**ALEXANDER SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

POLICY:  ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

It is the policy of the Alexander School Department not to discriminate against limited English proficient students.  According the Equal Education Opportunities Act (1974), this district must make an effort to do whatever is educationally appropriate to address the English and educational needs of the limited English proficient student so that he/she can compete with his/her same age English background peers.  Qualifying students will be identified and placed in programs and services in accordance with statutory guidelines. The Alexander School Department will strive to provide a linguistically and culturally rich learning and teaching environment. It is the policy of the Alexander School Department to comply with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against students on the basis of all civil rights categories.

A Language Assessment Committee (LAC) will be created to coordinate and oversee the educational program of limited English proficient students enrolled in the Alexander School Department.  The LAC will be composed of the guidance counselor, building administrators, classroom teacher(s), parents when appropriate, English as a Second Language Teacher, and other ESL consultants who may be involved with the committee on an as-needed basis.  The LAC meetings will be scheduled and conducted by the Director of School Services or an Administrator of the Alexander School Department.

The LAC responsibilities will include the following:

1. The review the home language surveys to identify potential LEP students who have not already been identified through mandatory special education screening, parent/teacher referral, or LAC surveys.
2. The administration of multi-criteria evaluations to potential LEP students annually.
3. To make determination from multi-criteria evaluations about placement, programming in regards to amount of services, time of delivery of services, and types of programs for LEP students.
4. To meet quarterly to monitor student’s language and academic progress.
5. To make recommendations for placement and program type for the next school year.
6. To recommend revisions and additions to the Alexander School Department *Lau* Plan for action by its board.
7. To recommend modification of ESL support services or reclassification of a student from limited English proficiency to full English proficiency.
8. To carry out annual monitoring for three years after a LEP student’s reclassification to full English proficiency.

To aid in the identification of and classification of any student, the following information will be sought:

\_ Student’s level of functioning in:

-dominant language of both oral and written language,

-secondary language in both oral and written language,

-relevant subject matter areas in the native language and English

\_ Baseline of student’s oral language proficiency in English

\_ Identification of the student’s dominant language

\_ Both social and educational background information as appropriate

The following instruments may be used to identify students:

1.  Home language surveys

2.  A review of all relevant educational documents and student records

3.  Standardized achievement or diagnostic test data

4.  Language Assessment Battery

5.  Bilingual Syntax Measure

6.  Basic Inventory of Natural Language

7.  Idea Proficiency Test

8.  Language Assessment Scales (LAS & Pre-LAS)

9.  Maculaitis Assessment Test

10. Oral language proficiency tests

11. Teacher observations

12. Teacher-developed devices (inventories, Cloze tests…)

The Director of Special Services will be responsible for maintaining and updating LEP student

files.  Those files may include all or some of the following:

1. The results of the multi-criteria evaluation
2. The LAC’s placement recommendations
3. Samples of student’s work
4. Copies of communication between home and school
5. Documentation of student’s academic progress
6. Summary of program at the time the student exits the ESL program

Resources available to the Alexander School Department and the ESL teacher include the following:

1. ESL curriculum materials
2. The professional library available schoolwide
3. Library staff and resources
4. Computer technology
5. Curriculum materials consistent with state standards
6. Classroom material and programs consistent with state standards
7. Parent Teacher’s Association
8. Publications and resources of the state Department of Education
9. Consultation Services - from an endorsed ESL Teacher
10. Instructional materials, technical assistance, and in-service training from the state Department of Education, ESL/BE office
11. Access to research data, workshops, and listings of local interpreters - State Library Information Exchange
12. State Refugee Resettlement Program
13. U.S. Department of Education-funded resources (clearing house, regional center)
14. The University’s College of Education

The definitions of classifications of proficiency level s for language minority students include:

1.  Beginner

Through testing, this student would be characterized by:

\_ non-English proficiency level

\_ no basic interpersonal communicative skills (or minimal)

\_ no cognitive academic language proficiency skills

\_ the beginning of associating sound and meaning, the way that spoken language relates to their

      environment

\_ using non-verbal expressions rather than words to indicate comprehension

\_ relies heavily on contextual clues

\_ depends on key words, not the complete utterance, in order to comprehend the main idea

\_ has little or no literacy skills in English (for students second grade or older)

\_ has little or no receptive vocabulary

\_ attempting speech although elements may be missing and individual words may be                                       mispronounced

\_ continuing to develop comprehensive skills

\_ some simultaneous development of literacy readiness skills

\_ oral language is replete with errors

2.  Intermediate

 Through testing, this student would be characterized by:

\_ limited English proficiency

\_ attempting more elaborate speech

\_ continuing to make errors, and at a greater rate because of more speech production

\_ requiring extensive vocabulary development

\_ increasing literacy skill development in English

\_ developing basic interpersonal communicative skills

\_ low cognitive academic language proficiency

\_ understanding most of the everyday language they heard during a typical school day

\_ continuing to develop comprehensive skills, especially in order to acquire higher level vocabulary

1. Advanced

 Through testing, this student would be characterized by:

\_ having a wide range of abilities in the instructional setting both basic interpersonal                                       communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency formally and informally.

\_ having a wide range of literacy skills (for students second grade and older).

\_ requiring further facilitation of vocabulary and development of higher level comprehension.

\_ almost mainstreamed requiring less ESL support.

1. High Advanced

   The student would be totally mainstreamed, requiring little or no ESL assistance, only in specialized areas of academic study.  The LAC will monitor this student’s progress in mainstream classes for up to three years.

Time allocations for ESL services may include any of the following:

\_ appropriate time allotment daily during school hours, dependent on English proficiency levels.

\_ instruction during all or part of a language intensive class (reading, social studies, language arts)                 in collaboration with the regular content classroom teacher.

\_ appropriate time allotment daily after school hours if requested by the student or parent/guardian.

A document of consent signed by the parent/guardian for ESL services after school will be in the

student’s file and approval will be requested on an annual basis.  After-school support is to supplement,

not supplant the language support program of the regular daytime schedule.

Program Types

There are many types of structured language support programs the Alexander School Department believes can be beneficial to language minority-limited English proficient children.  This district’s ability to provide some of these programs depends on both - availability of native-language-speaking personnel and availability of native language instructional materials for sheltered content.  The keys to an effective and appropriate program choice will include careful consideration of the child’s needs, full research into the resources available (personnel, materials), and full understanding of the possible program configurations.

Some of the likely structured language support programs to be used in this district will include:

English as a Second Language:  A structured language learning program or curriculum designed to teach English to students whose native language is not English.  In low-incidence situations, this instruction may occur through “pull-out” from regular English literacy instruction, and students are supported in mainstream subject areas for most of the school day.  Services are provided by or supervised by a state certified teacher endorsed in ESL.

Sheltered English:  An approach that utilizes the simplification of the English language to teach ESL and subject area content simultaneously (sometimes called “content ESL”).  Although the actual content is the same as that taught to non-LEP students, key concepts and vocabulary are targeted to fit the ESL student’s English language proficiency level.

Structured immersion:  Instruction for LEP student is conducted in English in a setting wherein the teacher understands the student’s non-English home language.  The student uses the non-English native language with the teacher who usually responds in English.

A structured language support program encompassing the above models will be provided in a time allocation that will most benefit the ESL learner.  The consideration of many factors must take place when a program is being set up. However, the ultimate goal is to provide effective and appropriate services to the student so they may benefit fully from and succeed in an education conducted in English.

The determination of a time allotment for structured language support program will be determined by the Language Assessment Committee with assessment information in hand.  The long-term effects of the programmatic decisions must take precedence over the short-term effects (i.e., cost of the services); if a shorter time allotment or time span of services is opted for, it may result in greater difficulties for the child in the mainstream classroom and in his/her accomplishment of academic success.  The investment in a quality structured language support program will be obvious in the broad range of abilities than an English as a second language student will acquire.

Grade-level Placement

Before making a permanent grade-level placement decision for a language minority student, the LAC will need to have pertinent background information about the child.  That information would include, as a minimum:

- the child’s chronological age

- the child’s educational background

- the child’s English language proficiency level

- the child’s academic performance

With this information, which should have been collected as expeditiously as possible, the LAC will decide at what grade level the student should be placed.  Under no circumstances will a student be placed in a grade level that is more than one year below his/her chronological age. Although it may seem logical to place a language minority child at a grade level that matches the kind of English skills he/she needs to acquire, it would be a great disservice to the child both socially and cognitively to do so.  The school committee is obligated to provide a structured language support program that meets the ESL as well as content area needs of the student.

If the student is at the low end of the English language proficiency spectrum, the necessary ESL services will probably focus on survival skills and basic communication regardless of the child’s grade level.  Even though the focus of the program at that time is on Basic Interpersonal Cognitive Skills, the school has the obligation to assist that child in learning the content area information that has been taught in earlier grades.

Regarding the issue of grade-level retention, on the whole, retention is only advisable when a language minority student is lagging behind peers socially and emotionally (and even that may not be appropriate).  It stands to reason that a language minority - LEP child will not be on grade level academically until he/she has had the opportunity to acquire the English skills and content necessary for success. It is not appropriate to retain a LEP child solely for the reason of limited English proficiency because the child has unique needs and must be given ample time from grade level to grade level to acquire English proficiency.  The school committee accepts the research findings that the acquisition of a second language for cognitive/academic proficiency can take from five to seven years under optimal circumstances.

The most advantageous way to avoid grade-level retention is to make accommodations for the LEP child in the mainstream classroom and to maintain a close collaborative relationship between the mainstream and ESL programs.  If a LEP child is referred for retention, the LAC should be included in that process to ensure that language proficiency is not the sole reason for the referral.

Teacher Skills

Just as with any other teaching field, ESL teachers require special training to provide the best services for our LEP students.  Our state has an ESL endorsement for teachers. It requires 15 semester hours of course work in five cluster areas:

1. ESL methods
2. ESL curriculum
3. ESL assessment
4. Language acquisition
5. Culture

Our structured language support services can be provided in two personnel staffing configurations:

1.  An ESL-endorsed teacher provides direct ESL instruction

2.  A paraprofessional or non-ESL endorsed teacher provides direct ESL instruction and is

   supervised and guided by an ESL-endorsed teacher

The presence of an ESL-endorsed professional is imperative for an effective and appropriate program to be implemented.  In opting for the recommended configuration, one must realize that if a paraprofessional or non-ESL endorsed teacher is engaged to provide direct services, that person must still participate in training in ESL, though it might be less formal.

The ideal qualifications for ESL tutors (education technicians) who do not possess an endorsement would be:

1.  Experience in second language setting;

2.  Experience in a non-English speaking culture;

3.  Experience working effectively with children in an instructions setting;

4.  Possession of a knowledge of instructional methods for communication skills and content

    areas; and,

5.  Possession of a working knowledge of ESL, second language acquisition, and LEP students.

Exit and Reclassification Criteria

If a structured language support program is effective and appropriate and the ESL student is adequately receptive, there will come a time, when the student is ready to be:  (a) reclassified at a higher level of proficiency, or (b) exited from the structured language support program entirely.  Any member of the Language Assessment Committee, the parents, or the child him/herself may recommend reclassification or exit.

Once the recommendation has been made for reclassification or exit, an evaluation process and a review of records will be undertaken.  The evaluation criteria and review of records are similar to those implemented in the entry criteria with one very crucial exception, that of the comparability of the student to his/her mainstream peers and the likelihood/predictability of academic success in the totally-mainstreamed instructional setting.  This range of criteria will be identifiable in: the student’s scores on a standardized achievement test normed on fluent English proficient children; a portfolio of the student’s literacy work; observations in both formal and informal settings; teacher observations; and interviews with the child and parent(s)/guardian(s).  The compilation of this information would necessarily bear out the viability of a recommendation for reclassification or exit.

The criteria would include a cut-off score for the standardized achievement test to determine the child’s ability to compete with monolingual English-speaking peers.  If the child has difficulty taking standardized achievement tests, the LAC may set up an alternative test-taking situation.

When the student is found to be eligible for reclassification or exit, the LAC will monitor the child’s academic performance and psycho-social well-being after the placement is made.  In the case of a student who is reclassified, the decreased ESL instructional time should be monitored in terms of: continued academic success; adjustment to a longer time period in the mainstream classroom; and, instructional needs being met in the structured language support program.  In the case of exit from the program, the full mainstreaming should be monitored for: academic success; adjustment to the full-time mainstream classroom; and, any gaps in language skills that may appear after the mainstreaming.

After a student has been exited from a structured language support program, that child’s language performance and growth must be monitored for three years (if the child is still in school).  This could be done in the regularly scheduled LAC meetings. At any time, during those three years, if the student experiences a pattern of difficulty with a language or content skills, the LAC can re-enter the child into an appropriately structured language support program.

In the monitoring process, the LAC members would be considering criteria similar to those considered in the exit criteria.

Program Evaluation

In order to ensure the most effective and appropriate structured language support programming for limited English proficient children, a model for overall program evaluation must be developed and utilized.  An annual program evaluation will illustrate: attainment of program outcomes; attainment of learner outcomes; school climate and support for the program and children; the quality of instructional materials, the maintenance of information about students; the effectiveness of staff development activities; the amount and effectiveness of mainstream-ESL collaboration; the effectiveness of school and program communication with parents; and, the implementation of the *Lau* Plan itself.

The program accountability and demonstration of outcomes will enhance the program’s legitimacy in the school and will consummate the work and methods of the program toward the ultimate goal of continually improving instruction to meet learner instructional needs.

Caveats:

The following three circumstances could present themselves.  The policy of the school committee is duly noted for each situation.

1. Although language minority-limited English proficient students may be eligible for IASA Title One services under the same criteria as other children, any may receive those services.  Title One services cannot supplant structured language support services, such as ESL.
2. Limited English proficiency is not a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1994 and state special education regulations.  If a language minority child is referred for a special education evaluation, a culturally and linguistically non-biased evaluation must comply with state and federal regulations.  An assessment of the child’s native language skills as soon after school enrollment as possible is advisable so that any significant problems can be identified and noted for future references.
3. In the event that a parent/guardian refuses ESL services for their child, a signed letter of refusal will be placed in the student’s file.  These ESL services will be offered yearly and a letter of refusal must be signed annually. The parent may withdraw refusal of services at any time.

Alexander School Department

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