

Language Access Plan

Ensuring Effective Communication with Multilingual Students and Families

Section 1: Policy Directives

This section sets forth the laws, standards, and operating principles that will govern the implementation of Rochester Beacon Academy's language access plan.

Policy Foundation

Federal

- Title VI, enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.
- The Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA) requires states and school districts to provide equal educational opportunity to students learning English by taking appropriate actions to overcome language barriers.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) upholds language access rights for bilingual families by requiring that students be tested in their home language and Individual Educational Plans (IEP) be written in the appropriate home language. IEP meetings must be conducted in the family's home language using a highly trained and qualified interpreter.

State

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32 states:

- Subd. 1. Language access plan required. Starting in the 2025–2026 school year, during a regularly scheduled public board hearing, a school board must adopt a language access plan that specifies the district's process and procedures to render effective language assistance to students and adults who communicate in a language other than English. The language access plan must be available to the public and included in the school's handbook.
- Subd. 2. Plan requirements. The language access plan must include how the district and its schools will use trained or certified spoken language interpreters for communication related to academic outcomes, progress, determinations, and placement of students in specialized programs and services; and how families and communities will be notified of their rights under this plan.
- Subd. 3. Regular review. The board must review the plan every two years and update the plan as appropriate.
- Minnesota Learning for English Academic Proficiency (LEAPS) Act of 2014, Chapter 272, H.F. No. 2397, Article 1. The law has three principal goals for all English Learner (EL) students: 1) academic English proficiency; 2) grade-level content knowledge; and 3) multilingual skills development.

Definitions

American Sign Language (ASL) – A visually perceived language based on a naturally evolved system of articulated hand gestures and their placement relative to the body, along with non-manual markers such as facial expressions, head movements, shoulder raises, mouth morphemes, and movements of the body.

Relay – Telephone accessibility services to people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.

Screen Reader – Software programs that allow blind or visually impaired users to read the text that is displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display.

Interpretation – The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language). The interpreter must retain the same meaning as the original message without omitting information, summarizing, or otherwise altering the message and without adding the interpreter's own thoughts or opinions.

Interpreter – A person who provides interpreting services.

Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment – Equipment that allows a group of people to listen through headsets to information interpreted into their primary language. This method is most appropriate for large group settings and meetings where multiple languages are being interpreted simultaneously.

Language Assistance Services – Oral, expressive, written, and technological supportive services that help students and families communicate effectively with school staff. These services ensure students and families can participate fully in school services, activities, and programs.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) – Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English, including writing, reading, speaking, and listening comprehension. Federal law uses this term to refer to the intended beneficiaries of language access services.

Emergent Multilingual Speakers – Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English but are in the process of developing their English language proficiency. Language access industry leaders and advocates prefer the use of this term when referring to the intended beneficiaries of language access services.

English Learner (EL) – A status assigned to students whose primary language is not English, who lack the necessary skills to understand, speak, read, and write in English and are receiving English language development instruction in a public school or charter setting.

Home Language – The language that is most commonly used in the home by members of a family, or the language that parents use when speaking with their children.

Primary Language – An individual's native tongue or the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.

Sight Translation – The oral interpretation of a written document. This occurs when an interpreter reads a document and then provides a complete oral interpretation of the information that it contains.

Remote Interpreting – Interpreting that is provided via telephone or video call.

Translator – A person who provides translation services.

Translation – The restating of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).

Vital Document – Materials deemed vital to ensuring access to educational services, programs, and activities, or that contain information required by law to be translated or provided in audio format.

Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

At Rochester Beacon Academy, we are committed to delivering accurate and up-to-date information, fostering respectful communication, and ensuring all families receive the support they need. We strive to actively engage parents and guardians in their child's education by making reasonable efforts to connect with them and collaborate as partners in learning.

Core Principles for Language Access:

Equity & Inclusion

Every family—no matter their primary language—deserves transparent, accurate, and respectful communication about their child's education.

Confidentiality

All staff and interpreters involved in translation or interpretation must uphold strict confidentiality in every interaction.

Accuracy & Professionalism

Translations and interpretations must be linguistically precise, culturally sensitive, and free from bias.

Respectful Engagement

Staff and interpreters will interact with students and families with dignity, ensuring language differences do not limit access to school programs or decision-making.

Ongoing Growth

We commit to providing training and professional development for staff to enhance cultural competence and strengthen communication with multilingual families.

In alignment with the Minnesota Department of Education's requirements:

- Schools are obligated to share information with parents who have limited English proficiency in a language they understand.
- Translation and interpretation services must be provided by qualified and competent individuals. Schools may not rely on students, siblings, friends, or untrained staff to fulfill these roles.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) provides guidance on the Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Language that can be viewed on the English Learner Disability Resources webpage. This guide is only available in English because it was intended for language access practitioners.

By embedding these principles into our Language Access Plan, Rochester Beacon Academy guarantees that our communication with families upholds integrity, professionalism, and respect—ensuring that language is never a barrier to equitable education.

Section 2: The Plan

Overview

Rochester Beacon Academy's Language Access Plan serves as a strategic framework to ensure compliance with state and federal language access requirements. It outlines how the academy will expand its capacity to meet the language service and resource needs identified in its self-assessment.

This plan also acts as a practical guide for staff, helping them establish deadlines, prioritize tasks, and assign responsibilities for developing policies and procedures. It covers key areas such as hiring and contracting language assistance services, ensuring their quality, providing clear notice of available services, training staff, and conducting continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Language Access Plan

Description of Services

Rochester Beacon Academy is dedicated to ensuring that all families, regardless of language proficiency, have full and equitable access to school programs, services, and communications. To achieve this, the academy offers comprehensive language assistance in both oral and written formats, tailored to the needs of our diverse community.

Our team will provide qualified interpreters for enrollment assistance, IEP/504 meetings, parent–teacher conferences, disciplinary proceedings, school events, and urgent or unexpected needs. For written communications, we ensure critical documents—such as enrollment forms, report cards, IEP/504 plans, disciplinary notices, health and safety alerts, and other essential communications—are accurately translated into the family's preferred language, upon request.

All language services are handled by trained professionals and supported by clear staff procedures. To maintain the highest standards, these services are reviewed annually to ensure ongoing quality, accessibility, and effectiveness.

Implementation

Rochester Beacon Academy's leadership and staff play a key role in ensuring seamless access to language services for all families. The District Literacy Lead serves as the main point of contact for families seeking language support, guiding them to the right resources and collaborating with the academic team to address any translation needs for student materials.

Additionally, the Executive Director and Literacy Lead work together to develop, refine, and update the academy's Language Access Plan as needed. They partner with staff across the building to establish clear, practical procedures for putting the plan into action, ensuring it remains effective and aligned with the needs of our community.

Identification and Assessment of Language Assistance Needs

Rochester Beacon Academy will determine parent/guardian language needs through the following procedures:

1. Enrollment Survey: Upon registration, parents/guardians will identify their preferred language and method of communication.
- Enrollment staff are trained in procedures for accessing qualified interpreters to help parents complete enrollment paperwork if needed.
2. Student Information System: The preferred language and method of communication of parents/guardians is available to all staff in JMC, the school's Student Information System.
3. Staff Communication: Staff are encouraged to inquire about communication preferences during “Back to School” open house and in their own communication with families.

Timeline

Rochester Beacon Academy’s Language Access Plan is a living document that evolves with the needs of our school community. To ensure it remains effective, we review it annually, with updates made at the start of the school year and again at the mid-year mark, based on the latest data and feedback.

This plan is designed to be transparent and accessible, and you can find it on our school website at www.rochesterbeaconacademy.org.

Notice of Services

1. Parent & Student Handbook: The Language Access Plan, or a summary of it, will be included in the annual Student & Family Handbook in compliance with Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32.
2. Parent Meetings and Events: At parent–teacher conferences and open houses, families will be informed of the availability of interpretation and translation services and how to request them.
3. School website: The Language Access Plan will be available on the Rochester Beacon Academy school website. www.rochesterbeaconacademy.org.

Staff Responsibilities

At Rochester Beacon Academy, our teachers and staff are prepared to connect families with the language services they need. When a family requests assistance, our team knows how to direct them to the right contact for effective support.

Training to prepare staff to support multilingual families includes:

- In-person workshops
- Step-by-step guides
- New staff onboarding

Training covers:

- How to identify, inform, and correspond with individuals with language assistance needs.
- Understanding language rights and state/federal regulations.
- How to use interpretation tools and processes effectively.
    - ➢ How to procure telephone or video interpretation services.

- ➢ How to procure in-person interpreter services.
- ➢ How to interpret written materials and emails.

Plan Maintenance

At Rochester Beacon Academy, we're committed to keeping our Language Access Plan meaningful and effective. That's why we review and update it every year, using feedback, policy, and the needs of our students and families to guide our decisions. This way, we can always stay responsive and ensure our support grows alongside our community.

Community Engagement and Partnership

Rochester Beacon Academy is committed to removing language barriers and fostering an inclusive environment for all students and families. We collaborate with local community groups, government agencies, and religious organizations to connect emergent multilingual families with our language assistance services. Through multilingual outreach and accessible communication, we ensure families are informed about and can fully utilize these resources.

To further support our school community, we also partner with organizations that provide language support and additional services, including:

- For direct, localized language assistance, organizations in this sector frequently utilize regional providers like the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA) in Rochester, which supplies certified medical and social service interpreters.
- Opportunity Services: Support for adults with disabilities through employment services, day programs, and community integration.
- Workforce Development (RAEDI): Initiatives to strengthen the local economy, retain jobs, and attract talent, including partnerships with healthcare, education, and the Destination Medical Center (DMC) project.

Emergency Communication Protocol

At Rochester Beacon Academy, we make sure all families—including those with limited English proficiency—receive timely, accurate, and easy-to-understand information. RBA communicates through the families preferred language using the school's student information system, JMC. This includes sharing important updates about emergencies like severe weather, safety alerts, transportation changes, public health notices, or other urgent situations—so every family stays informed and prepared.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translation Services

AI translation tools should be limited to brief, non-vital translations only. These tools are suitable for:

- Quick understanding of simple sentences or short paragraphs.
- Informal content, such as newsletters or general information.

- Non-critical communications where perfect accuracy is not essential.
- Getting the general meaning of basic text.

Section 3: Procedures

Overview

This section sets forth guidelines and steps for staff to coordinate, gather data, and deliver uniform services to students, families, and community members.

Home Language Identification at Enrollment

At Rochester Beacon Academy, we are committed to identifying and supporting the language needs of our students and families during the enrollment process, in accordance with Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) guidelines.

How We Identify Language Needs:

Enrollment Paperwork:

1. Parents/guardians complete the enrollment application, found on the school website, rochesterbeaconacademy.org.
2. Enrollment Coordinator will reach out to families and determine if they require interpreter services, and provide families with the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS). Parents or guardians complete the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS) for each student. This survey helps us:

- Determine a student's primary language.
- Identify if a student may need additional support as a Multilingual Learner (ML).
- Assess the communication and language needs of families to ensure they receive the support they require.

Student Information System (JMC):

The district's student information system records language preferences and interpreter needs, following Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) guidelines.

- A "Parent/Guardian Requires Interpreter" flag is added to the student's record in the system.
- Staff can easily see this flag to ensure proper communication and support.
- The Enrollment Coordinator documents and uploads language assistance needs, including interpreter requests.
- Student language data from the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS) is securely stored and reviewed to meet state and federal requirements.

Language Interpretation Services

Professional Interpreter Services

Rochester Beacon Academy is committed to removing language barriers and fostering an inclusive environment for all students and families. We collaborate with the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA) to

provide comprehensive interpreter services, including written translation, video interpretation, and in-person support.

How to Request Interpreter Services

- In-Person, Video-Remote, and Phone Interpretation: Staff and families contact us via phone or email, using the information provided below in the Contact Information section. Teachers and staff should not contact vendors directly.

- Written Translation: Essential documents like enrollment forms, report cards, health and safety alerts, IEPs, and discipline notices—along with newsletters and flyers—must be translated. Contact us via phone or email, using the information provided below in the Contact Information section, to arrange official translations when needed.

  Other Tools and Resources for Written Translation:

  Google Translation Services: Google translation services are used in some instances to help provide basic information to families.

  Diffit--Diffit is an AI-driven online platform designed to assist teachers in creating customized instructional materials. It generates texts, vocabulary aids, and comprehension questions tailored to students' reading abilities and language skills, ensuring alignment with academic content. Educators can adapt these resources to support English Learners and other students who need language accommodations. The tool promotes equitable access to grade-level content and learning opportunities for all students. Diffit is accessible to teachers at Rochester Beacon Academy, where it is procured and maintained by the academy's administrators.

When to Use Interpreter Services

- Parent–teacher conferences
- Enrollment and placement meetings
- IEP/IFSP and Section 504 meetings
- Behavioral/disciplinary conversations
- Health, safety, or academic-related meetings
- Employee Services meetings and district events

Contact Information

For support, questions, or to provide feedback, contact:
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