



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

English Learners and ELPACs

INFORMING, EDUCATING, EMPOWERING FAMILIES

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Who are English Learners?

English Learners (ELs) are students whose first language is not English and who are enrolled in an English Learner Education program.



- 118 languages are represented in MA public schools
- English Learners make up 11% of students in MA public schools
- Most common languages represented are Spanish (54.7%) and Portuguese (15%)
- Some of these students may have experienced limited or interrupted formal education

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Support for English Learner Families

The Language Opportunity for Our Kids (LOOK) Act requires a School District or Charter School to form an ELPAC if the school,



- Has 100 or more English learners OR in which English Learners are at least 5% of the student body (whichever is less)
- Is designated as underperforming or chronically underperforming.

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Parent Rights under the LOOK Act

- Join ELPAC groups and advise the district on English Learner Education Program Choices
- Choose the program that is right for their child (if the district offers multiple programs)
- Request a transfer to another English Learner Education Program available in the District
- Submit a request (from the parents or guardians of no fewer than 20 English learners) to implement a specific English Learner Education Program

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What is an ELPAC?

ELPACs are English Learner (EL) Parent Advisory Councils.

Membership is voluntary and open to all parents and legal guardians of students who are or have been identified as English learners.

ELPACs have an advisory role and should meet regularly with school leaders to participate in the planning and development of programs to improve educational opportunities for English learners.

ELPAC Online Training Modules can be found at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/families/elpac/>

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Why are ELPACs Important

- Foster partnership between EL parents, the district, and the community
- Provide opportunities for parents to have a voice in their child's education
- Create a culturally appropriate and accessible space where parents can engage with other parents with similar experiences
- Improve educational outcomes for students
- Families and students feel like valued members of the community
- Contributes to breaking down cultural and linguistic barriers to family engagement

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Issues an ELPAC can Address

MCAS/ACCESS

EL students in grades 3-8 & 10 must participate in all MCAS testing scheduled for their grades, except for first-year students and EL students are required to participate in the ACCESS for ELLs tests, regardless of the English language services they receive

EL Students and Special Education

Patterns of disproportionate representation of EL students in special education may exist with overrepresentation in districts with smaller EL populations and underrepresentation in districts with larger EL populations.

Discipline/Suspension

- The risk of suspension for EL students is 20% higher than non-EL student.
- 50% of students who were involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American.

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Does my District have an ELPAC?

School district and schools required to establish an ELPAC must annually notify parents of ELs in writing of the opportunity to participate in the ELPAC.

Parents/Families can also:

- Ask your child's educator
- Check your school district website, search for "ELPAC"
- Call your school district's central office and ask
- Ask at a general parent group meeting at your local school

Membership in an ELPAC is voluntary and open to all parents of students identified (or previously identified) as ELs.

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Resources

[Disparities Within School Discipline: An Examination of Race, English Language Learner Status, & Suspension](#)

[English Learners with Disabilities, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)

[Response to Intervention and the Disproportionate Representation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Special Education, RTI Action Network](#)

[Read the DESE Blueprint for English Learner Success](#)

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