

## **Understanding the Temporary Use of Alternative Language Programs**

### **English Transcript**

Welcome to an explanation of when and why Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may need to implement Alternative Language Programs temporarily to support their emergent bilingual students. Recall, the term “emergent bilingual student” is interchangeable with the term “English learner,” which is used to describe a student who is in the process of acquiring English and has another language as the primary or home language.

In this video, we will answer the question: What are the requirements for districts who do not have appropriately certified teachers to fully implement their required bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs?

Remember, all Texas public schools, including traditional school districts, open-enrollment charters, and districts of innovation, are required to provide bilingual or ESL program services to their emergent bilingual students, based on the student population. Each program has specific teacher certification requirements.

First, let’s discuss bilingual program certification requirements. There are four state-approved bilingual education program models: transitional bilingual early exit, transitional bilingual late exit, dual-language immersion one-way, and dual-language immersion two-way.

For transitional bilingual program models, both early and late-exit, teachers are required to be bilingual-certified in the language of the program for each grade level that the program is implemented through the duration of elementary grades.

For dual-language immersion program models, both one- and two-way, teachers are also required to be bilingual certified in the language of the program for each grade level that the program is implemented through the duration of elementary grades. However, when instruction is delivered at a level of 50% in each program language, one bilingual-certified teacher can be paired with one ESL-certified teacher, who instructs the English portion. If a district chooses to extend the dual-language immersion program into secondary grade levels, the teacher

certification requirements also apply.

When the district cannot provide the appropriately certified staff for their bilingual program, they are required to file a bilingual education exception application with the state for the teacher or teachers who are in the process of obtaining their appropriate certification. The district will administer an Alternative Language Program during that school year as described within their bilingual education exception application. In a moment, we'll discuss the Alternative Language Program, but first, let's take a look at the ESL certification requirements.

There are two state-approved ESL program models: content-based and pull-out.

Students served in a content-based ESL program should receive all of their content instruction by ESL-certified teachers. This includes English language arts and reading, math, science, and social studies.

Students served in a pull-out ESL program should receive at least their English language arts and reading instruction by an ESL-certified teacher or teachers.

When the district cannot provide the appropriately certified staff for their ESL program, they are required to file an ESL waiver application with the state for the teacher or teachers who are in the process of obtaining appropriate certification. The district will administer an Alternative Language Program during that school year as described within their ESL waiver application.

As emergent bilingual students are being temporarily served in an Alternative Language Program when their teacher or teachers are not yet appropriately certified for the district's required bilingual or ESL program, it is the district's responsibility to ensure that the affective, linguistic, and cognitive needs of emergent bilinguals are being supported and addressed.

Also, the district must ensure that emergent bilingual students will be given a full opportunity to master both the essential knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and the English language proficiency standards (ELPS). Furthermore, the district must ensure that the teachers under the bilingual exception or ESL waiver are being trained and monitored for success through the district's comprehensive professional development plan. This will help teachers best serve their emergent bilingual students and also help them prepare for obtaining their necessary

bilingual or ESL certification.

The district's comprehensive professional development plan equips teachers with the training they need to obtain their required certification and also to effectively serve the students assigned to them. The district must ensure that a minimum of 10% of their Bilingual Education Allotment (BEA) funds are allocated to supporting the teachers under the bilingual education exception and/or ESL waiver. The strategic design of the Alternative Language Program should align as closely as possible with the district's intended bilingual or ESL program model.

For instance, within an alternative language program to a required bilingual education program, emergent bilingual students may receive strategic primary language instructional support from other educators, including paraprofessionals. It is a district decision to allow a teacher under the bilingual exception to instruct in the students' primary language without a bilingual certification in order to align as closely as possible with the intended bilingual program. It's important to note that primary language instruction should be used appropriately, including making cross-linguistic connections and avoiding concurrent translation.

Within an alternative language program to a required ESL program, emergent bilingual students may receive additional English language development (ELD) support from other educators, including paraprofessionals. In the district's efforts to provide supplemental support for emergent bilingual students under an ESL waiver, they must avoid limiting students' access to all content instruction and specialized classes, such as physical education, music, and art.

Since the 2019-2020 school year, specific coding for Alternative Language Programs has been added to the state's public education information management system. The purpose of these new codes is to most closely align with the actual instructional setting of the students being served under an Alternative Language Program. Also, it allows districts to more effectively disaggregate program data and to target areas of needed growth in professional development and training.

For more information on program models, visit [txel.org/programimplementation](http://txel.org/programimplementation). For information on filing a bilingual education exception or ESL waiver application,

go to the TEA Bilingual Education Exception and ESL Waiver Resources webpage. If you have additional questions, reach out to the TEA English Learner Support Division at [EnglishLearnerSupport@tea.texas.gov](mailto:EnglishLearnerSupport@tea.texas.gov). Thank you for listening!