

**Chapter 28A.183 RCW  
LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAM**

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**RCW 28A.183.010 Definitions.** The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Interpreter" means a spoken language or sign language interpreter working in a public school, as defined in RCW 28A.150.010, to interpret for students' families, students, and communities in educational settings outside the classroom.

(2) "Qualified interpreter" means an interpreter who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively using any necessary specialized vocabulary until the office of the superintendent of public instruction and the Washington professional educator standards board establish a different definition in rule making.

(3) "2020 and 2021 reports of the language access work group" means the reports of the language access work group created by section 2, chapter 256, Laws of 2019, and reconvened and expanded by section 501(3)(g), chapter 334, Laws of 2021. [2022 c 107 s 2.]

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** "(1) The legislature finds that:

(a) It is the policy of the state to welcome and encourage the presence of diverse cultures and the use of diverse languages and modalities of communication in business, government, and private affairs in this state. To this end, the state has developed interpreter credentialing programs for court, medical, and social service settings.

(b) According to a report from the United States department of education, 50 years of research has shown that family engagement has beneficial impacts on student grades, test scores, drop-out rates, students' sense of competence, and beliefs about the importance of education. In Washington, many students' family members have language access barriers because they prefer to communicate in a language other than English or require communication assistance services. Washington public schools' ability to effectively communicate with students and their family members who have language access barriers plays a vital role in reducing educational opportunity gaps. Failure to provide language access hinders communication between schools and families, which leads to long-term economic costs when a substantial fraction of the students in Washington are not able to realize their full potential.

(c) Effective two way communication between school staff and student's families in educational settings outside the classroom is not taking place for a variety of reasons, including: (i) Some school districts do not consistently assess the language needs of their communities or consistently evaluate the effectiveness of their language access services; (ii) resources, including time and money, are often not prioritized to engage families with language access barriers; and even when language access is a priority, some districts do not know the best practices for engaging families with language access barriers; (iii) school staff are often not trained on how to engage families with language access barriers, how to engage and use interpreters in educational settings outside the classroom, or when to provide translated documents; and (iv) there are not enough interpreters qualified to work in educational settings outside the classroom.

(d) Providing meaningful, equitable language access to students and their family members who have language access barriers is not only a civil right, but will help students meet the state's basic education goals under RCW 28A.150.210 resulting in a decrease in the educational opportunity gap between learners with language access barriers and other students, because student outcomes improve when families are engaged in their student's education.

(2) Therefore, the legislature intends to require public schools to implement a language access plan and program for culturally responsive, systemic family engagement developed through meaningful stakeholder engagement. The legislature intends to provide training, tools, and other technical assistance to public schools to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of their language access plans and programs. In addition, the legislature intends to direct the development and implementation of credentialing for spoken and sign language interpreters for students' families in educational settings outside the classroom, with the goal of creating a professional interpreter workforce guided by a code of ethics and standards of practice. Finally, the legislature intends to establish an ongoing advisory committee to guide, monitor, and report on the implementation of these new policies." [2022 c 107 s 1.]

**RCW 28A.183.020 Principles.** The principles of an effective language access program for culturally responsive, systemic family engagement are as follows:

(1) Accessibility and equity. Schools provide access to all; two-way communication is a priority and is woven into the design of all programs and services;

(2) Accountability and transparency. The language access program and decision-making processes at all levels are: Open, accessible, and useable to families; proactive, not reactive; continuously improved based on ongoing feedback from families and staff; and regulated by a clear and just complaint process;

(3) Responsive culture. Schools are safe, compassionate places where each family's opinions are heard, needs are met, and contributions are valued. School staff are humble and empathetic towards families; and

(4) Focus on relationships. Schools seek to relate to families on an individual level, building trust through respectful relationships that recognize the unique strengths that each family and student possesses. [2022 c 107 s 3.]

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** See note following RCW 28A.183.010.

**RCW 28A.183.030 Technical assistance program—Toolkit.** (1) The center for the improvement of student learning established in RCW 28A.300.130 must implement a language access technical assistance program for culturally responsive, systemic family engagement that meets the requirements of this section.

(2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the language access technical assistance program must:

(a) Adhere to the principles of an effective language access program for culturally responsive, systemic family engagement established in RCW 28A.183.020;

(b) Provide training and technical assistance to support the implementation of language access programs for culturally responsive, systemic family engagement required under \*RCW 28A.183.040 and 72.40.310;

(c) Develop and maintain training modules for interpreters on interpreting for students' families and students in educational settings outside the classroom;

(d) Develop, periodically update, and publish a language access toolkit that includes the following resources:

(i) A self-assessment for evaluating the provision of language access services;

(ii) A guide for the development, implementation, and evaluation of a language access policy, procedures, and plan that meets the specific needs of families and the community;

(iii) Best practices for using interpreter services provided by dual role staff and contract interpreters, for using remote interpretation, and for translating documents;

(iv) Language access service evaluation templates for spoken and sign languages;

(v) Information for students' families about their language access rights, translated into English, Spanish, and at least the next nine languages most commonly used by students and their families; and

(vi) Sample job description of school district language access coordinators and building points of contact for language access services;

(e) Develop, periodically update, and publish bilingual glossaries of education terminology;

(f) Analyze and publish language access and language access service information submitted as required under RCW 28A.183.050. In addition to disaggregation by the student race and ethnicity categories and subcategories described in RCW 28A.300.042 (1) and (3), the published information must be disaggregated, to the extent possible, by language, school district and school, type of meeting, and other demographics or categories; and

(g) Provide staff support for the language access advisory committee established in RCW 28A.183.070.

(3) The activities of and resources provided by the language access technical assistance program must take into consideration the recommendations in the 2020 and 2021 reports of the language access work group. [2022 c 107 s 4.]

**\*Reviser's note:** The reference to RCW 28A.183.040 and 72.40.310 appears to be erroneous. RCW 28A.183.040, 28A.710.400, and 72.40.310 was apparently intended.

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** See note following RCW 28A.183.010.

**RCW 28A.183.040 Liaison—Policy and procedures—Implementation—Coordinator.**

(1) Each school district must designate a language access liaison to facilitate district compliance with state and federal laws related to family engagement, including the requirements under this section and RCW 28A.183.050. If a school district has a language access coordinator with duties as described in subsection (4)(c) of this section, the language access coordinator may also be the language access liaison.

(2) By October 1, 2022, each school district must adopt a language access policy and procedures that adheres to the principles of an effective language access program for culturally responsive, systemic family engagement established in RCW 28A.183.020 and incorporates the model policy and procedures described in RCW 28A.183.060.

(3) Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, each school district must implement a language access program for culturally responsive, systemic family engagement. Implementation of a language access program requires that a school district, at a minimum, complete the following activities:

(a) Adopt a language access plan that outlines how the school district identifies language access needs, allocates resources, establishes standards for providing language access services, and monitors the effectiveness of the language access program;

(b) Administer the self-assessment for evaluating the provision of language access services, which is part of the toolkit described in RCW 28A.183.030;

(c) Use the guide for the development, implementation, and evaluation of a language access policy, procedures, and plan, which is part of the toolkit described in RCW 28A.183.030. The processes for developing and evaluating the language access policy, procedures, and plan must engage staff, students' families, and other community members in ways likely to result in timely and meaningful feedback, for example partnering with community-based organizations and providing translation and interpretation in common languages understood by students' families;

(d) Review, periodically, the language access policy and procedures adopted as required under subsection (2) of this section to incorporate updates made to the model policy and procedures described in RCW 28A.183.060;

(e) Collaborate with community-based organizations on how to work effectively with interpreters; and

(f) Review, update, and publish, at least annually, information about the school district's language access plan, policy and procedures, and language access services, including the need for, and spending on, language access services. The information must include notice to families about their right to free language access services and the contact information for any school district language access coordinator and any building points of contact for language access

services. The information must be translated into common languages understood by students' families.

(4) (a) Except as required under (b) of this subsection, school districts are encouraged to have a language access coordinator with the duties described in (c) of this subsection.

(b) Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, school districts with at least 50 percent English learner enrollment or greater than 75 languages used by students or families must either: (i) Have a full-time language access coordinator with the duties described in (c) of this subsection; or (ii) annually report to the office of the superintendent of public instruction the total number of hours school district staff spent performing the language access coordinator duties described in (c) of this subsection and other information as required by the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

(c) The duties of the school district language access coordinator are to: (i) Serve as the primary contact for families, community members, school district staff responsible for monitoring compliance with chapter 28A.642 RCW, the office of the superintendent of public instruction, and the office of the education ombuds on issues related to language access needs and language access services; (ii) collaborate with any building points of contact for language access services; (iii) receive training and technical assistance provided under RCW 28A.183.030; and (iv) deliver language access training and support to school district staff.

(5) The requirements in this section do not apply to school districts with both fewer than 1,000 enrolled students and less than 10 percent English learner enrollment. [2022 c 107 s 5.]

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** See note following RCW 28A.183.010.

**RCW 28A.183.050 Service information collection—Feedback.** (1) School districts must annually collect the following language access and language access service information for use by the school district:

(a) The language in which each student and student's family prefers to communicate;

(b) Whether a qualified interpreter for the student's family was requested for and provided at meetings reported in the longitudinal student data system established under RCW 28A.300.500; and

(c) Other data on provision of language access services.

(2) School districts must submit the information collected under subsection (1) of this section at the time and in the manner required by the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

(3) Beginning in the 2023-24 school year, school districts must provide an opportunity for participants in each interpreted meeting to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the interpretation and the provision of language access services. [2022 c 107 s 6.]

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** See note following RCW 28A.183.010.

**RCW 28A.183.060 Model policy and procedures.** (1) By August 1, 2022, and periodically thereafter, the Washington state school directors' association must collaborate with the office of the superintendent of public instruction to update a model policy and

procedures for implementing a language access program for culturally responsive, systemic family engagement.

(a) When updating the model policy and procedures, the Washington state school directors' association must perform a racial equity impact analysis that involves the community.

(b) The model policy and procedure must include procedures for the school district board of directors to annually review the spending on and the need for language access services.

(c) The model policy and procedure must address procedures for effective communication with students' families who are deaf, deaf and blind, blind, hard of hearing, or need other communication assistance.

(d) The elements of the model policy and procedures must take into consideration the recommendations in the 2020 and 2021 reports of the language access work group.

(2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction and the Washington state school directors' association must maintain the model policy and procedures on each agency's website, at no cost to school districts. [2022 c 107 s 9.]

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** See note following RCW 28A.183.010.

**RCW 28A.183.070 Advisory committee.** (1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall establish the language access advisory committee to guide and monitor the implementation of chapter 107, Laws of 2022 and to recommend changes to requirements, policies, and procedures related to language access and language access services for students' families, students, and communities in educational settings outside the classroom.

(2) At a minimum, the advisory committee must guide, monitor, and make recommendations on the following topics:

(a) The effectiveness of language access policies, procedures, and programs;

(b) Family and community engagement, with a focus on multicultural families, families whose students have multiple barriers to student achievement, and families least engaged with their schools;

(c) The definition of "qualified interpreter";

(d) Supply of and demand for interpreters;

(e) Training for interpreters;

(f) Credentialing requirements for interpreters, including a code of professional conduct;

(g) Grants to cover nonstate controlled interpreter credentialing requirement costs;

(h) Language access and language access service data collection and analysis; and

(i) Evidence-based practices regarding language access, including best practice for using state and federal funding to provide language access services.

(3) (a) The members of the advisory committee must include representatives from spoken and sign language services users, community organizations that provide direct services to non-English speaking families, interpreters for students' families, interpreter preparation programs, advocacy organizations, schools, and school districts.

(b) Members of the advisory committee must be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

Subject to available funding and as determined by the office of the superintendent of public instruction, members of the advisory committee who do not receive compensation from their employer or contractor for attendance, either in person or virtually, at a meeting of the advisory committee are eligible for a stipend.

(4) Staff support for the advisory committee must be provided by the language access technical assistance program described in RCW 28A.183.030, except with respect to credentialing requirements for interpreters, for which staff support must also be provided by the Washington professional educator standards board.

(5) The advisory committee must collaborate with the Washington professional educator standards board, the Washington state office of equity established in RCW 43.06D.020, the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee created in RCW 28A.300.136, and other office of the superintendent of public instruction committees that focus on ensuring equity in access to opportunities for all students.

(6) By November 1, 2024, and periodically thereafter, the advisory committee must submit, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, a report on implementation of this chapter to the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the Washington professional educator standards board, the governor, and the appropriate committees of the legislature. [2022 c 107 s 10.]

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** See note following RCW 28A.183.010.

**RCW 28A.183.080 Credentialing requirements for interpreters.**

(1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction and the Washington professional educator standards board shall collaborate to establish credentialing requirements for interpreters as described in this section.

(2) Prior to establishing new credentialing requirements for interpreters, the office of the superintendent of public instruction and the Washington professional educator standards board must consult with the language access advisory committee established in RCW 28A.183.070.

(3) The credentialing requirements for interpreters must take into consideration the recommendations in the 2020 and 2021 reports of the language access work group.

(4) Credentialing requirements for interpreters, which must include minimum employment requirements, may be phased in as training and testing options become available and may be tiered based on the structure and significance of the interaction between school staff and the student's family.

(5) The office of the superintendent of public instruction and the Washington professional educator standards board must establish, and periodically update, a definition of "qualified interpreter" for purposes of this chapter and for other purposes.

(6) Once a code of professional conduct for interpreters is established, the superintendent of public instruction has the power to issue, suspend, and revoke interpreter credentials to which the code applies and to take other disciplinary actions against interpreters to which the code applies.

(7) Any activities provided by the office of the superintendent of public instruction or the professional educator standards board

that are required to meet credentialing requirements, including training, testing, and applications, must be made available at no cost to people who want to be interpreters.

(8) The electronic educator certification process must be adapted to include interpreter credentials. [2022 c 107 s 11.]

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** See note following RCW 28A.183.010.

**RCW 28A.183.090 Rule-making authority.** The office of the superintendent of public instruction and the Washington professional educator standards board may adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW that are necessary for the effective and efficient implementation of this chapter. [2022 c 107 s 12.]

**Findings—Intent—2022 c 107:** See note following RCW 28A.183.010.