficiency Test** to determine both his or her growth and level of English language proficiency each school year. The test is given in the spring of each school year, and results will be provided to you at the beginning of the following year. Your child will be tested in four **domains** of language development:



Domain

there are four areas of language development: listening, speaking, reading and writing



How long will my child be considered an English learner?

The amount of time a student is considered an EL student varies for each child. Talk to your child's **EL teacher** regularly to monitor his or her progress towards English proficiency.



What is required for my child to exit the EL program?

Students identified as ELs will remain in the program until they test out with qualifying scores on the **English Language Proficiency Test**. Talk with your child's teacher about the test requirements for exiting the EL program.



What happens once my child tests out of the English learner program?

Once a student meets the required scores, he or she will no longer be considered an EL student and will be placed on **monitored status**. This means that school personnel will meet at least once every nine weeks to ensure that your child is progressing in all academic areas. If he or she is struggling, the team should indicate on the monitor form what will be done to support the student's academic growth.

Monitored status

this status is designated for students who have tested out of the EL program. Schools are required to monitor (or watch over) their academic progress for at least four years.



Will information about English learner status be transferred if we move to a new school or district?

If you change schools within the district or state, all your child's information will be sent to the new school once you have registered at the new school. This will include information on your child's placement in the EL program. Check with the new school as to what documentation is required from parents or guardians when registering a new student.

If you transfer to a school that is outside of the state, let the new school know that your child is an **English learner**. They will guide you on how to follow their process for determining EL status in their state.



What supports will my child receive if schools are closed for an extended time?

If schools are closed for an extended time, your child is still eligible for all services provided to all other students. Schools are required to continue to provide support for your child to learn both the Mississippi academic standards and the English language standards. Depending on the school's resources, these supports may be provided virtually via computer or phone, or through academic packets sent home for your child.



What else can I do to support my child's academic and English growth?

You are your child's first and most important teacher. Parents and guardians are encouraged to be advocates for their children and to be part of the decision-making process that supports their child's academic progress. You are encouraged to:

1

Ask school personnel about providing translation or interpretation services if you need assistance with either.

2

Keep the school telephone number in a convenient location at your house. Know your child's bus number, the teacher's name, and your child's grade level.

3

Keep the school updated on all your contact information such as current phone number and place of employment. It is important that the school can contact you for meetings, school events, or in case of an emergency.

4

Work together with your child to ensure his or her success at school. This includes ensuring your child is well rested for school, attends school every day, and completes homework assignments to the best of his or her ability.

5

Support your child's academic progress by helping with special projects (do not do it for him or her, but rather assist), asking your child to review prior assignments with you, and asking your child what supplies he or she needs for school.

6

Stay informed about your child's education and exercise your parental rights by attending parent-teacher conferences, asking questions, and ensuring your child has the support and access to all resources and programs for which he or she needs or qualifies. Such services might include gifted programs, special education, intervention services, or other programs.

7

Keep up with school assignments when your child is absent. Ask the teacher or have your child call friends for missed assignments.

8

Talk to your child about how his or her day went at school. This will help him or her to share interests and process concerns as well as help you to understand school and classroom rules, activities, and procedures.

9

Encourage your child to make friends at school. This will support positive thoughts about school, interest in school activities, and language development.

10

Read daily with your child (in English or in your home language). Ask your child to read aloud to you.

11

Participate in school activities such as volunteering for school field trips, classroom activities, or other school programs where parent support is requested.

12

Love your child! Believe in what your child can do and teach him or her to believe in himself or herself as a student.

Additional Resources

¡Colorin Colorado!

<https://www.colorincolorado.org>

This bilingual website was created just for parents/guardians and families to provide them with the information they need to help their children become good readers and successful students. It has a “For Families” tab which provides specific supports for families of ELs. You can also change all text to either English or Spanish. The site also provides supports for teachers of EL students and contains book and author lists as well as an abundance of tips and techniques for parents and guardians to use at home to help their children become successful readers.

English Learner Family Tool Kit

<https://ncela.ed.gov/family-toolkit>

This tool kit is being developed by the US Department of Education and will eventually consist of six chapters. Chapter One contains information on enrolling your child in school, and chapter Two covers information on attending school in the United States. The Introduction and the first two chapters are currently available in multiple languages including English, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese.

Family Guides for Student Success

Books created by the Mississippi Department of Education for each grade level from Pre-K to 8th grade to help parents/guardians understand the Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards in Math and English Language Arts. The books also provide activities that you can do at home to support your child’s understanding of the content being taught in class. These books are available in multiple languages.

- English versions: <https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/OEER/FamilyGuidesEnglish>
- Spanish versions: <https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/OEER/FamilyGuidesSpanish>

Helping Your Child Series

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html>

This section of the U.S. Department of Education’s website provides links to booklets published in the Helping Your Child series. This publication series provides parents and guardians with the tools and information necessary to help their children succeed in school and life. These booklets contain practical lessons and activities to help parents and guardians of school-aged and preschool children master reading, understand the value of homework, and develop the skills and values necessary to achieve and grow. All the booklets are available in English and Spanish.

Information for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Parents and Guardians

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>

This is the link to a fact sheet from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education with answers to common questions about the rights of parents and guardians who do not speak, listen, read, or write English proficiently because it is not their primary language.

Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards

<https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/college-and-career-readiness-standards>

This section of the Mississippi Department of Education's Website outlines the skills and knowledge expected of students from grade to grade and subject to subject.

ToolKit for Hispanic Families

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/2006toolkit/index.html>

This toolkit was developed with guidance from Hispanic parents from across the country. It is available in seven languages. It contains articles for parents/guardians of children from preschool to high school and tips to help parents and guardians help their children with reading.

Reading is Fundamental Literacy Central

<https://www.rif.org/literacy-central/collections/beeline-reader-collection-0>

This website allows teachers, parents, and guardians access to digital reading resources that are directly connected to children's books that may be familiar to them. The reading resources are also available at three different reading levels.



References

- ¡Colorin colorado! For Families
<https://www.colorincolorado.org/families>
- ¡Colorin colorado! A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders
<https://www.colorincolorado.org/guide/guide-engaging-ell-families-twenty-strategies-school-leaders>
- Education Northwest Parent Guide for English Learners
<https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/parent-guide-el-english.pdf>
- United States Department of Education, (November 2018) English Learner Family Toolkit
https://ncela.ed.gov/files/family_toolkit/EL-Family-Tool-Kit-All.pdf



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