



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Washington State Multilingual Learners: Policies and Practices Guide

2024

APPENDIX A: HIGH SCHOOL NEWCOMER ENROLLMENT

Intake, Assessment, and Placement

A welcoming and efficient intake process is an important way to encourage belonging, foster academic success, and establish effective language supports at the high school level.

Intake

Intake processes for newly arrived multilingual high school students traditionally require partnership between the student, their guardians, the student's high school counselor, their certificated ELD teacher or language services case manager, and their community-based advocate, if they have one. An interpreter can provide interpretation for the student and family but may not serve as a member of the decision-making team. If a student arrives at their new school with documentation of a diagnosed disability or records of special education services in their prior school, a member of the school's special education team should also be part of the intake process.

Newcomers may arrive with or without documentation of prior schooling. Strong high school counseling and language support programs have processes and procedures in place for both situations. The following considerations can assist in designing and refining multilingual student intake processes:

Students who Arrive with Transcripts	Students who Arrive without Transcripts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Placement can be made in the grade-level that provides continuity of academic history.• Official or unofficial transcripts* or grade reports can be reviewed by qualified staff if formal evaluation has not been completed.• Students may be placed in the next course in a series based on successful prior completion of equivalent courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Placement can be made in the age-aligned grade level until formal records are available. If improper placement is identified upon receiving formal records, locally determined district procedures for grade-level adjustment should be followed.• Students should confer with their school counselor and/or transcript evaluator to determine placement testing needs and appropriate course placement. This process frequently requires collaboration between the student's high school counselor and a member of the school's or district's multilingual education team.

* More information on official vs. unofficial records and transcript evaluation procedures can be found in the section on Transcripts and Credit for Previous Coursework below.

Newcomer students at the high school level benefit from the following intake practices:

- **Enrollment/Intake Checklists-** Newcomer students and their families benefit from having a translated printed list of the forms that will need to be filled out, documents that need to be submitted and how they are used, and any meetings and placement testing that will take place.
- **Immediate Enrollment-** Regardless of whether high school newcomers arrive at the end of the school year or without transcripts, they should be placed in appropriate classes and be assisted with accessing English language development (ELD) and other school support services as soon as possible.
- **ELD Teacher Participation in Student Scheduling** - Coordination between the ELD teacher and school counselor makes it easier to place students in classes that meet their language development needs and move the student towards graduation. This collaboration also ensures that students can feel comfortable asking questions and receiving help from the ELD teacher or case manager and the student's counselor.
- **Requesting Middle School Transcripts-** In many countries, middle school includes the equivalent of 9th grade in the United States. In Washington, students are also able to earn high school credit as early as 7th grade for courses that meet high school-level course standards (RCW 28A.230.090(4)). Requesting middle school transcripts can help educators identify students' strengths and areas of interest and receive all credits eligible for transfer to their new school.
- **High School and Beyond Plan-** The High School and Beyond Plan is a useful tool that can assist school counselors and other student support staff in learning about a student's interests and goals to identify possible pathways to graduation. For more information on the High School and Beyond Plan, see OSPI's [Graduation Requirements](#) webpage.
- **Orientation and the First Week of School-** High school newcomers come to Washington schools with a wide variety of experiences. It is important to make sure that students have printed copies of school maps with their classes and teachers listed, a printed copy of their schedule, and a list of any log-in information they may need to access school technology. Students may also need instructions for purchasing school lunches, locating bus stops, understanding school behavior expectations, typical adult language (such as corrective vs. attention-getting language), bell systems, and using lockers. It is also possible that newcomers have not had access to computers or programs such as Canvas or Google Classroom and will need assistance navigating these programs.
- **Peer Language Connections-** Pairing a student with other students who speak their language, or a closely related language, can help students learn how to get to their classes, navigate the cafeteria, and most importantly, build connections with their peers. This is one of the most effective support practices for newcomers. Peer mentors also benefit from being in a leadership role that supports their growth and development.

Assessment

Proper assessment procedures ensure that newcomers are appropriately placed in language services and content classes. However, there are some assessments that should be avoided or that newcomers do not need to take. Newcomers and their families should be informed about which assessments they need to take and how the results of the assessments will be used.

English Language Proficiency Testing

The WIDA screener must be given within the student's first ten school days (WAC 392-160-015). The WIDA screener is the only approved way for a student to be identified as an Eligible Multilingual Learner and be enrolled in the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program (TBIP) (See Chapter 2: Identification and Placement of this Policies and Practices Guide). The test can also give insight into a student's strengths in English and which instructional strategies would benefit them. Strong ELD programs also track how quickly a student demonstrates increased capacity and proficiency in English using the student's screener score as a baseline to determine if a student would benefit from highly capable identification testing and/or advanced learning opportunities.

While best practice is for students to complete the screener prior to scheduling classes, in some cases, that may not be possible. There may be time constraints, or a student may have experiences that make it unwise to be subjected to a standardized test prior to meeting peers and support staff. Students may also first need assistance navigating computer programs before engaging in computer-based testing. When a schedule must be created prior to ELP screening, it is recommended that a trained ELD teacher or language specialist attend the scheduling meeting to do an informal screening and collaborate with the student's school counselor for initial class placements. Once this process has been completed, the ELD teacher or language specialist should then schedule the test with the student as soon as possible. Once the screener is given, class schedules can be adjusted, as needed.

Content Area Testing

Math is the most common content area where a need for placement testing arises during intake for newcomer high school students. Math placement testing relies on the concept of threshold skills and mathematical practices and therefore, should be administered by a math teacher or a language specialist familiar with math testing and standards. Placement tests that are designed specifically for newcomer students often include limited English and instead rely on technical drawings, predictable formatting, and, when possible, are available in the student's primary language to eliminate linguistic barriers. These can be formal written tests or informal conversations to gauge math proficiency and problem-solving processes.

World Language Testing

It is also recommended that testing for World Language Competency and qualification for the Seal of Biliteracy be completed as soon as possible. World Language Competency testing not only creates an opportunity for students to earn additional credits but also provides valuable information on the student's primary language abilities. ELD and content area teachers can use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of providing primary language support and/or access to advanced class placement. Please visit OSPI's [World Languages website](#) for information on available assessments by language.

State Testing

Recently Arrived English Learners (RAEL) can skip one administration of state ELA testing in their first 12 months in US schools. Newcomers must take state tests in math and science. Districts must plan to provide appropriate testing accommodations for the math and science assessments to ensure accessibility for students who need them. See the Washington State Test Coordinators Manual available on the [WCAP portal](#) for more information.

Course Placement

New student schedules are made based on prior academic experience and graduation requirements balanced by student interests and strengths. Placement in the appropriate multilingual education model and designated ELD is part of a student's language development plan and must be determined by a certificated ELD teacher or language services case manager. Newcomer students at the high school level benefit from the following placement practices:

- **Placement in Dual Language Programs when Available-** High school dual language programs support students with achieving high levels of academic success. Classes that meet graduation requirements and are accessed in the student's strongest language are critical for student success while they develop their English language skills. Dual language programs are especially impactful when they are taught in the student's primary language (such as Spanish or Vietnamese) or a language in which the student had prior schooling (such as students who were taught in Spanish in Mexico or Guatemala and have a primary language of Mixteco or K'iche').
- **Credit for Previous Coursework** – Students with previous high school-level coursework in their home country should have their transcripts evaluated to identify opportunities for transfer credits. Students may also qualify for mastery-based credits (also referred to as competency-based credits), including world language credit, as explained above. Each district has discretion over which courses to accept for transfer credit.
- **Individualized Schedules-** Students who arrive from other school systems may take classes outside of their grade level so that they do not repeat courses or so that they can meet graduation requirements regardless of when they enter Washington schools.

Transcripts and Credit from Other Countries

All high school students must have a transcript that contains the student's **entire academic history** (WAC 392-415-070), including those courses that a student did not complete, high school classes taken at the middle school level (RCW 28A.230.090(4)), and any high school-level courses taken within or outside of the United States.

There is no standardized process for transcript evaluation in Washington - the decision to accept credits is locally determined. Districts must decide how to award credit for prior coursework and should have clear policies and procedures to grant transfer credits for domestic and foreign transcripts. Because of the complex and technical nature of evaluating international transcripts, it is suggested that districts create procedures, including who will complete, coordinate, and oversee the evaluation process.

Official vs. Unofficial Documents

Official transcripts or school records are signed, sealed documents received directly from the sending school's registrar or obtained directly from the student and family. Documents that have been opened, are photocopies, or do not have a signature from the sending school's representative are not official documents. Unofficial documents can also include grade reports and printouts from online student or family access systems.

Many high school newcomers are unable to provide official transcripts. There is no law that states that a district cannot accept unofficial documents. However, districts should be sure that any unofficial documents are verified as authentic and accurately reflect the student's academic history. Districts should also state clearly in their policies and procedures if and how any unofficial documents will be used. If only unofficial, unverified transcripts are available, districts should consider adopting and implementing a competency or mastery-based crediting policy to reduce barriers to graduation. This policy should be applicable to all students.

Translation vs. Evaluation

Transcript translation and transcript evaluation are two different processes. Transcript translation is a word-for-word version of a non-English document rendered in English. Transcript evaluation is a process that results in a list of courses eligible for transfer credit by determining equivalency between courses taken outside the district and those offered within it.

Transcript Evaluation Process

While transcript evaluation can be a complex process, accurate transcript evaluations can ensure students are on the path toward on-time graduation and help staff members recognize the student's skills.

Since evaluation determines if foreign coursework meets state and locally determined graduation requirements, transcript evaluation should be completed by staff who are familiar with the district's course catalog and Washington state graduation requirements and have training in transcript evaluation and their district's transfer credit policies. These staff members are usually school counselors and/or school registrars but may also be district translators, migrant graduation specialists, or language specialists who have received specific training to be transcript evaluators.

The following table outlines the transcript evaluation process and includes sample resources and considerations to help school staff conducting the transcript evaluation process identify equivalencies and grant transfer credit.

Step 1: Verification of Records		
Resources Needed	Process	Considerations
<p>Student transcripts or academic records</p> <p>Sending school's contact information (This may be located within the header or footer of the transcript or may need to be located online.)</p> <p>School staff familiar with the language in which the transcript is written or a professional interpreter</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Match the student's name on the transcript to the student's provided identification. 2. Verify that the sending school is a recognized/ accredited school through the school's website and/or governing body. 3. If transcripts are not received directly from a sending registrar, call or email to verify the authenticity of the transcript with the sending school. 	<p>Students frequently arrive with end-of-year documents rather than an official transcript. In these cases, it is helpful to have information from the sending school to assist in aligning local course requirements with the previous school's course timeline.</p> <p>The student and their family cannot verify records themselves or serve as an interpreter when calling the school.</p> <p>OSPI's webpage on Interpretation and Translation provides more information and resources that may assist districts that need support with minority languages or languages new to their schools.</p>
Step 2: Translation		
Resources Needed	Process	Considerations
<p>Qualified translator</p> <p>Student transcripts or academic records</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a trained, qualified translator or transcription service. (Translation may not be completed by the student or a family member.) 2. Obtain an exact translation of the transcript or academic record, including headers and footers, charts as rendered in the original document, school names and addresses, and any handwritten comments. 	<p>Digital or machine translation, such as services like Google Translate, can only be used if a qualified translator reviews, edits, and verifies that the rendered document accurately reflects the source document. OSPI's webpage on Interpretation and Translation provides more information and resources that may assist districts that need translation support.</p> <p>Creating a translated and similarly formatted copy of the transcript will ease the evaluation process.</p>

Step 3: Evaluation		
Resources Needed	Process	Considerations
<p>Translated student transcripts or academic records</p> <p>A guide to international school systems (i.e., UNESCO's National Education System Profiles)</p> <p>Website for the sending school's governing body (i.e., Secretaría de Educación, Gobierno de Puebla).</p> <p>Sending school's website.</p> <p>OSPI's Learning Standards and Instructional Materials website</p> <p>State Course Codes</p>	<p>Determine if the transcript is from a public, parochial, or international school.</p> <p>For each block of courses, determine if transferring courses are year-long or are aligned with certain grading periods (i.e., quarters, trimesters, semesters) and assign a US grade level and grading period equivalent while maintaining the dates provided.</p> <p>Then, for each course:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Using the school's or school governing body's website(s), identify the standards for each course. Compare the standards covered in the foreign course to the WA state standards to determine areas of equivalency. If no equivalency exists, it is ineligible for transfer. Using the Washington state course codes/descriptions, assign an equivalent course code. Determine the grading scale used on the student's transcript and assign grades aligned with your local grading scale. Determine the number of eligible transfer credits for 	<p><i>Schooling Systems:</i></p> <p>Public schools in other countries may be part of a national or a regional system or be attached to large public universities.</p> <p>Parochial and other schools may not follow the same grade level and term systems of public schools. Many follow a system that aligns to the religious order overseeing the school.</p> <p>English and American international schools may follow a UK or US system of grade progression.</p> <p>IB World Schools are all aligned with the IB educational program.</p> <p>In some countries, even when in-person schools are managed regionally, virtual schools may be managed by the federal educational authority.</p> <p><i>Grade Level Settings:</i></p> <p>It is common for 9th grade to be the final year of "middle school" in many countries. In systems that include grade 9 equivalent courses in a middle school, course standards for 9th and 10-12th grade courses are usually found in different places.</p> <p>In many other countries, students in grades 10 through 12 attend school in multiple settings, such as vocational schools or college preparatory programs. It is important to identify the setting in which a student took each course to identify which</p>

Step 3: Evaluation		
Resources Needed	Process	Considerations
	each course based on grades earned.	<p>standards to use during the evaluation.</p> <p><i>Grading Systems:</i> Schools using a 10-point grading scale have final grades that mirror the percentage earned in the course (i.e., 8.9= 89%).</p> <p>In some educational systems, an earned grade of "5.0" or "50%" is a passing grade but may not be the equivalent of a passing grade in a Washington school.</p> <p>If a student did not pass a course that has a local equivalent, it must still be included on the student's transcript. These courses would be evaluated with credits listed as "0.0."</p>
Step 4: Transcription		
Resources Needed	Process	Considerations
<p>Original and translated student transcripts or academic records</p> <p>Completed transcript evaluation</p> <p>OSPI's website on High School Transcripts</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verify that the translation and evaluation are complete. 2. Enter the evaluated courses into the student's official transcript. 3. Print three copies of the transcript– one for the student, one for the cumulative file, and one for the student's school counselor. 4. Document completion of transcription on the evaluation form (if applicable). 	<p>All academic history must be entered on the student's transcript in the order taken.</p> <p>Based on the transcript evaluation, follow your district's review process to ensure that the student is in the correct grade level based on their academic history.</p>

Step 5: Retention		
Resources Needed	Process	Considerations
<p>Completed transcript evaluation packet, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original transcripts or academic records • Translation of original documents • Evaluation process forms (if applicable) • Completed Washington state transcript 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. File the student's original records, any translations, evaluation forms, and a copy of the updated transcript in the student's cumulative file. 2. Submit a copy of completed evaluation forms to the student's high school counselor to assist in class placement and graduation tracking. 3. Give a copy of the completed transcript to the student/ student's guardian for their records. 	<p>Some registrars also keep a copy of transcript evaluation packets completed by year for their own records or for auditing purposes.</p> <p>If a school's language support program has a case management model, the student's case manager may benefit from a copy of the packet.</p> <p>School counselors should review any current or future schedules when they receive a copy of the completed transcript to verify that no courses will be repeated.</p>

Frequent Errors Made when Determining Equivalency

Error	Correct Equivalency	Reason for Equivalency
ELA credit given for English as a Foreign Language	01008 English as a Second Language	Foreign language classes do not meet CCSS grade level ELA standards
Assigning two semesters of study with the same grade for year-long courses	Transcribe as a year-long course	On final transcripts, all high school coursework must be listed with the duration of the course and grading periods listed in order, as taken.
No credit given for courses that have term grades or term exams but no final grade	Partial credit given with a correctly evaluated number of credits and grades earned if the course has a district-approved equivalency	<p>Many districts award partial credit to students based on the following statutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCW 28A.300.542 (Students experiencing homelessness) • Chapter 13.34 RCW (Definition of a dependent) • Chapter 13.32A RCW (At-risk youth or children in need of services)

Transfer Credit Policies

All decisions about which previous international coursework is eligible for transfer must be made based on the local district's policies and procedures. Districts may consider the following recommendations:

- **Mastery-Based or Competency-Based Crediting Policies and Procedures:** Strong master-based crediting policies and procedures can help districts with confusion that may arise from unofficial transcripts or school records that cannot be verified. These policies can help reduce barriers to graduation for newcomer and highly mobile students. Mastery-based crediting may be a critical process in awarding students with credit for their demonstrated proficiency in ELA and math if transcripts are not available.
- **Clearly Designated Transcript Evaluators:** When transcript evaluators are clearly identified in district policy, procedures, and job descriptions, it can reduce the confusion in a complicated process and help the transcript evaluation process move faster.
- **Databases of Identified Equivalent Courses-** Maintaining a list of commonly used course equivalencies can assist in the transcript evaluation process. If a district, or group of districts, maintains such a list, it is important that it be reviewed periodically to ensure that the list remains valid.
- **Manual Review of Transcripts for Students with International Academic History Who Transfer from Other US Schools-** Verifying previous translations and evaluations of international transcripts can ensure that students are receiving all the credits for which they are eligible.