

Is Your Child an English Learner? Know Their Rights. Advocate With Confidence.

At Revolución Educativa, we believe every child deserves access to an excellent education - no matter the language they speak at home. English Learners (ELs) are protected under federal law, and as a parent or guardian, you play a powerful role in ensuring your child receives the support they need to thrive.

Understanding English Learner (EL) Classification

If your child speaks a language other than English at home, they may be identified as an English Learner - even if they already speak English fluently. Over 60% of English Learners in the U.S. were born here, and research shows that bilingualism does not slow down English learning. In fact, being biliterate is a strength.

Every EL student is on a unique path. Schools must tailor support based on the student's language development stage:

- **Emerging:** Build confidence through encouragement and connection - don't correct mistakes. Foster peer relationships.
- **Developing:** Support risk-taking with language. Use games, read together, watch shows with English subtitles, and visit the library.
- **Conversational Fluency:** Practice with real-world texts like magazines and newspapers. Encourage community engagement and personal writing.
- **Academic Fluency:** Keep reading! Help your child find their voice - blending English and Spanish can be a powerful tool.

Key Terms to Know

Understanding these terms can help you navigate conversations with your child's school:

- **Classification:** When a student is identified as an English Learner based on a home language survey and language assessment. This means they are eligible for support.
- **Qualification:** A student qualifies for EL services if their assessment shows they need help developing English proficiency. This gives them access to language instruction and support programs.

- **Exiting:** When a student demonstrates full English proficiency and no longer needs EL services. Schools must continue monitoring exited students for at least two years to ensure continued success.

What Schools Are Required to Do

Your child has the right to:

- High-quality English language development services
- Instruction from certified and trained educators
- Equal access to all academic and extracurricular programs
- Clear communication from the school in a language you understand

Schools must:

- Use valid assessments to determine EL eligibility
- Provide services for a reasonable amount of time
- Monitor EL progress and compare outcomes with non-EL peers
- Continue to monitor academic success even after a student exits EL services

Schools **cannot**:

- Prohibit students from using their native language
- Discourage families from enrolling in EL programs
- Isolate or segregate students based on EL status or national origin
- Withhold access to classes, electives, sports, or activities

How to Advocate for Your Child

You don't need a degree to advocate - you need information, persistence, and the courage to speak up. As a parent or caregiver, your voice matters. You know your child best, and you have the right to be heard. Here's how to take action:

1. Identify the Issue

Start by clearly naming what's wrong and what your child needs. This will help you stay focused and confident when speaking to school staff.

- Write down your concerns. What do you notice your child is struggling with?
- What support is missing - language help, classroom modifications, communication in your home language?
- Be specific: Include examples from schoolwork, homework, or conversations with your child.

This documentation will help you stay organized and strengthen your case.

2. Start at the School Level

Try to resolve the issue directly with staff at your child's school. In many cases, this is where change happens fastest.

- Talk with your child's classroom teacher, EL teacher, or school counselor. Share what you've observed at home.
- If your child is not receiving services but you believe they need them, ask to speak to the school registrar or counselor and formally request an evaluation.
- **Put your request in writing via email.** Schools are legally required to respond to evaluation requests in a timely manner.

Ask questions like:

- What EL services are currently offered at this school?
- How is my child's language progress measured?
- How often are EL students reassessed?
- How can I be involved in decisions about my child's services?
- What assessments have been done to determine if learning struggles are related to my child being multilingual, or a potential learning disability?

3. Elevate the Concern

If the issue isn't resolved or your concerns are dismissed, escalate the matter respectfully and firmly.

- Ask to speak to the school principal or the district's ELL Coordinator or Director.
- Describe the situation, what steps you've already taken, and what outcome you're seeking.
- **Document every conversation**- who you spoke to, when, and what was said. Keep emails and take notes during meetings. Send followup emails after meetings to provide a summary of next steps and information shared by the school, this helps establish a shared understanding of how the issue will be resolved.
- If the school does not provide translation or interpretation services during meetings or communications, that is a violation of your rights. You can request written and verbal communication in your preferred language.

4. File a Complaint if Needed

When your child's rights are not respected, you have the legal right to take further action.

- If your student is denied EL services, removed from programs prematurely, or excluded from opportunities their peers have access to, that may be a violation of civil rights.
- You can file a complaint with:
 - Your **district's central office** or **ELL Director**
 - Your **state's Department of Education**
 - The **U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR)**

Include clear documentation of the issue and your previous efforts to resolve it.

Multilingualism is a Strength - Not a Barrier

Research consistently shows that once multilingual students complete English Learner programs, they often outperform their monolingual peers on academic assessments. But to reach that point, they need appropriate, high-quality support. Too often, learning disabilities like dyslexia and ADHD go undiagnosed in multilingual children, as language

differences are mistaken for delays. Most students who enter school as emerging bilinguals can successfully exit EL programs within five years - many do so even sooner. If your child has been classified as an English Learner for longer than five years, it is a sign that they are either not receiving the right instruction or may require additional evaluations and support. Every child deserves instruction that affirms their strengths and meets their needs. Don't wait to ask questions. Your advocacy can change the course of your child's education.

Learn more about your rights or connect with our team for additional support!