English Learner Policy

Policy 220

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Policy Statement

The Board of Directors of Freire Charter School recognizes that charter schools are bound by Title 22, Chapter 4, Section 4.26 of the Pennsylvania Code. The information included herein will be useful in designing, staffing, and evaluating effective programs for English Learners (ELs). These mandates and interpretations are based on the Pennsylvania Regulations, Chapters 4 and 11, and on federal law, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA), the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and regulations and case law under those statutes.

Freire Charter School shall provide a program for each student whose dominant language is not English and/or who are ELs for the purpose of facilitating the student's achievement of English proficiency and the academic standards under § 4.12 (relating to academic standards). To comply with this requirement, Freire will provide the student with a planned program of English as a second language (ESL) to facilitate the acquisition of English language skills and provide an instructional program appropriate to the student's developmental and instructional level. The term "program" refers to (1) planned instruction by a qualified ESL/Bilingual teacher and (2) adaptations/modification in the delivery of content instruction by all teachers based on the student's language proficiency level and the Pennsylvania English Language Development Standards (PA ELDS) as well as the Pennsylvania academic standards.

Freire Charter School will be able to document that children with limited English proficiency, who are in need of programs and services, are identified and evaluated through initial survey intake. Freire will conduct systematic screening activities that lead to the identification and evaluation of children with Limited English Proficiency. Freire will use the most current and appropriate versions of the WIDA Screener or current equivalent assessment to assess students for placement in the language instructional program for ELs.

The State English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment (i.e. ACCESS for ELs) must be administered annually to measure progress and/or attainment of the student's English language proficiency for each language domain (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening/understanding). These score results are maintained in the student's permanent record folder.

The PSSA/Keystone accommodations allowable for ELs will be used as permitted by PDE.

Freire Charter School understands that ELs may be eligible for Special Education. In this case, the IEP team must consider the need for ESL instruction as they address all student needs related to the provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). In determining the student's needs, IEP teams must consider both special education services and ESL instruction simultaneously, as appropriate. All procedures for the screening, evaluation, IEP, and the provision of services and/or instruction must be in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and 22 Pa Code Chap. 711 Regulations.

Freire Charter School will also have a system to evaluate the overall success and effectiveness of the ESL program. Data reported to Freire from state level assessments of ELP and academic achievement (ACCESS for ELs and PSSA/Keystone) must be used in program review and improvement.

Freire Charter School will grade ELs using the same grading system as all other students. A student may not be retained in a grade based solely on his/her lack of English language proficiency. If an EL is retained, Freire

Charter School will be able to demonstrate that all appropriate modifications were made to instruction and assessment in order to allow the EL meaningful access to the general curriculum as well as to promote second language learning.

Freire Charter School will submit information requested by the Pennsylvania Department of Education related to ELs through the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) and the Limited English Proficient System (LEP SYSTEM). PIMS and the LEP SYSTEM provide data and information on student numbers, teachers, and 22 Pa. Code § 4.26.

Freire Charter School recognizes that children with limited English proficiency will be admitted on the same basis as students without LEP. Upon admitting a child with LEP, the school will provide services to address the child's specific needs. When a student with LEP transfers to the school, the school is responsible for ensuring that a student receives services.

Freire Charter School recognizes that communication with parents must be in the parent's preferred language and mode of communication. The student and parents/legal guardians will also have access to any translator and/or tutor. Freire Charter School will provide for these services if the school cannot meet a student's specific language needs.

Freire Charter School understands that all teachers in our language instructional programs must hold the certification and endorsements required by PDE.

If ELs are enrolled in Freire Charter School, we must offer staff development related to ESL for all school personnel as part of our Professional Development Act 48 Plan.

Freire Charter School's budget must include provision for resources/materials, staffing for language instructional programs, and professional development for all school personnel as part of core programming outlined in 22 Pa Code § 4.26.

To meet the requirements of State regulations, Freire Charter School may provide the services itself or contract with another entity.

TO THE EXTENT THAT ANYTHING IN THIS POLICY COULD BE CONSTRUED TO CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS, THE APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS CONTROL. .

ESL Program Summary

Freire's English as a Second Language (ESL) program allows for both push-in and pull-out services. The student will attend regular content areas classes as much as possible. In all regular content classes, the student will meet with his or her teacher and an ESL staff member to address the goals that the student must achieve in order to receive a passing grade. The student will also receive additional ESL-specific instruction. English Language Development (ELD) delivered by a certified ESL teacher is its own content area.

ELD will be delivered via curriculum aligned with Pennsylvania's Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Standards, and the PA ELDS.

In order to acquire English, ELs will receive instruction in the same manner as they would receive instruction for other curricular areas. In other words, EL classes will be part of the daily schedule and will be thoughtfully planned from the administrative level so that students are not moved from other content classes to receive instruction for English language acquisition.

As the proficiency of a student advances into the upper levels (e.g. Bridging), a student may require only minimal ELD instructional time, which may be in the form of ongoing support as needed. HOWEVER, this support will be planned, structured time within the school day.

The language instructional program will also provide ELs with meaningful, comprehensible access to instruction in all content areas as required by Pennsylvania academic standards.

The PA ELDS PreK-12 is an overlay to the academic standards and will be incorporated in planned instruction for ELs by all teachers.

Freire will support instructional planning and evaluation efforts between the ESL teachers and the content-area teachers by providing common planning time as appropriate.

In accordance with Pennsylvania academic standards and Freire academic standards, Freire will monitor the progress of EL and will provide appropriate accommodations within the content areas to ensure achievement of the academic standards and curricular goals. 22 Pa. Code § 403; 20 U.S.C.A. § 6842. The ESL Coordinator will oversee the review, both annual and periodic, of ELs.

Pennsylvania's assessments shall be administered to all ELs annually to measure progress and determine each EL English language proficiency for each language domain (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening/Understanding). Each designated ESL teacher will complete the annual grading and evaluation process for EL (English, Reading and Language Arts). Other considerations will include EL portfolios and teacher narratives regarding observations of each EL. Students with immigrant status who have lived in the United States for less than one year are exempt from participating in the PSSA and local assessments.

Throughout the course of the year, individual student progress will be evaluated on a continuous basis with each ESL teacher and the classroom teacher. Each teacher will modify ELs' learning plans to ensure academic success for each student.

A standardized form will be kept in each ELs' permanent record folder through graduation. The form shall identify the date, level, and English proficiency score upon entering the ESL Program; report(s) of progress toward ESL Program goals; and academic standardized test scores. A narrative from the designated ESL teacher, regarding each ELs' progress toward satisfying the ESL Program objectives, will also be part of the data collection and review process.

An EL may not be retained in a grade level based solely on his/her lack of English language proficiency. Before an EL is retained in a grade, the ESL Coordinator must demonstrate that all appropriate modifications were made to instruction and assessment in order to allow the EL's meaningful access to the grade level content curriculum as well as to promote ESL instruction.

Identifying English Language Learners

To ensure Freire is meeting the needs of English Language Learners, the parents of all incoming students complete a comprehensive Home Language Survey (HLS) during the registration process. Freire also reviews files from previous schools to determine if students are currently identified as ELs.

Freire evaluates any student for whom a primary home language other than English is spoken using multiple criteria. Through these multiple criteria, appropriate language supports are determined. Families answering any question on the HLS with a response other than English and whose students are not identified as English learners from previous schools are considered potential ELs. A family interview is conducted for potential ELs to determine if second language exposure and use is significant and tied to the national origin of the student, or is superficial in nature. Then, a full review of the student's academic records is conducted to look for compelling evidence the student has sufficient academic proficiency in English to access instruction without support or accommodations, including passing grades in content classes where instruction is delivered in English and/or work samples.

Conclusions drawn from the record review and family interviews are recorded on the Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE) tool. Students that meet the criteria for identification are then screened for English proficiency using the WIDA Screener.

Freire files records including HLS, evidence from the record review, WIDA Screener score reports and parent notifications of program placement in students' EL compliance files. Students who are exited from ESL are actively monitored for two years to assure their continued success.

Parent Notification of Placement

Schools have 30 days from the start of the school year to identify ELs and notify parents of program placement. After 30 days, any new student who enrolls in Freire Charter Schools and has a Home Language Survey that indicates a language other than English must go through the EL Identification process within 14

days. Once a student has been identified as an EL, parents are immediately notified of program placement in their preferred language and English.

Schools are also required to send annual notifications to parents of enrolled ELs to inform them of the continued or changed program status of their students within 30 days of the start of each school year. Required annual notifications include a continued program placement letter that outlines a description of the program, available services, and a parent's right to refuse services, as well as a program exit notification. All program notifications are sent home in the parents' preferred language and English.

ESL Staff

English Language Learners are provided ESL instruction by a certified ESL Specialist. ESL Specialists receive professional development aimed at increasing knowledge of second language acquisition and instructional best practices, including language development across content areas in alignment with WIDA's English Language Development Standards.

Grading of ELs

In general content classes, ELs are graded in accordance with the general education grading policies. A student may not be retained in a grade based only on his/her level of English proficiency. For ESL class, students are graded based on their level of mastery of appropriately leveled work aligned to the students' English language proficiency levels.

ELs with Disabilities

ELs are eligible for the full range of Special Education services as appropriate.

Annual Assessment of ELs

Freire's assessment processes for ELs comply with all state and federal laws. ELs take the ACCESS, PSSAs, and Keystone as is appropriate to their grade level annually with allowable accommodations.

Exit Criteria

In order to be exited from the EL programming:

- The student must achieve an ACCESS composite score of 4.5 or higher and/or PDE's Criteria for ELs with Disabilities
- Two Language Inventories must be completed by the ESL & Content teacher
- The combined Language Inventory scores with the ACCESS test score must exceed the state defined threshold.

Exited Students

Students are actively monitored for two years after exiting ESL using a review of grades and teacher observations. Records of these reviews are kept in the student's file. Freire continues to report Former ELs to the state in PIMS for an additional two years after the active monitoring period. At the end of the fourth year after reclassification, ELs are coded as Former ELs – no longer monitored for the remainder of their time in school.

If it is determined during the active monitoring phase that an EL is struggling academically as a result of persistent language acquisition needs and not academic barriers, the school will meet with the EL Coordinator to discuss the potential need to reinstate language supports. If it is determined that the EL would benefit from reinstating language supports, the school will re-designate the former EL as an active EL, and re-enroll him/her in the LIEP.

Parent Involvement

Parents of ELs have the right to meet with school staff with the assistance of an interpreter, in order to understand Freire's program and to offer their input. All information disseminated to the students and their parents is provided in the language or mode preferred by the parents. The ESL program is evaluated annually to ascertain that it is meeting its goals for the students.