

# INFORMATION, RESOURCES AND GUIDANCE

## COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS WHO SPEAK ANOTHER LANGUAGE

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Image from <https://vimeo.com/51313197>

From U.S. Department of Education / Office of Civil Rights:

### **Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents**

*"The obligation not to discriminate based on race, color, or national origin requires public schools to take affirmative steps to ensure that limited English proficient (LEP) students, now more commonly known as known as English Learner (EL) students or English Language Learners (ELLs), can meaningfully participate in educational programs and services, and to communicate information to LEP parents in a language they can understand."*

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Communicating with Parents who speak Another Language (PALs) can be rewarding as well as challenging. Here is a [brief video](#) that outlines why it is so important that PALs, also known as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) parents, be included in all communications that are also sent out to English-speaking parents.

***While mechanical translation like Google Translate is improving, it remains unreliable and should not be used to translate messages, letters, newsletters, or other communication.*** In ACSD, we have several more reliable tools to help faculty and staff communicate with PALs.

- ***Language Line*** provides real-time oral interpretation via the telephone or for conferences.
- ***Talking Points*** is a texting tool you can use with all of your classroom families that will also translate messages for PALs.
- ***PowerSchool*** and ***ManageBac*** have auto-translate functions.
- Chinese and Spanish ***translators*** are contracted by the district for certain high-use written translations. Many other languages are available through online translation company ***Rev.com***.
- Translated ***templates*** for field trip forms, health information, and other generalized information are accessible on the district website.

In addition, the ELL team has developed a guide for parents who speak another language to empower them to be able to communicate directly with teachers and staff. This guide will be distributed to parents regularly beginning in the fall of the 2018-2019 school year. This guide is also available on the ACSD [website](#) in Spanish, Chinese, and Portuguese.

Remember, as educators, **it is our responsibility to protect student and family privacy in accordance with FERPA.** Take this into account when determining which tools and processes to use to meet translation and communication needs.

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## Language Line

Language line can be used via speaker phone / conference phone when a parent is with you, such as for **grade reports, conferences** or **parent meetings**. It can also be used to call a parent at home and have real-time interpretation for **emergencies** or short parent **updates**. In addition, Language Line can be used with three-way calling for an incoming phone call from a parent.

**For more information on using Language Line in a variety of settings, watch this [brief training video](#).**

### How to Use the Language Line interpreting Service to Call a Parent or Facilitate a Bilingual Parent-Teacher Conference....

1. Collect parent's name, parent's phone number, and language needed.
2. Dial **1-866-874-3972**
3. Provide your Client ID # **5 2 5 2 5 6**
4. Select the language you need:
  - Press 1 for Spanish
  - Press 2 for all other languages and state the name of the language you need
  - Say "yes" or enter 1 to accept language
  - \*\* Press 0 for agent assistance if you do not know the language**
- You will be connected to an interpreter who will provide his/her name and ID number.
5. Give school name when prompted
6. Interpreter will ask if client is with you or if they need to dial them.
  - a. **If you are calling a parent, call Language Line first and follow the above instructions.** When the interpreter is on the line, please provide them with the **parent's name(s) and their phone number**. Language Line will take care for the dialing for you. They can also leave a voicemail for you if there is no answer.
  - b. **If you are having a face-to-face parent /teacher conference**, please have a telephone with a speaker function available. Dial Language Line when the parent arrives, and use the speaker phone to communicate with the parent.
  - c. **If a parent calls you**, please put the parent on hold and call Language Line to connect to their 3-way phone interpreting service. (*See below for more info.*)

Brief the interpreter. Summarize what you wish to accomplish and provide any special instructions. Talk directly to the client, NOT the interpreter from this point forward. Say "End of Call" to the interpreter when your call is completed.

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## Language Line: Incoming Calls

In the parent guide, ACSD has requested that PALs contact Central Office in their native language and administrative staff will access Language Line to interpret the call. Central Office will then contact the school with the parent name, contact information and a brief message as to the nature of the call. School staff can use Language Line or other resources to communicate further with the parent(s). (This [Interpretation Request Log](#) may help administrative staff in documenting and sharing information regarding incoming calls.)

If parents would like to call Central Office or a specific school, the staff member can use the following steps to receive the call and access Language Line for a conference call (phone features may vary by school):

1. When calling a school or Central Office directly, the parent will state their preferred language or simply say "Language Line." The staff member receiving the call will press the *Conference SOFTKEY* to activate a conference call.
2. Staff member may then dial 8 or press another outside line and dial the number for Language Line: 1-866-874-3972. When Language Line answers, follow the prompts to provide ACSD's client ID (525256) and the appropriate language needed. **\*\*Press 0 for agent assistance if you do not know the language needed.**
3. Once you are connected to an interpreter, press the *Add SOFTKEY*, then the *Begin SOFTKEY* to connect the calls.

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## Working with Interpreters

When working with Language Line or other interpreters providing real-time interpretation, there are several things to keep in mind to help the process be smooth, efficient, and respectful.

*Here are some tips from Burlington School District for working with interpreters:*

1. Keep it **short** and make it **clear!**
  - Organize your remarks into manageable and meaningful **chunks** so the interpreter is better able to interpret your message accurately.
  - Provide the parent and interpreter with an **overview** of what will be discussed at the conference and the **purpose** of the discussion.
2. **Avoid slang and idiomatic expressions.**
  - Slang and idiomatic expressions are difficult to translate. They confuse the interpreter and the parent.
  - Use **direct language** free of slang and idioms. Examples of hard-to-translate language include: “get down to business”, “have an axe to grind”, “zero in on something”, “step up to the plate”, and “get up to speed”.
3. Speak **slowly and clearly.**
  - Speak a little more slowly than usual.
  - Do not try to talk while eating or drinking.
  - Keep hands away from your mouth.
  - Don’t mumble. Don’t talk more loudly.
4. Look at the **parent**, not the telephone or the interpreter.
  - The meeting is with the parent; the interpreter is a tool to facilitate the conversation.
  - The telephone or interpreter should sit adjacent to the parent in a way that allows the teacher and parent to speak directly to each other.
5. Be prepared to give **background information.**
  - Parents may not understand aspects of American schooling (e.g., planning room, interim reports, field trip permissions, etc).
  - The interpreter may ask you to explain what you are talking about.
6. Allow **additional time** for the meeting.
  - Everything the teacher or parent says is repeated again when it is interpreted.
  - Meetings that include an interpreter will take longer than a usual meeting.
  - **Writing down comments** on paper that the interpreter and parents can take with them ensures that the parents get all the information they need.
7. Offer **suggestions** and **solutions**
  - Many refugee and immigrant parents expect the teacher to tell them what s/he will do and what the parents must do to help their student succeed.
  - Provide suggestions and solutions that parents can enact.

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## Talking Points

Talking Points is a non-profit, FERPA compliant organization that connects teachers and parents via text messaging. It is free for teachers to use, and you can set up your entire classroom so that the same message goes out to all parents and is translated for parents in your class based on the language profiles you set up. This can be useful for **all-class announcements and reminders** or for individual student **achievements and celebrations**. Another great feature of Talking Points is the ability for parents to communicate directly with teachers in their native language(s) and you will see the text in English. You can use a computer or a device to send texts, and all messages are sent and received through a TalkingPoints number so your personal cell number is not disclosed. **Ask your principal if the *Talking Points* app is approved for use in your school.** *Talking Points should not be used for situations already covered by Blackboard Connect (e.g., school closings), which is already set up with translated announcements.*

**Here's a link for a [brief training video](#). See this [Google Doc for Talking Points General Info](#) and this document for a [teachers' guide to using Talking Points](#).**

## PowerSchool and ManageBac

Starting this year, parents/guardians can select their preferred language when signing on to PowerSchool and ManageBac. This will allow PALs to access their child's grades in a language that works for them. Language options are limited, but if you know of a family who needs access in a language not listed, contact Jasmin Doty.

## Written Translations

Generally used for high-volume mailings, ACSD has contracts with translators for communication that is all-district or all-school. If you regularly communicate with a PAL and don't hear about a translated version of a mass mailing, please contact your building principal (or Caitlin Steele, for district-level mailings) to find out more.

Any documents or mailings that are going out to all community members and have **not** been translated should include this multilingual translation / interpretation [notice](#) that will allow parents to access interpretation or translation at no cost to themselves. (Note: This notice does not need to be reproduced for every family. Use school-based PALs lists to determine need.)

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## ACSD Translating Procedure

Translation is the process of transferring ideas expressed in writing from one language to another. Translators must have a superior understanding of the grammatical and idiomatic nuances of two languages.

### *Translation Service Guidelines*

- Start the translation process at least 2 weeks before documents are needed.
- Carefully review the document to be translated.
- Double-check document for timeliness and relevance to PALs.
- Make sure the text is concise (We pay by the word.) and clear.
- Avoid jargon, idioms, and technical language.
- **The translated document does not need to be a word-for-word translation of the original. It is often best if it is a focused summary of the key points.** If you need to use acronyms such as IB, MESA, ASAP, TBA, etc., make sure they are defined.
- Send any documents via email with the subject line **“Translation Needed”** to the translation lead within your building.
- All documents to be translated need to be submitted in electronic form as Google Doc with no complicated formatting (e.g., **Bold** and *italics* are fine, tables and blanks are not.)
- When the document is returned to you, attach the translation to the original and send both home.
- Comply with FERPA requirements whenever sending specific student information. This may involve stripping out student/family names. In a Google Doc, you can search for the name and replace it with “[Name]” so it’s easy to find and replace later.

When preparing to submit a document for translation, consider using the Talking Points App if the communication can be summarized in a short message. Also consider using Talking Points for brief announcements whenever possible. Some teachers are using sites like Class Dojo or Bloomz for classroom communication. These sites have the ability to translate messages automatically and can increase parent engagement with teachers. They are free, FERPA compliant, and can take the place of the school newsletter (and it’s monthly translation process). And finally, if time is of the essence or written translation is not possible, you can use Language Line to call a parent and relay the information orally.

## Translated Templates

**ACSD is developing templates that you can use for field trips, general information, or health needs.** Some forms are already posted on the ACSD website [here](#). ACSD has also produced a [Multilingual Note to School](#) so that parents can send quick notes from home. If you would like to order notepads to distribute to Spanish and Chinese-speaking families, contact Caitlin Steele.