

Frequently Asked Questions about the Guidelines for the Identification of English Learners 2017-2018

See the [Guidelines for the Identification of English Learners](#) for the 2017-2018 school year. The Lau Resource Center welcomes feedback about the guidelines by email to lau@education.ohio.gov.

1. When must districts begin using the Ohio home language usage survey?

The 2017-2018 school year is a year of transition. Districts must follow the guidelines to the extent feasible as they prepare for the statewide standardization of English learner identification required under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Districts should take steps during the 2017-2018 school year to be ready for full implementation of [Ohio's ESSA plan](#), pending approval from the U.S. Department of Education.

2. What signals the administration of the English language proficiency screener (step two of the English learner identification process)?

Districts administer the English language proficiency screener when one or more responses on the survey show the student has experience in a language other than English. The English language proficiency screener continues the identification process by determining whether lack of proficiency in English is a barrier for a student. The Ohio Department of Education will share more information about the statewide English language proficiency screener throughout the 2017-2018 school year.

3. Should a district include all 12 items on the home language usage survey?

Yes. To better understand students' language environments and use, districts should include all the questions. Multiple questions about a student's language background help determine whether he or she should be assessed using the English language proficiency screener. To ensure standardized English learner identification across the state, districts should include all 12 items in the survey (10 items about the student's language background and two items about the parents' communication preferences).

4. Can a district add questions to the home language usage survey?

Yes. Districts can add questions to the survey but should do so with caution. It is important to avoid creating a survey that is too long or includes questions that could intimidate parents and guardians. Remember, the purpose of the home language usage survey is to identify students and parents who might be well served by language assistance services.

5. Must districts and schools give the home language usage survey to *all* new students?

Yes. Districts or schools must complete home language usage surveys for all new students at the time of their initial school enrollment. Using the survey to assess all students' language backgrounds is not a new requirement. The survey is required for all new students because the survey identifies parents' communications preferences, as well as students' language backgrounds.

6. What should a district do when a student transfers without records of previous English learner identification?

Districts keep results of the identification process (both the home language usage survey and the English language proficiency screener) in students' cumulative files and share them appropriately when students transfer to other schools or districts. The home language usage survey should be administered only once in a student's school career if districts are maintaining and transferring files correctly. In the absence of student records, districts and schools should complete the identification process again, consulting with the parent or guardian.

7. Who can administer the home language usage survey?

To ensure the validity of the identification process, only district or school staff members who are trained in the survey's purpose and procedures should administer the home language usage survey. Schools and districts should make sure those who administer the home language usage survey are clear about its purpose as part of establishing a welcoming and culturally and linguistically responsive environment. Districts should retrain staff regularly to ensure they understand the survey's purpose and process. A trained school district employee, preferably with a current state TESOL license or endorsement, should validate all surveys.

8. How should districts administer the home language usage survey?

A district or school may give the home language usage survey online or on paper. As in previous years, schools and districts must ensure that parents understand and can respond to the questions. Personnel overseeing the district's home language usage survey process should ensure that trained school staff are available to help parents if they are confused or uncertain when completing the survey. For example, the school might administer an online survey on a device located in the school office, where trained staff can provide help if needed. Whether a district or school administers a home language usage survey online or on paper, staff should clearly communicate the survey's purpose and usage to parents or guardians and to school personnel administering and managing English learner identification.

9. Will translations of the home language usage survey be available?

After approval of Ohio's ESSA plan, all districts and schools will use Ohio's home language usage survey. The state will make the home language usage survey available in Ohio's most common home languages. To ensure meaningful communication during the registration process, schools should provide translation, interpretation and English language supports, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. During the transition year, districts and schools may use existing translations of their home language usage surveys.

10. Will the Ohio Department of Education provide training on the home language usage survey?

Throughout the 2017-2018 school year, the Department will determine the need for trainings and additional guidance on identification process topics. Please send feedback, comments and recommendations for trainings to the Lau Resource Center at lau@education.ohio.gov.

11. How can a district ensure it is administering the home language usage survey correctly?

Adequate training and the selection of appropriate staff are key to ensuring the validity of the home language usage survey and the overall success of the identification. All staff members who participate in the survey process should receive training. Districts and schools can develop a checklist as a self-assessment to help make sure they are giving the survey correctly.

12. What information from the identification process should districts and schools give to the Ohio Department of Education?

[Educational Management Information System](#) (EMIS) coordinators should submit information from the home language usage survey on the appropriate EMIS records (for example, student home language) for students identified as English learners. As a reminder, districts should report the native language for *all* students, while reporting the student home language only for students identified as English learners. Schools also should report the results of the English learner identification in EMIS to indicate whether the student is an English learner. Please talk to your EMIS coordinator for more information. The Department may ask districts and community schools participating in Ohio's Title III grant program to submit evidence of their compliance with Ohio's standardized English learner identification and reclassification procedures during self-surveys and onsite reviews of the Continuous Comprehensive Improvement Plan (CCIP).