

## BOARD BRIEF

Date: November 10, 2023

BOARD INFORMATION:   X  

MEETING PREPARATION: \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:** Bethany Nickerson, Ed.D. Executive Director of English Language 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:** English Learner Updates

**ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:**

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence  
Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support  
Goal 5: Family and Community Engagement

**SY 2023-2024 PRIORITY AREA:**

Academic Achievement  
Student Supports  
Staff Supports  
Recruitment and Retention

**SUMMARY:**

This Board Brief is an overview of English Learner programming and priorities for the 2023-2024 school year.

**DETAILS:**

Cultural and linguistic diversity is one of our greatest strengths. Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) has 8,895 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 6,070 students, are identified as English learner (EL) students. English learner students are a subset of ML students, who, based on their English proficiency level, qualify for language support services.

***English Learner Service Delivery Models***

To support co-teaching, push-in service delivery models, general education and EL teachers work collaboratively through professional learning communities to lesson plan, integrate EL best practices, and ensure the development of the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Co-planning occurs at the team, grade, and/or individual teacher level which helps to build the capacity of all of our teachers to effectively serve our EL students. The

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amount of targeted language instruction for each EL student depends upon the needs of each individual student. For example, an EL student with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) at English proficiency level 1 will receive more targeted language support than an EL student at level 1 who has high levels of literacy in their first language.

### ***English Language Development Courses***

ACPS also supports EL students through English Language Development courses: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses at the secondary level and Accelerating Academic Language (AAL) at the elementary level. The curricula for these ELD courses are aligned with the general education curriculum, front-load the language that students need to access the general education curriculum, and are taught by EL teachers during elective periods or intervention/enrichment blocks.

### ***International Network For Public Schools***

ACPS partners with the International Network for Public Schools (INPS) to provide an instructional language program at the secondary level designed to meet the unique needs of newcomer, immigrant EL students. The International Academy model is a combined model of sheltered and content-based instruction, in which teachers, students, and counselors are grouped into interdisciplinary team cohorts. The team cohorts allow for structured collaborative planning blocks during which teachers plan thematically across content areas, share strategies that are working for individual students in each of their classes, and work with the counselors and social workers dedicated to that specific team of students to address their individual social and emotional needs. The model also incorporates best practices for immigrant, and newcomer language learning, including heterogeneous student groupings, experiential project-based learning, and explicit instruction of language across content areas. All teachers in the INPS model, both Content and EL, are trained to be teachers of language.

### ***Dual Language***

Dual language, a form of enrichment education that is considered the optimal program model to support EL students' progress in acquiring English and achieving academically, is now offered in five of our ACPS schools: Mount Vernon Community School, John Adams Elementary School, Francis C. Hammond Middle School, George Washington Middle School and Alexandria City High School. Dual language is the only program model that has shown full achievement gap closure for EL students. Students become fully proficient in a second language without sacrificing their English development and, in a Spanish-English dual language program, Spanish-speaking students have the opportunity to acquire high levels of literacy in their home language, thus enabling them to transfer skills and concepts to English.

Our goal is to prepare all teachers, division-wide, to use EL best practices and strategies in core content, Tier I instruction, in order to promote equitable outcomes for multilingual learners. To that end, our professional learning and coaching on Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) is expanding. Project GLAD is a professional development model of research-based strategies that incorporate EL best practices and support content and language integration. The strategies provide access to grade-level content, academic language, and support student engagement and positive classroom environments. The EL best practices are good instructional practices for

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all students, and they are essential practices for EL students.

### **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. English learner students 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.

English learner program services are delivered to students in ACPS through the Content-based EL Program model, where the goal is the acquisition of English through the study of content. English learner students learn language and content simultaneously, through core content courses and elective courses, with the same curricula as all students. General education and EL teachers work collaboratively to integrate EL best practices into Tier I instruction: make connections to and build upon student background knowledge, provide comprehensible input, explicitly teach academic language, differentiate instruction to account for differing English proficiency levels, ensure quality student interaction, engage in culturally responsive teaching and learning, and promote metacognition.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information in this English Learner Services School Board Brief.

### **IMPACT:**

The work of the Department of English Learner Services will positively impact the school experience for students, their families, and the teachers who support them, which will ultimately improve student outcomes.

### **REFERENCES:**

N/A

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

N/A

### **CONTACT:**

Bethany Nickerson, Ed.D., [Bethany.Nickerson@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Bethany.Nickerson@acps.k12.va.us)

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