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The Home-Language Survey – Just The First Step to Identifying ELL Students

Education Week recently published ***Home – Language Surveys for ELLs Under Fire***, dated February 16, 2010. *"A growing chorus of people are saying that some schools districts are overzealous in categorizing students as English-language learners in the aim of complying with federal and state laws to ensure that children of immigrants get extra help with English. They contend that the information requested on the home-language survey that parents are commonly asked to fill out when they enroll their child in a public school can be misleading or misused."*

An Iowa case sites a 10 grader who said she spoke Lao at home, which was recorded on a home-language survey. The district labeled her as an ELL without determining her English skills. She passed the test but was still labeled as such because of the Iowa policy that states that children must pass the English-Proficiency test two years in a row.

Federal Law Requires a Home-Language Survey at Enrollment

The home-language survey is a district-developed tool that should serve to answer the following question: *Has the student been significantly exposed to another language other than English?* As such, you can ask the following questions: (written by J. Iribarren, DPI)

- ☐ *Is your child's native tongue a language other than English?*
- ☐ *Is the primary language used in your child's home or environment a language other than English?*

A home-language survey should be a part of the school district enrollment process. There are two options for this – 1> Questions can be added to the school district enrollment form or 2> A *separate* home-language survey can be added to the school district enrollment process. DPI provides an example - dpi.wi.gov/ell/pdf/homelang.pdf

The home-language survey is a tool, which serves as a flag for further evaluation. It is the first step in the identification process in Wisconsin. See the summary below.

Quick Look Steps in Determining if a Student Should Be Identified ELL

1. Home Language Survey
2. Preliminary Evaluation: Academic History
3. Screener Evaluation for Instructional Placement. The *W-APT* is the initial "screener"
4. Placement in Language Instruction Educational Programs
5. Required Notification
6. Annual Assessment of English Language Proficiency – ACCESS for ELLs
7. Required Documentation

Summarized - DPI ESEA Bulletin 07.01, revision on 9.09. http://www.dpi.wi.gov/esea/pdf/bul_0701.pdf