



Home Language Survey (HLS): Frequently Asked Questions

This guidance provides answers to frequently asked questions about the statewide OSSE [Home Language Survey](#), which is the first step in the statewide English learner (EL) identification procedures. This document serves as a supplement to the OSSE EL policy document, [Delivering Education Services to English Learners: Policies and Procedures for Administrators, Instructional Leaders, and Teachers in the District of Columbia](#), and to the [Home Language Survey instructions](#). These resources as well as additional EL policy guidance may be found on the [OSSE website](#). For questions, contact Dr. Jennifer Norton at Jennifer.Norton@dc.gov.

1. Do pre-K-12 local education agencies (LEAs) have to use the OSSE Home Language Survey or can LEAs use their own questions?

Answer: LEAs may not make up their own questions. The OSSE Home Language Survey is the statewide survey. The introductory statement and questions must be used by all pre-K-12 LEAs and must be provided in English, Spanish, Amharic, French, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese.

2. Is this survey required for adult-serving LEAs?

Answer: Adult-serving LEAs must have a standard survey to find out whether a student needs to be screened for English language proficiency. As the first step in the EL identification process, adult-serving LEAs can develop their own home language survey to use as a standard questionnaire for all students, or use the OSSE Home Language Survey. Their screening process must meet the minimum criteria outlined in [Delivering Education Services to English Learners: Policies and Procedures for Administrators, Instructional Leaders, and Teachers in the District of Columbia](#).

Note: Adult-serving schools are defined as those that offer non-traditional pathways that do not culminate in a regular high school diploma or Certificate of IEP Completion in accordance with a student's individualized education program. Students age 21 or under as of Sept. 30 of the current school year, who are enrolled in adult-serving schools and who are not on a path for a regular diploma, shall be designated and supported as ELs for local uniform per-student funding formula purposes through a standard process established by the adult-serving school that is consistent for all students enrolled in a non-traditional pathway offered by the adult-serving school.

3. What is required if a student needs to be screened for eligibility for English learner services?

Answer: Follow the policy set forth in [Delivering Education Services to English Learners: Policies and Procedures for Administrators, Instructional Leaders, and Teachers in the District of Columbia](#). For additional information on statewide EL identification procedures, view the [EL screening and placement webinar](#) and access additional [OSSE EL identification links and resources](#).

4. Is this form for students entering our school for the first time or students entering any DCPS or public charter school in DC for the first time?

Answer: The policy is to administer the survey to students enrolling in any DC public school (DCPS or charter) for the first time. The OSSE HLS should not be re-administered to transfer students within DC or re-enrolling students. An exception to this policy is for students transferring from out-of-state who attended a DC school more than four years ago. For these students, the Home Language Survey will be administered.

5. How will an LEA know if a transfer student coming from another DC LEA has been identified as an EL?

Answer: OSSE maintains the authoritative records of EL status. To verify if a student has been identified as EL by the student's previous DC LEA, the receiving school will obtain the information from the [Early Access to EL Data application](#), which is accessible to EL coordinators, data managers, principals, heads of school, and ACCESS for ELLs coordinators.

In addition, the receiving school may discuss with the student's parent and guardian and request the information directly from the sending LEA.

6. When searching for incoming transfer students in pre-K4 and kindergarten in the [Early Access to EL Data application](#), students who are listed as EL have no proficiency level data, such as ACCESS scores. Should the LEA rescreen these students to make sure they are EL students?

Answer: Students transferring to your LEA in pre-K who are EL students will have been screened using the Pre-IPT or the K-WAPT (two domain only). Students who scored proficient on the Pre-IPT in pre-K or early kindergarten or on the two-domain portion of the K-WAPT should be re-screened in spring of their Kindergarten year using all four domains of the K-WAPT. This information may be obtained in the "Screener status" field in the [Early Access to EL Data application](#).

7. If the Home Language Survey is administered online, does it need to be signed and dated by the parent or guardian and a school official, or does this apply to the paper form only?

Answer: If the OSSE Home Language Survey is administered within your LEA's online enrollment form, the LEA can decide internally whether to include an electronic signature line for the parent/guardian and school official.

8. If the Home Language Survey is administered online, does the school need to maintain a paper copy at the school?

Answer: The OSSE Home Language Survey results should be recorded and maintained by the LEA for each student. For surveys that are administered online, the LEA can decide whether to maintain the completed survey electronically or on paper.

9. The Home Language Survey administration date is a data field to submit to OSSE. Will OSSE require LEAs to submit transferred students' survey dates?

Answer: The LEA that administers the Home Language Survey will enter the date of administration in their Student Information System (SIS). Any future receiving LEAs would not need to enter the Home Language Survey administration date because the date should already be entered by the previous LEA. If the student is transferring from a previous LEA and the Home Language Survey administration date is blank but has already been screened and identified as an EL, the receiving LEA can enter an estimated date based on the student's initial date of enrollment in a DC school.

10. Should the LEA or school have a new Home Language Survey on file every year for every student to show that our LEA implements the Home Language Survey?

Answer: No, LEAs should not administer the Home Language Survey to every student annually. Appropriate implementation of the form is to administer it to students starting school in DC for the first time only. This is because the purpose of the form is to identify students who are eligible for screening for English language services. The purpose of screening is to identify students who are ELs. Once identified, they are presumed ELs until they attain exit levels of proficiency. Their English levels of proficiency/growth are annually measured through ACCESS, which is not a screener, but an annual summative English proficiency assessment. When a school/LEA enrolls a student starting school in DC for the first time, it should keep the student's completed survey on file; this practice demonstrates the LEA administers the survey according to the state's procedures.

11. Our LEA's online enrollment form is only available in English. What should the LEA do to ensure language access for all enrolling students and families?

Answer: The expectation is that the LEA will make the Home Language Survey form available with the translations provided in English, Spanish, Amharic, French, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese. Reasonable efforts should be made to help the family understand the purpose of the survey and how to complete it. If needed, provide language support to families who may not be able to read or understand it. Pursuant to the DC Language Access Act of 2004, all covered entities with major public contact are required to provide interpretation services for limited or non-English proficient customers who request or demonstrate a need for assistance. The Act applies to DCPS; DC public charter LEAs are strongly encouraged to provide similar services to limited or non-English proficient families. Detailed information and resources are available through the Language Access Information Portal at <https://bit.ly/2KZEawZ>