Williamson County ESL Glossary of Terms

ELL stands for English Language Learner(s) and identifies students who are learning English and are eligible for support services.

ESL stands for English as a Second Language. ESL refers to the program.

NELB stands for Non-English Language Background and identifies students who may speak another language at home, or whose parents or others in the home communicate in a language other than English. NELB students may not require support services. These students may have previously received ESL support services, but have progressed to the point where services are no longer needed.

BICS stands for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills and identifies "social" language: the language the student is able to use to communicate needs and wants in social settings with native English speakers. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills usually develop first. The student can usually achieve 'social fluency' in 2-3 years.

CALP stands for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency and describes the academic language needed to function in the content-area classroom. Cognitive Academic Language refers to the specialized and advanced vocabulary students need to learn and to use. Proficiency refers to the need to use that language in writing, test taking, and projects required for the content-area class. Academic language is much more difficult for English Language Learners.

TESOL stands for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and is used nationally to identify the educational discipline of the professionals who work with students of all ages who are learning to speak English.

NEP means Non-English Proficient.

LEP means Limited English Proficient.

FEP means Fluent English Proficient (almost ready to exit).

EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language and is used internationally for courses of English taught in other countries.

The mission of the Williamson County ESL Department is to meet the needs of English Language Learners and help them achieve the high academic standards expected of all students. Our program educates and acculturates ESL students in a way that respects individual diversity, ability, intellect and character. The ESL Department provides English classes to all non-native English speakers. We support students and teachers through a variety of services including pull-out programs, daily ESL classes, inclusion, and/or other appropriate resources. All our classes are available to any WCS student who has been designated as an English Language Learner.
Frequently Asked Questions

How does my child qualify for ESL services?
1. A parent, teacher, principal, or other school official refers the student to the ESL program. The Home Language survey is used as a referral in many cases.
2. The student is assessed based on the state proficiency test, standardized test scores, and any other factors that may attest to the student’s English ability.
3. If the student is assessed as a non-English speaker or a student of limited English proficiency, then the student will receive assistance based on the student’s needs.

How does my child exit the ESL program?
A student’s exit from ESL services is based on proficiency in all areas of English language: listening, speaking, reading, grammar, and writing. A variety of criteria is used to document the student’s proficiency. Such evidence may include a score of FEP (Fluent English Proficiency) on the state proficiency test, as or above grade level standardized test scores, and satisfactory classroom performance. There will be a two-year transition period in which support will be provided as necessary. Afterwards, the ESL teacher will make recommendations regarding exiting.

How long will my student need ESL services?
Four to seven years is the expected range of time for a student to need ESL services. Many factors may cause this time to be longer or shorter: the age and grade level at which students enter US schools, students’ literacy in the native language, and individual variables including motivation, effort, and study habits. Students are always evaluated individually every year.

CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) usually takes a minimum of five to seven years to be sufficient for the student to function in a regular classroom. For some students, it takes longer.

What is taught in ESL class?

Elementary/Middle School
- Individualized curriculum designed to meet the needs of each student
- One-on-one or small group instruction
- Pull-out program (some inclusion in the regular classroom)
- Curriculum that corresponds to WCS scope and sequence
- Close collaboration with classroom teachers
- English reading, writing, grammar, listening, and speaking skills
- Vocabulary building and communication techniques
- Examples of basic topics include: school vocabulary, colors, shapes, numbers, letters and sounds, word order, home vocabulary, personal information, health, community, expressions
- Materials and strategies vary according to student needs

High School
- Individualized curriculum for each level of English proficiency
- Daily instruction for credit ESL classes
- Curriculum that corresponds to WCSCS scope and sequence
- Close collaboration with classroom teachers
- English reading, writing, grammar, listening, and speaking skills
- Vocabulary building and communication techniques
- Material and strategies vary according to student need

ESL students will receive all services, including an individualized education program, if appropriate.

Content-Area Classes
According to state law, content-area classroom teachers will modify to the point that the ESL student can be successful in the class. Possible modifications include:
- Environment (peers, strategic seating)
- Instruction (using visuals, speaking slowly and clearly, simplifying instructions, practicing behavior management)
- Materials and Assessment (adapt homework, tests, assignments; allow extra time, shorter assignments/tests; no essays or simplified essays; allow illustrations and labeling to assess)

Other Support Services
As with all students, ESL students may be eligible for other support services if necessary. These may include one or more of the following:
- Tutors
- Reading and Math specialists
- Speech specialists
- Interpreters
- Special education
- Learning labs
- Homework clubs

Tennessee-Mandated Tests
Students in grades 3-8 are required to take state-mandated tests in order to receive a high school diploma. The expected graduation rate is 100%.

Students in grades 9-12 are required to pass state-mandated tests in order to receive a high school diploma. The expected graduation rate is 100%.

What can I do at home?
- Talk with your children about their school day. Find out what has been learned in all classes. Make sure your children do their homework assignments. Show your children you care about their learning.
- Read with your children: read with your children in your home language and read in English. Parent interest in reading and learning will inspire children to read.

What are my rights as a parent of an ESL student?
- Parents have access to all school information concerning your child.
- Parents may waive student’s participation in the ESL program if they meet with the ESL teacher and make their request in writing.
- Parents will be notified if their child is eligible for ESL services.
- Parents and community members are encouraged to participate in the educational program for ESL students.