

Summary of
Settlement Agreement
between
The United States of America
and
Aiken County Public School District



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

Overview

On September 25th, 2024, the United States and the Aiken County Public School District entered into a Settlement Agreement to resolve an investigation into the District's program for English Learner students. The United States Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division conducted its investigation under the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. The District cooperated fully with the Department's investigation and, after receiving the results, committed to improving its services for English Learners.

This document summarizes the Settlement Agreement. You can read the entire Agreement on the Department of Justice's [website](#).

This summary is intended to increase awareness of the Settlement Agreement and share with the Aiken County community the steps the District is taking to better serve its English Learners and their families. The summary is designed for those who do not have a legal background.



English Language Instruction & Making Content Accessible to English Learners (“ELs”)



Beginning with the 2025-26 school year:

- Qualified, trained teachers will provide all English Learners with at least 45 minutes of English language instruction daily.
- English Learners who need more help will receive at least 90 minutes of English language instruction daily.

Teachers will help English Learners continue to learn in their math, science, social studies, and English/Language Arts classes, even while the student is learning English.

Teachers will be trained on how to use specific instructional strategies to help English Learners in their classes. These strategies include:

- Modifying their word choice or pace of speaking
- Providing additional materials to aid in school and home learning
- Using bilingual glossaries and dictionaries
- Changing how they assess whether a student understood the material



Special Populations

The District will develop plans to meet the specific needs of vulnerable EL populations.

Newcomers

- Newcomers means students born outside the United States who have arrived in the United States within the past two years. These students could have limited, interrupted, or no formal education in their native countries.
- The District will develop procedures to identify and monitor newcomer students, evaluate their needs, and provide language and academic supports.

Long-term ELs

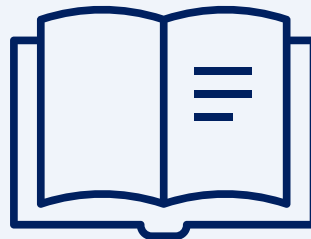
- Long-term ELs are students enrolled in the District's EL program for 5+ years.
- The District will implement strategies in core content classes to support language development and set specific language goals to accelerate literacy.



EL Students with Disabilities

English Learners with a disability will receive both Special Education and English language services.

- Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams will consider the language needs of EL students with disabilities and how those needs relate to their IEP.
- The District will train its special education, Core Content, and ESOL teachers on how to provide services to EL students with disabilities.





New Positions

ESOL Director - The District will appoint a director to lead the EL program

ESOL Coaches - The District will create an ESOL Coach position. ESOL Coaches will be assigned to specific schools to:

- Make sure that EL students in their schools receive appropriate English language instruction and support
- Create trainings for teachers of EL students
- Provide feedback on the English language instruction curriculum
- Provide coaching to core content teachers

ESOL Advisory Board - The District will form a group of parents, teachers, and other community members to advise the District on how to meet the needs of EL students. The ESOL Advisory Board will:

- Gather information from ELs and their parents about their experiences through surveys or focus groups
- Review data on EL academic outcomes
- Meet regularly with the District to discuss ideas and concerns

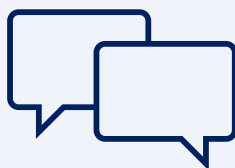




Parent Communications

The District will provide language assistance to parents who are not fluent in English so that they know about their child's educational opportunities. This includes:

- Asking parents to identify their preferred language and providing important information from schools and the central office in the languages spoken by most parents.
- Providing parents with an interpreter or translations upon request and posting clearly, in multiple languages, how parents can get language assistance.
- Providing information about the EL program to all parents, in a language the parent understands, before their child's initial EL program placement
- Providing parents with a written copy of their EL student's draft IEP/504 Plan in a language the parent can understand at IEP/504 Plan meetings, along with a qualified interpreter if needed.





Program Monitoring and Evaluation

The District will ensure that schools are properly serving English Learners and will evaluate the effectiveness of the English Learner program. This includes:

- Using data to understand whether the program helps students learn English and provides equal access to the District's educational opportunities.
- Surveying parents each year in a language they understand to obtain feedback on the English Learner program.
- Surveying teachers about instruction and services for English Learners and ways to improve them.





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Contact Information

Aiken County Public School District

If you have concerns about discrimination in any Aiken County Public school, please reach out to Elisabeth Hardy, EdD, Director of Multilingual Learners

Contact Information:

Email: ehardy@acpsd.net

Phone: 803-641-2428 ext. 12569

You may also submit a complaint to the **Department of Justice** through the:

[Civil Rights Division Complaint Portal](#)