

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

What is ESL/LEP/ELL/EL?

English as a Second Language (ESL) is the program each district has to assist their English language learners (ELL), limited English proficient (LEP) students, or English learners.

What is NKCES?

NKCES stands for the Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services. We provide many services to local school districts including assistance with their EL programs.

Why is my district a member of NKCES for EL program services?

By joining NKCES as a member district for EL services your district and other districts are able to receive Title III funding. They pool this funding to provide services for the district that would not be possible individually.

How does NKCES help my district with their EL program?

NKCES currently has an EL program consultant that works with districts to help provide services to their ELs. EL program consultant helps districts to properly identify, document, assess, and place ELs into the district's EL program. The consultant assesses the English language proficiency of the students each year. They meet one-on-one with teachers to help teachers learn how best to accommodate the needs of their particular students. They provide professional development opportunities to districts and provide on-site training and informational meetings about the needs of English learners.

As a teacher how can the EL program consultant help me?

The consultant provides the school with a copy of each limited English proficient student's program service plan (PSP). Teachers and administrators should view a PSP for an English learner just as an IEP for a special education student. PSPs are distributed at the beginning of the year and they outline data as well as classroom accommodations and modifications recommended for each student. If you have any questions or concerns it is your responsibility to contact the EL program consultant. They can answer questions and assist you with accommodations only if they know you have questions.

What do I have to do as a teacher of an EL?

Follow the student's PSP and accommodate and modify material for that student so that he/she can be successful in your classroom. In early spring you will be asked to complete a Teacher Checklist for Accommodations/Modifications to confirm that you have been implementing the listed options in the student's PSP. If you have any questions about these accommodations (testing or classroom) you should contact an EL consultant. **You are legally required to accommodate this student's needs. If you have questions about how to best fulfill your responsibilities please contact the EL consultants.**

Should I retain an English language learner?

Typically, no. EL students may not be retained based solely on their level of English language proficiency. Since academic success is dependent on English language proficiency, academic difficulties may not be justification for retaining an LEP student. While in Kentucky, keeping a student in a primary program for an additional year is not technically termed “retention,” it is similar enough that such a decision could easily become a legal issue. If you are considering suggesting that an LEP student repeat a grade, please contact the EL program consultants so that they can guide you through the decision and documentation process.

How should we place an EL student if they come to my district/school with no formal schooling, interrupted schooling, having been previously retained, or with no school records or transcripts?

You should place all LEP students age-appropriately within the grade level of their same-age peers. If you have any questions regarding the equity of the student’s placement please call the EL program consultant immediately.

What if I suspect a student has a learning disability? Should I refer them to special education?

Not yet. We must take every precaution to ensure that an EL student is not misdiagnosed as having a learning disability. This requires the combined expertise of the EL and special education professionals. If you have concerns regarding a student’s progress you should contact your district’s EL teacher and/or the EL program consultants immediately. Together, we should discuss and implement appropriate interventions and keep careful documentation. Should we agree on the need for a referral, the EL teacher and/or consultant and the special education department should work together through every step of the process.

Should I insist that the family/parents of my English language learner speak English at home?

No. Second language acquisition relies heavily on first language proficiency. If students are being taught skills (social, reading, writing, etc) in their first language they will learn those same concepts in English more effectively and possibly more quickly. Also, many times parents will try to help their child in English even though their English is not proficient, thereby exposing their child to a poor example of English rather than a good example of language in their first language. Please encourage your student’s parents to teach their children the skills they need to be successful in whichever language.

What opportunities are available for me to learn more about English language learners?

NKCES provides professional development opportunities throughout the year. Check out our website <http://www.nkces.org/el-programs.html> for updates! We also have many books and resources on second language acquisition, how to encourage EL parent involvement, differentiated instruction strategies for ELs, etc. Please contact the EL program consultants if you would like more information.