

ENGLISH LEARNER TOOL KIT

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) released joint guidance on January 7, 2015, reminding states, school districts, and schools of their obligations under federal law to ensure that English Learners (ELs) have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. In this context, the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) at the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) is pleased to provide the [English Learner \(EL\) Tool Kit](#), a companion to the OCR’s and DOJ’s “Dear Colleague Letter” (DCL). The tool kit is designed to help state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) in meeting their legal obligations¹ to ELs and in providing all ELs with the support needed to attain English language proficiency while meeting college- and career-readiness standards. The [EL Tool Kit](#) is intended primarily for state, district, and school administrators, as well as teachers, but may also inform other stakeholders concerned with the education of ELs.

The 10 chapters of the *EL Tool Kit*, originally published in serial form over a number of months, correspond to the 10 sections of the January 2015 DCL. Each chapter provides (1) explanations of the civil rights and other legal obligations to ELs; (2) checklists SEAs, LEAs, and schools can use as self-monitoring tools; (3) sample tools that may be used or adapted for use in SEAs, LEAs, and schools to aid with compliance; and (4) additional resources that may provide further relevant information and assistance.² The tool kit does not encompass all resources about EL services, only a sample. For the reader’s convenience, the tools and resources are free and accessible via the Internet.

The chapters of the tool kit are:

- Chapter 1: Tools and Resources for Identifying All English Learner Students
- Chapter 2: Tools and Resources for Providing English Learners with a Language Assistance Program
- Chapter 3: Tools and Resources for Staffing and Supporting an English Learner Program
- Chapter 4: Tools and Resources for Providing English Learners Meaningful Access to Core Curricular and Extracurricular Programs
- Chapter 5: Tools and Resources for Creating an Inclusive Environment for and Avoiding the Unnecessary Segregation of English Learners
- Chapter 6: Tools and Resources for Addressing English Learners with Disabilities
- Chapter 7: Tools and Resources for Serving English Learners Who Opt Out of EL Programs
- Chapter 8: Tools and Resources for Monitoring and Exiting English Learners from EL Programs and Services
- Chapter 9: Tools and Resources for Evaluating the Effectiveness of a District’s EL Program
- Chapter 10: Tools and Resources for Ensuring Meaningful Communication with Limited English Proficient Parents

As part of the Department’s mission, OELA provides national leadership to help ensure that ELs and immigrant students attain English language proficiency and achieve rigorous academic standards, identify major issues affecting the education of ELs, and support state and local systemic reform efforts to improve EL achievement. This tool kit, used in conjunction with the January 2015 DCL, serves an important role in accomplishing these goals by helping SEAs and LEAs to better understand and meet their obligations to ELs.

OELA led the development of the tool kit, with assistance from the Department’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), OCR, the Institute for Education Sciences (IES), the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), as well as staff from DOJ. The [National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition](#) (NCELA) also was integral to developing the tool kit.

¹ Although this toolkit contains updates to reflect amendments to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* made by the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)*, the DCL has not been updated because the federal civil rights laws are independent of the *ESEA*. The civil rights laws denote parallel requirements for SEAs and LEAs to meet their legal obligations to ensure that ELs can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs and services, regardless of reauthorization or of changes to *ESEA*. While *ESSA* requires reauthorization, the federal civil rights laws do not.

² No official endorsement by the Department of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned in this publication is intended or should be inferred. For the reader’s convenience, the tool kit contains information about and from outside organizations, including URLs. Inclusion of such information does not constitute the Department’s endorsement.