

# Galax City Public Schools

## English Learner Handbook



# Guiding Documents

[Dear Colleague Letter](#) published by US Department of Justice and the US Department of Education

[EL Toolkit](#) published by the US Department of Education

## English Learner Program Staff

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**EL Advisory Board** : Elizabeth Stringer-Nunley (EL Specialist), all EL teachers, Susan Tilley (Division Superintendent), Charles Byrd (Assistant Superintendent), Michelle Finney (Principal Galax High), Justin Iroler (Principal Galax Elementary), Michelle Garvey (Principal Galax Middle), \_\_\_\_\_ (parent)

## Entrance Procedures

**Purpose:** In order to provide a reasonable opportunity for on-time graduation, federal civil rights law for EL education requires school divisions to take appropriate steps to accurately identify ELs for specialized language instruction to help them attain English proficiency for meaningful and equitable participation in the general education curriculum.

### Identification of ELs

*(Staff responsible)*

The three questions listed below to identify potential ELs are included in division enrollment documents. The wording of the questions is verbatim and are part of the enrollment process for every student enrolling in Galax City Public Schools. *(Student services / guidance counselors / school secretaries)*

1. What is the primary language used in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student?
2. What is the language most often spoken by the student?
3. What is the language that the student first acquired?

A qualified division interpreter is available to assist EL parents to complete the enrollment process. In the case that the division interpreter is not available, then other trained bilingual EL staff will assist with the enrollment process. *(Division interpreter / trained bilingual EL staff)*

EL students will be identified within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the school year, or 14 calendar days after the school year begins. *(EL teachers)*

EL entrance procedures are disseminated to all pertinent staff including school secretaries, students services staff, guidance counselors, administrators, and EL staff. *(Division EL Specialist)*

Galax City Public Schools provides annual training on the EL Entrance Procedures to all pertinent staff including school secretaries, student services staff, guidance counselors, administrators, and EL staff. Training is provided to newly hired staff as needed. *(Division EL Specialist)*

Galax City Public Schools uniformly and consistently implements the EL Entrance Procedures in all three schools of the division. *(Division EL Specialist / student services / guidance counselors / school secretaries)*

Galax City Public Schools accurately codes all identified ELs and former ELs in PowerSchool and maintains all relevant information in the ELLevation online program. *(Division EL Specialist / EL Teachers)*

Galax City Public Schools conducts a periodic review of the EL Entrance Procedures each summer and implements modifications as needed. This includes the opportunity for feedback from parents and staff during an in-person meeting. *(Division EL Specialist)*

### **Screening ELs for English Proficiency Level**

Galax City Public Schools uses the WIDA Screener to determine the English language proficiency level of students. *(EL Teachers)*

Galax City Public Schools provides annual training through WIDA for all staff responsible for administering the WIDA screening instrument. *(EL Teachers)*

The Division EL Specialist verifies the staff training completion to administer the WIDA screening instrument for all pertinent staff. *(Division EL Specialist)*

Galax City Public Schools utilizes the scoring guidelines as recommended by the VDOE, and ensures consistent application of the scoring guidelines to determine EL status. *(EL Teachers)*

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Screening Assessment</b>	<b>Domains</b>	<b>Levels indicating Student is an EL</b>
Rising Kindergarten (summer) through Kindergarten 1st semester	WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	Listening and speaking	Oral language below 4.5
Kindergarten 2nd semester (and 1st semester of first grade)	WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	Listening, speaking, reading, and writing	Overall language below 4.5
Grades 1-12	WIDA Screener	Listening, speaking, reading, and writing	Overall less than 4.5

### **Placement of ELs in Programs and Services**

Galax City Public Schools ensures that the purpose for all programs and services for ELs meets the same academic content standards as all students and to develop English language proficiency, and that the programs and services are effective for EL student progress. *(EL Teachers)*

Galax City Public Schools ensures that the EL curriculum is aligned to both SOLs and the WIDA English language development standards. *(EL Teachers / Content Teachers)*

Galax City Public Schools ensures a sufficient number of qualified teachers (1:50 as directed by VDOE SOQ) and sufficient and appropriate materials and resources (including print and online) in order to provide a realistic opportunity for improved academic outcomes within a reasonable timeframe. *(Human Resources / Division EL Specialist)*

Galax City Public Schools ensures that educators of ELs are provided high quality, sustainable professional development focused on meeting the EL academic and language needs. Professional development is provided by division staff as well as VDOE or other organizations to content teachers, EL teachers, and other division staff on topics such as EL instructional strategies, working with SLIFE students, SEL for EL students, appropriate accommodations for ELs, etc. *(Division EL Specialist)*

Galax City Public Schools conducts an annual evaluation of EL programs and services based on student data such as SOL scores, WIDA scores, course grades, and graduation rates, as well as staff and parent input, to determine the increasing ability of ELs to meaningfully participate in the school division's general education program. *(Division EL Specialist)*

### **Foreign Transcript Review**

When EL students enroll in GHS and bring transcripts from other countries, the student services staff will meet with the division interpreter and the EL student's parents to determine transferable credits. Galax schools also contract with Validate ME to conduct transcript reviews. Every effort will be made to ensure that enrolling students transfer as many credits as possible.

*(Division EL Specialist / Student Services staff)*

### **Ensuring Meaningful Parent Communication Regarding EL Status**

Galax City Public Schools establishes a welcoming and linguistically responsive environment throughout all schools. School signage is in English and Spanish and interpreters are available for any family or community interaction with the division. *(Division interpreter)*

Galax City Public Schools notifies EL families, in a language they can understand, of their student's EL status within the required federal timeframe of within 30 days from time of identification. *(EL Teachers)*

Galax City Public Schools ensures that the notification of EL status is sent annually to the parents of all identified EL students proficiency levels 1.0-4.3. This is completed either at Open House before school begins, or within the first two weeks of school starting. In addition to EL status, information is also provided about programs for ELs, and options for services to EL families in a language they can understand. Additionally, for ELs enrolling in high school, information is provided to their families about pathways for on-time graduation and other educational options available in the división and / or community. *(EL Teachers / Division interpreter)*

### **Removing the EL Designation**

After a student is identified as an EL, Galax City Public Schools may not remove the EL designation before the student scores proficient (overall score of 4.4 or higher) on the annual ELP Assessment (WIDA Access), even if the parents object to the EL designation. EL families retain the right to decline EL services at any time. *(EL Teachers)*

### **Opt Out**

Families who chose to opt their student out of EL services must attend an annual meeting with building administrators and EL teachers to hear information about the EL program, sign forms indicating that they understand the benefits of an English Learner program and that they understand their student will still participate in annual English language proficiency assessments and be monitored for English proficiency until meeting the exit criteria of 4.4 on the WIDA ACCESS test. The division EL Lead will enter the Code 2 for refusal of EL services in PowerSchool.

### **Erroneously Designated ELs**

An erroneously identified EL is a student who was identified as EL but should not have been because the student does not in fact meet the definition of “English Learner” in ESEA section 8101(20). The erroneous identification may have occurred as part of the initial identification process for reasons such as

- parent’s inaccurate completion of the Home Language Survey
- Administration of an EL screening assessment without providing for appropriate accommodations for a student with disabilities, or
- An inaccurate scoring on the annual ELP assessment

In instances of erroneous EL identification, Galax City Public Schools will reach out to the VDOE for further support and guidance to determine how to proceed based on individual circumstances. For example, if the division decides that appropriate accommodations were not provided to a student with a disability during the screening process to determine EL status, then the student will be retested with appropriate accommodations. If the results of the screening process show that the student is not an EL, the EL designation will be removed.

Erroneous EL identification may also occur due to parent misunderstanding during enrollment. For example, parents indicate that languages other than English are spoken at home due to occasional use of a language other than English, even though English is the dominant language at home and the student does not speak or understand any other language than English. In this case, Galax City Public Schools may remove the EL designation since the student should not have been identified as an EL.

Galax City Public Schools will report the removal of the EL designation to the VDOE office of Student Assessment. (*Division EL Specialist*)

### **Exit Procedures**

Students exit the EL status once they have achieved proficiency on the ACCESS for ELs assessment. To reach proficiency, students must meet one of the following criteria:

- 4.4 or higher on the overall composite score
- Successfully complete Level 5 of the VA ELP Checklist K (Significant Cognitive Disabilities) or VA ELP Checklist 1-12 (Hearing and/or Vision Impairment)

Exiting EL status means that students are designated as formerly EL. Former ELs do not participate in the ACCESS for ELs assessment; are not included in the division count of ELs for funding; and have reading and math SOL scores reported in the EL subgroup for 4 years after reaching proficiency.

Former ELs are monitored academically for 4 full academic years to ensure they are able to participate meaningfully in the regular education program. Monitoring occurs each academic quarter through the ELlevation platform. All content teachers of monitored ELs fill out forms about the academic progress, attendance, and instructional interventions of their ELs. The forms are reviewed by the LIEP teachers to determine if further support is needed.

### **SLIFE**

SLIFE (Students with limited or interrupted formal education) are students who

- Enter or re-enter any school in the US at or after the age of 8
- Are identified as a level 1 or 2 English Learner
- Have at least 2 years less schooling than similar age peers

SLIFE students enrolled in Galax City Public Schools are given extensive, rigorous instruction in both English language and content. Students work directly with EL teachers as well as classroom teachers to foster rapid growth to close gaps in their learning due to limited or interrupted educational experiences. After school and summer programs are offered to SLIFE students to further close achievement gaps.

### **LIEPs**

Galax City Public Schools offer 3 types of state-approved language instruction education programs.

**Newcomer programs** are available for recently arrived students with no or basic levels of English development. These programs can include SLIFE students. The goal of the Newcomer program is to teach basic English and content concepts to prepare students to participate in the regular education program. Newcomer programs are offered at GES, GMS, and GHS.

**Content classes with integrated support** are available for students to receive instruction from both content specialists and language specialists within the regular education classroom. Co-teaching and co-planning models are implemented in all schools to assist English learners to be successful in the content classrooms. Content classes with integrated support are offered at GES, GMS, and GHS.

**English for Multilingual Learners / English Language Development courses** are delivered by certified EL teachers during a dedicated class period or through pull out services. EML / ELD courses are offered at GES, GMS and GHS. EML courses in the high school are awarded elective credit.

### **Program Evaluation**

Galax City Public Schools utilizes an EL Advisory board to annually evaluate the EL program efficiency. Data points included in the evaluation are WIDA scores, SOL scores, graduation rates, rates of family engagement, participation in extracurricular activities, participation in gifted programs and accelerated courses, and other data. Members of the EL Advisory board include EL teachers, building administrators, division superintendent, and parent representatives.

### **Standards**

EL programs in Galax City Public Schools adhere to the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards, 2020 edition. A copy of the WIDA ELD standards can be found [here](#).

### **Data Collection and Record Keeping**

GCPS utilizes the ELlevation platform to keep digital records for all EL students. EL student records include recent WIDA ACCESS scores, classroom accommodations, testing accommodations, recent state assessment scores, can do's, monitoring forms, annual notice of continuation of service letters, entrance and exit letters, and other pertinent information. Data in ELlevation comes directly from PowerSchool or teacher data entry. PowerSchool will be the primary source of data for SRC reporting and other state data collection. The EL Lead is responsible for maintaining accurate records in PowerSchool for English Learner students.

### **EL Identification for Gifted Services**

The GCPS gifted plan has an equity focus, considering underrepresented populations in the screening process. A universal non-verbal screening assessment, the NNAT3, is administered to all students in grades 2 and 5. Growth shown by WIDA scores are also considered for EL students being screened for gifted services.