

Individual Learning Plans Frequently Asked Questions

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Background and Overview

What is an individual learning plan?

An individual learning plan (ILP) is a document that describes the academic and language needs of, and goals for, an English learner (EL). An ILP details the strategies, accommodations, and goals to be implemented daily in the classroom in order to help ELs be successful.

Are individual learning plans new?

No, individual learning plans have been used in many schools and districts across Tennessee in some form for at least 30 years. However, the *requirement* that all schools and districts must implement individual learning plans is new in 2018-19.

Why is Tennessee implementing individual learning plans?

District leaders, administrators, and teachers are expected to meet the needs of all students, and those who are furthest behind and who have been historically underserved must be prioritized, as demonstrated by the department's commitment to "All Means All" in our [Tennessee Succeeds](#) strategic plan.

Further, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is grounded in equity, which includes access, opportunity, and supports for all students with an increased emphasis on both the proficiency and achievement of ELs. With the new guidelines and accountability for the EL subgroups in Tennessee's [ESSA state plan](#), district and school leaders are called to review and to make data-driven decisions for all students, especially for our historically underserved student groups. ILPs are an important tool in ensuring access to grade-level content area instruction through the development of the English language.

Why are individual learning plans important?

ILPs are designed to ensure that all ELs are being served and are on track to meet the linguistic and academic expectations each year. The development and implementation of ILPs provide key supports, such as:

- supporting language acquisition across the instructional day,
- providing meaningful participation in core instruction,
- enabling students to reach grade-level targets in their academic subjects, and
- coordinating instructional approaches, including collaboration, among all educators.

Identifying Students

Who receives an individual learning plan?

Per [State Board of Education Policy 3.207 \(5\)\(j\)](#), all English learners (ELs) will have an ILP beginning in the 2018-19 school year. Students who are English learners receiving English as a second language (ESL) services as well as English learners whose parents have waived direct ESL services will receive an ILP.

How are students identified for individual learning plans?

EIS data will be the source of identification for students with individual learning plans. Any student marked as “L” or “W” in EIS will receive an ILP.

How can we ensure that we are correctly identifying students for an individual learning plan?

Ensuring data accuracy in EIS is crucial to preparing ILPs for students in a district. Developing a system for verifying the accuracy of EIS data in a timely manner will be an important step toward correctly identifying students for an ILP. The department recommends verifying that data is correct bi-weekly or at least monthly.

Our district does not currently have any English learners. Do we still need to have an individual learning plan prepared?

Each year, the number of ELs increases as does the number of districts in Tennessee that serve ELs. **All districts** must have a plan in place to support English learners. The plan should include identification and placement procedures and who would provide the services. This includes having a plan for developing and implementing an ILP for a student should a new student who requires one arrive in the district.

Implementation

How should an individual learning plan be used?

ILPs are to be incorporated into classroom instruction by all educators serving EL students. State board policy also notes that all teachers who provide instruction to an EL must be trained on WIDA English development standards.

What should be included in an individual learning plan?

There is not one required ILP form that must be used by all districts; rather, schools and districts retain the local responsibility to create an ILP based on their students' needs. An ILP should be tied to the [WIDA Standards](#) and [WIDA Can Do Descriptors](#). The department recommends the following elements that are neither mandatory nor exhaustive:

- General information about the student (name, age, grade, school year)
- WIDA assessment placement proficiency level
- WIDA ACCESS proficiency level (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Composite)
- State and local assessment information
- Strategies, and accommodations for the student to be implemented in all classes
- Strategies and accommodations for state assessments
- Description and schedule of ESL services provided to student
- Goals for the student
- Parent, teacher, and student input

Will the state be providing an individual learning plan for districts?

The department will provide a sample template for an individual learning plan to districts. This template will include the recommended elements. If a district is currently using an existing template, it is not required to transition to the state sample template. The sample template is a resource provided for any districts choosing to utilize it. The template may be customized with the district logo and addition or deletion of suggested information.

Where can I find the state-provided individual learning plan template?

A sample version of the ILP template is available [here](#).

How are students engaged in the creation of an individual learning plan?

There are no specific requirements around how students are engaged in the ILP process. Some students may not be at a level to provide meaningful information to the process. However inclusion of the student's ideas and suggestions encourages them to be involved in their own education and to develop metacognitive skills. Student feedback on accommodations, goals, and growth should be collected as needed throughout the academic year. An ILP should include space for, and be adjusted to, reflect this student feedback.

How are parents engaged in the creation of an individual learning plan?

There are no specific requirements around how parents are engaged in the ILP process. Schools should keep parents informed of their student's progress, and an ILP should be referenced during opportunities for parent engagement. Phone calls, parent-teacher conferences, and parent nights are opportunities to share an ILP with a parent and gather their feedback.

How many times per year should the individual learning plan be updated?

An ILP should be updated as needed, but should be updated at least every four and a half weeks. ILPs are intended to be living documents that reflect a student's current progress, goals, and needs. If student learning goals are met during the year, the goals should be adjusted and updated. If student accommodations change, these should be adjusted as well. Teacher input should be gathered regularly.

Does the individual learning plan follow the student if he or she moves districts?

Yes, when possible, an ILP should move with a student. If an EL enters your district without an ILP, please create one. As a courtesy, the referring district should forward the ILP with other student records when a student leaves a district. Having this information will enable the best placement and services for this student in the new school.

Can Title III funds be used to support the implementation of an individual learning plan?

No, Title III funds cannot be used to meet state board or other state legal requirements. ILPs are required under [State Board of Education Policy 3.207 \(5\)\(j\)](#), therefore a district would need to consider supplement, not supplant provisions when deciding how to use funds. For further information, please see the Supplement, Not Supplant webinar located [here](#).

How should a district combine the state's template for an individual learning plan with its own template, if already in use?

While not required, a district may choose to select elements from the state ILP template for use within an already existing template.

Roles and Responsibilities

Who creates an individual learning plan?

ILPs are locally developed by ESL teachers in collaboration with other content area and general education teachers, leaders, counselors, parents, and/or the student. The lead developer does not have to be an ESL teacher, but generally will be. Collaboration among educators and other stakeholders involved in the EL's education is the most important aspect the ILP. An ILP should be shared with the EL to ensure that the student understands his or her goals and growth targets.

Who should be trained on WIDA standards?

Per [State Board of Education Policy 3.207 \(5\)\(j\)](#), all teachers who provide instruction an English learner must be trained on WIDA English development standards. This includes both ESL and general education teachers.

How can we learn more about WIDA standards?

More information about WIDA standards can be found on the [WIDA website](#). In April 2018, the department is providing a series of WIDA standards trainings across the state for both general education and ESL teachers. In late spring 2018, a WIDA standards training webinar will be available on the [Tennessee WIDA website](#).

What is considered adequate training on WIDA standards?

Participating in the department's in-person WIDA training or online webinar, along with consistent professional development around standards is considered adequate training. Some districts work with ESL teachers to train general education teachers through professional development days, while others utilize ESL coaches or teachers to train through embedded professional development sessions with general education teachers.

How can a district-level administrator support individual learning plans?

District-level administrators should stay updated on developments related to statewide policy on individual learning plans. Additionally, district-level administrators can develop systems of support for both ESL and general education teachers around the implementation of individual learning plans. District leadership should support school leaders as they require implementation of ILPs at the school level.

How can a school-level administrator support individual learning plans?

School-level administrators should provide opportunities for collaboration among teachers. Training around ILPs is highly recommended for administrators, and the department is planning professional development for school administrators for summer and fall 2018. Additionally, administrators can seek out and provide professional development opportunities for all educators around WIDA standards and ESL education. Moreover, school administrators can build a positive school culture that supports students from all backgrounds and views the EL's native language and cultural background as an asset.

Special Education and English Learners

Is the individual learning plan the same as an IEP?

No, the implementation process for an ILP is less formal than that of an IEP. The IEP is a legal document that assures services through IDEA to students with disabilities. It requires, at a minimum, annual meetings with stakeholders.

An ILP is designed to be a tool for collaboration among educators, parents, and students to coordinate effective instruction for ELs. While ILPs must be updated regularly (every four and a half weeks at a minimum) and used daily, the exact implementation plan is at the discretion of districts. Formal stakeholder meetings are not required; informal discussions among teachers, students, and parents are appropriate.

Can students have both an individual learning plan and an IEP?

Yes, students who are identified for both ESL services and special education intervention can have both an ILP and an IEP. Collaboration among all educators who work with the student throughout the school day is important in order to support both of these needs.

Accommodations

Are there any required accommodations that need to be listed for all students on an individual learning plan?

Accommodations are based on individual student needs and may not be necessary. This means that there are no required accommodations that need to be included for all students on an individual learning plan. The purpose of accommodations is to provide access to instruction and assessment. Accommodations may be required for some students and can be revisited when needed to assure the support is working. Some students may require specific language supports or accommodations for longer periods of time in comparison to students that may only require accommodations for a short period. Therefore, accommodations should be revised regularly to assure student success with access to instruction.

Can we list additional accommodations other than those on the template?

Yes, although the ILP template will include some commonly used accommodations, districts have flexibility in adding additional accommodations.

What are the accommodations for assessment?

For TNReady/end-of-course (EOC) exam accommodations, please click [here](#). On the WIDA ACCESS for ELs 2.0, the two approved accommodations are extended time and rest/ breaks where the assessment may be paused and resumed, as needed.

How do we ensure that all teachers are correctly using the accommodations listed on the student's individual learning plan?

To assure accommodations are being utilized appropriately, districts and schools must have a plan to ensure fidelity. Fidelity can take place in various forms, such as classroom observations, lesson planning, scheduling support for teachers that are new to using specific accommodations, teacher modeling of best practice during staff professional development opportunities, and ongoing check-ins. Accommodations and language supports that are used for assessments should be used in the classroom setting throughout the year.

Support and Additional Information

What supports will the department provide on individual learning plans?

As mentioned above, by the end of April 2018, the department will share a sample ILP template for use by districts. This template will include the department's recommended elements. During spring and summer 2018, the department will offer regional trainings for district administrators, school administrators, and teachers for completing meaningful ILPs. The ESL team at the state, listed below, is also available to provide specific technical assistance as needed to districts and schools.

Where can I find additional information about English learners?

Additional information about supporting ELs can be found in the EL Framework and the ESL Manual, both of which can be found on the department's [website](#).

Who do I contact for more information?

For more information, please contact:

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