

**BOARD MEMO**

Date: May 9, 2024

For ACTION

For INFORMATION

**FROM:** Bethany Nickerson, Ed.D. Executive Director of English Learner Services  
Anna Harvin, Project GLAD Specialist, Office of English Learner Services

**THROUGH:** Pierrette Finney, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer  
Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** The Honorable Michelle Rief, Chair, and  
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

**TOPIC:** Office of English Learner Services Updates

**ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:**

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support

**SY 2023-2024 PRIORITY AREA:**

Academic Achievement

Student Supports

Staff Supports

Recruitment and Retention

**FY 2024 BUDGET PRIORITY:**

Reduce Class Sizes

**SUMMARY:**

This memo provides an overview of the English learner (EL) student population, EL Office supports, and EL best instructional practices, including Project GLAD, in Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS).

**DETAILS:**

Alexandria City Public Schools has 8,916 multilingual learner (ML) students, who are culturally and linguistically diverse with a home language other than English, representing approximately 55% of all students in ACPS. Approximately 38% of all ACPS students, or 6,087 students, are identified as EL students. \*English learner students are a subset of ML students, who, based on their English proficiency level, qualify for language support services. Afghan students are the fastest-growing population of English learners in ACPS. Since the beginning of SY 2021-22, Afghan student enrollment has increased from 392 students to 1,100. Afghan EL students now comprise 17% of the total EL population, as compared with 8% in August 2021.

The Office of English Learner Services serves the school division in the following primary areas

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of responsibility:

- Register, assess for language proficiency, determine EL program eligibility, review transcripts, and provide community resource information for multilingual learner families
- Provide coaching, professional learning, and instructional support for teachers of EL students
- Coordinate language access services and dual language programs
- Ensure compliance with federal and state regulations related to EL students.

Students identified as EL are assessed annually with the state-approved WIDA *Access for ELLs* test, in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The results of the test determine students' progress in acquiring English and determine continued program eligibility. The test generates an overall composite proficiency score on a scale of 1.0 - 6.0. In Virginia, students are considered English proficient and exit from EL services when they score 4.4 or higher on the *Access for ELLs* test. The Virginia Department of Education sets student progress targets, based on English proficiency level and grade level. The VDOE Annual Measurable Achievement Objective for SY 2023-2024 is that 54% of EL students make progress, as measured by *Access for ELLs*.

Instruction is delivered to EL students in ACPS through a content-based program model where the goal is the acquisition of English through the study of content. English learner students learn language and content simultaneously, through the core content courses. ACPS also has developed and provides English language development (ELD) courses: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses at the secondary level and Accelerating Academic Language (AAL) at the elementary level. The ELD courses are aligned with the general education curriculum, and front-load the language that students need to access the general education curriculum. A variety of service delivery models, including co-teaching and sheltered instruction, are used according to the needs and resources of each school. General education and EL teachers work collaboratively to build student background knowledge, provide comprehensible input, explicitly teach academic language, utilize strategies to increase the use of the four language domains and engage in culturally responsive teaching and learning. Service delivery models incorporate co-planning at the team, grade, and/or individual teacher level in order to build the capacity of all teachers to effectively serve EL students. Additionally, at the secondary level, ACPS partners with the Internationals Network for Public Schools to provide an instructional language program designed to meet the unique needs of newcomer immigrant students. A model of sheltered content-based instruction is utilized, incorporating project-based learning, structured collaborative planning blocks, and supports tailored to meet students' social and emotional needs.

The overarching goal for professional development in ACPS is to prepare all teachers, including general education teachers, to utilize best practices and strategies for EL students in tier I instruction, and to ensure that our EL teachers are language experts who plan for and deliver language instruction for EL students utilizing EL best practices and strategies. Our plan for providing effective professional development focuses on the integration of content and

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language instruction through sustained, ongoing professional development and coaching on EL best practices and Project GLAD® (Guided Language Acquisition Design) strategies.

Project GLAD® is a model of professional development that incorporates EL best practices. It provides depth and understanding behind best practices for language learning and development with practical applications in the classroom. Project GLAD® uses innovative design practices to ensure that lessons are designed to meet the needs of all students, most intently the needs of our language learner students. We now have the opportunity to become a professional learning leader within the Northern Virginia region by becoming a Project GLAD® Regional Training Center.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The school division is committed to ensuring high-quality English Learner services for students and their families. All students enrolling in ACPS complete a Home Language Survey at the time of registration. If the Home Language Survey indicates that a language other than English is spoken in the home, students are assessed for English proficiency to determine eligibility for EL services. Parents and guardians of students found eligible have the right to accept or waive the services. English learner program services are language services designed to supplement the general education program and help students attain language proficiency in English and achieve academically. They are delivered directly to students in schools by qualified EL teachers.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information in this Office of English Learner Services Updates memorandum.

### **IMPACT:**

Teachers implementing EL best practices and Project GLAD in Tier I classroom instruction, combined with the foundational support from the Office of English Learner Services, will positively impact the school experience for students and families, and improve student outcomes.

### **ATTACHMENT:**

1. 240509\_Presentation\_English\_Learner\_Services\_Updates\_v1
2. \*Data Source: SY 2023-24 ML Student Fact Sheet and November PowerSchool Data

### **REFERENCES:**

\*Data Source: SY 2023-24 ML Student Fact Sheet and November PowerSchool Data (Attached)

### **CONTACT:**

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