



**BILL LEE**  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
NINTH FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER  
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY  
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

**LIZZETTE REYNOLDS**  
COMMISSIONER

**Via Electronic Mail**

July 19, 2023

Natalie Morosi, Executive Director  
Aventura Community School  
3010 Tuggle Avenue  
Nashville, TN 37211

Re: Waiver for English as a Second Language (ESL) Rule

Dear Dr. Morosi:

I am in receipt of your July 18, 2023 waiver request of State Board of Education Rule 0520-01-19-.03 requiring direct ESL Services to be provided utilizing one or more of the Department-approved service delivery models. According to your request, you are seeking a waiver of this rule to use a co-teaching ESL model in kindergarten through second grade classes for the 2023-24 school year. Due to the unique nature of your dual-language immersion program, the department understands language acquisition supports are being used throughout the day and certified ESL teachers are overseeing the specialized needs for students.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-1-201(d) grants the commissioner the authority to “waive any state board rule or statute that inhibits or hinders the LEA’s ability to meet its goals or comply with its mission.” Therefore, your request is hereby granted for the 2023-24 school year. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions

Sincerely,

Lizette Reynolds  
Commissioner



Tennessee Department of Education – Office of The Commissioner  
 710 James Robertson Parkway - Andrew Johnson Tower, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor - Nashville, TN 37243

## Local Education Agency Waiver Request

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-1-201(d), upon application by the local education agency (LEA) for one or more of its schools, the commissioner of education may waive any state board rule or statute that inhibits or hinders the LEA's ability to meet its goals or comply with its mission. Please submit completed forms to [Commissioner.Education@tn.gov](mailto:Commissioner.Education@tn.gov). Following review by the commissioner, the LEA will be notified in writing if the waiver request is approved or denied. Unless otherwise stated, all waivers granted by the commissioner shall be granted for one-year terms.

Waivers may **not** be granted by the commissioner for regulatory or statutory requirements related to:

- (A) Federal and state civil rights;
- (B) Federal, state and local health and safety;
- (C) Federal and state public records;
- (D) Immunizations;
- (E) Possession of weapons on school grounds;
- (F) Background checks and fingerprinting of personnel;
- (G) Federal and state special education services;
- (H) Student due process;
- (I) Parental rights;
- (J) Federal and state student assessment and accountability;
- (K) Open meetings;
- (L) Educators' due process rights;
- (M) Reductions in teachers' salaries;
- (N) Employee rights, salaries and benefits; and
- (O) Licensure of employees.

**Local Education Agency:**

MNPS

**School Information (if applicable):**

School Name:

Aventura Community School

Street:

3010 Tuggle Ave

City:

Nashville

Zip Code:

37211

Please list the statute(s) and/or state board rule(s) for which waiver is being requested:

English as a Second Language Rule, Chapter 0520-01-019

Explanation of how the statute(s) and/or state board rule(s) inhibits or hinders the local education agency's ability to meet its goals or comply with its mission:

As a dual language school with co-teachers in each classroom, providing opportunities for students to engage with linguistic diversity within the classroom is essential to our model. Allowing ESL licensed teachers to provide co-teaching services without pulling students out of the classroom demonstrates that all students at Ventura are language learners regardless if they are receiving the

Expected duration of the condition necessitating this waiver request: support for Spanish or English.

2023-2024 school year

(and beyond in the duration of our model for our K-5 classrooms)

Director of Schools (Signature)



Print Name

Natalie Morosi

Date

7/18/2023

# AVENTURA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Dear Commissioner Reynolds,

My name is Katie Castellon and I am the Lower School Director (and ESL Coordinator) at Aventura Community School. I am writing to request the use of a co-teaching ESL model in our Kindergarten through 2nd grade classes for the 2023-24 school year, beginning August 7th 2023. We are a single-site charter and are only requesting this permission for ourselves.

Aventura is a dual language (Spanish/English) project based learning charter school located in Southeast Nashville. Our student population is linguistically, racially, and socio-economically diverse. We have about half of our student population who identify as native English speakers and half who do not. We are approximately 30% caucasian, 40% hispanic, 15% African American, 5% Asian and 10% mixed-race. We have approximately 75 students (estimation with incoming Kindergarten students still being identified) who will be identified as Active EL learners for the 2023-24 school year.

All of our classrooms are co-taught by two fully licensed educators, of whom are two licensed EL teachers per grade level (2 out of 6 teachers per grade level in K-1 and 2 out of 4 teachers in 2nd grade). This ratio of EL teachers is nearly double the state requirement due to the nature of our dual-language model where *all* students are considered language learners (learning English, Spanish or both). Embedding second language acquisition strategies is a daily part of our instruction for all students. Some example of these structures and strategies are:

- dedicated time in our scope and sequence for bridging of content (between Spanish and English) for all students
- using total physical response when engaging with a student in their non-native language
- word walls for both languages and cognates
- Center-based independent work time with manipulatives for both literacy and math
- Flexible work cycles that allow for daily adaptation to student needs and data in intentional small groups
- A project-based model that encourages students to collaborate and work together and build on each others linguistic and cultural backgrounds

A co-teaching model is essential to the implementation of our program and success of our students because it enables teachers to integrate content and language instruction seamlessly throughout the day and hold time during both literacy and math for small group instruction without pulling students out of the classroom. Our academic model is structured around two work cycles (literacy and math) during which teachers are implementing a variety of co-teaching strategies to meet the needs of each student in the classroom. This may include, but is not limited to, parallel or team teaching a lesson launch to ensure students are receiving new

# AVENTURA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

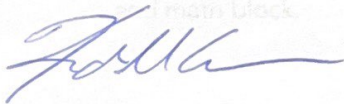
content in their zone of proximal development or station teaching during independent work time to reinforce literacy or math skills.

We understand that for co-teaching to be effective it requires extensive co-planning, coaching and professional development. We ensure teachers have over 2 weeks of training and co-planning time prior to the start of classes as well an hour of co-planning each day (see attached schedule). This includes weekly facilitated Team Planning meetings (run by our Lower School Director or Executive Director) to review upcoming lessons, monitor integration of language standards using the Standards Crosswalk, and analyze student data & progress.

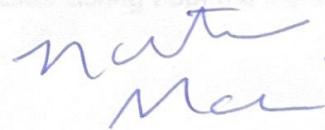
Research shows several examples of significantly increased achievement scores (Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis, 2008; York-Barr, Ghere, and Sommerness, 2007) from collaborative/co-teaching inclusion models over a pull-out or sheltered approach. In addition, several districts and states across the country are moving to co-teaching as the backbone of their English acquisition strategies. For example, in New York State all ENL classes (English as a New Language) are taught by an educator who is dually certified (content area/ENL) or are co-taught by a certified ENL teacher. We understand it was removed as an approved program in Tennessee because it was not being carried out intentionally in all settings, but believe that when carried out with fidelity and intentionality it is the best way to meet the needs of our ELL students in a dual-language program.

As you can see in the evidence outlined above, co-teaching is a foundation of our school model and built into our teacher training, daily schedule, and instructional practices. We request that you allow us to build on this backbone of our model to support our English language learners instead of one of the other pre-approved models from the State Rule. We appreciate your time and consideration for our request.

Sincerely,



Katie Castellon  
Lower School Director & ESL Coordinator



Dr. Natalie Morosi  
Executive Director



Attachment A: Work Cycle Description

Attachment A: Work Cycle Description

Lower School Work Cycles: Aventura incorporates several methods of instruction throughout the day that are beneficial not just for our ELL students but for all students. These include daily whole group, small group, and individual instruction guided by our curriculum & state standards. Co-Teachers provide support and interventions to address needs as indicated by academic benchmarks, ILPs and IEPs. In each work cycle in the ACS Lower School an observer could expect to see the following instructional elements:

- **Launch:** The work cycle Launch is a whole group activity led by one or both Co-Teachers and may involve an interactive read aloud, introduction of a mathematics performance task, or a lesson on how to use a set of classroom materials in tackling a component of one of our multidisciplinary projects. During this part of the lesson co-teaching is often either team teaching, parallel teaching or one teach one drift.
- **Independent Work:** Following the Launch, all students proceed to Independent Work time where they progress through a daily plan of learning activities during that work cycle. Independent Work is monitored and guided as needed by one of the classroom Co-Teachers, completed through station-teaching or one-teach one drift.
- **Focused Instruction:** During Independent Work, students will be called for individual or small-group Focused Instruction in Math or Literacy with the Co-Teacher who is not guiding Independent Work (as the year progresses and routines are established, eventually both co-teachers are pulling small groups simultaneously). These sessions are 10-30 minutes in length, allowing for approximately 4-8 Focused Instruction lessons per day in each extended work cycle. Based on the strengths of Co-Teachers, they designate who will lead Focused Instruction sessions in particular subject areas or to meet particular student needs. For our EL students these small-group sessions are 30 minutes of direct instruction from a licensed EL educator during both the literacy and math block.

8:00-8:15			
8:15-8:30			
8:30-8:45	EL Labs/Centers	EL Labs/Centers	EL Labs/Centers
8:45-9:00			
9:00-9:15			
9:15-9:30			
9:30-9:45			
9:45-10:00	Clean Up	Clean Up	Clean Up
10:00-10:15	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal



Amendment: Schedule Clarification and Additional Narrative

2023-2024 (Version A)			
	Kinder	First	Second
7:30 - 8:00	Before Care	Before Care	Before Care
8:00-8:15	Arrival/MW	Arrival/MW	Arrival/MW
8:15 - 8:30	Morning Mtg/ Compass	PE/Art/STEAM	Morning Mtg/ Compass
8:30 - 8:45		Classroom Teacher Planning	
8:45 - 9:00	Eureka Lesson		Eureka Lesson
9:00 - 9:15		Morning Mtg/ Compass	PE/Art/STEAM
9:15 - 9:30	Math Centers (9:15 - 10:15)		Classroom Teacher Planning
9:30 - 9:45		Eureka Lesson	
9:45 - 10:00			
10:00 - 10:15			
10:15 - 10:30	PE/Art/STEAM	Math Centers	Math Centers
10:30 - 10:45	Classroom Teacher Planning		
10:45 - 11:00		1st Recess 11:10 - 11:40	
11:00 - 11:15			EL Lesson
11:15 - 11:30	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	
11:30 - 11:45			
11:45 - 12:00	Kinder Recess 11:40 - 12:10	EL Lesson 12:10 - 12:40	Lunch Break
12:00 - 12:15			2nd Recess 12:30-1:00
12:15 - 12:30	EL Lesson 12:15 - 12:45		
12:30-12:45			
12:45 - 1:00			
1:00 - 1:15			
1:15 - 1:30			
1:30-1:45			
1:45 - 2:00			
2:00 - 2:15	EL Labs/Centers	EL Labs/Centers	EL Labs/Centers
2:15 - 2:30			
2:30 - 2:45			
2:45 - 3:00			
3:00 - 3:15			
3:15-3:30	Clean Up	Clean Up	Clean Up
3:30-3:45	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal

MW = Morning Work

EL Lesson = Expeditionary Learning Lesson

**Direct EL Services:**

English Language Learners receive direct support in small groups during two half an hour sessions each day from the licensed ESL teachers in each grade. Grade-level teachers work to create small group schedules for the Math Centers and EL Labs/Centers times based on student literacy and math levels (as well as ESL status) during the two weeks of summer Institute (July 24 - Aug 4th).

- In Second grade these groups take place in the students homeroom class because each class has a licensed ESL teacher.
- In Kindergarten and 1st grade, because two of the three classrooms have co-teachers with EL licenses, the students in the third homeroom are divided and sent into one of the classrooms with a licensed ESL teacher to receive their direct instruction during this time.

# AVENTURA COMMUNITY SCHOOL



## References:

Causton-Theoharis, J., & Theoharis, G. (September 2008). Creating inclusive schools for all students. *The School Administrator*, pp. 24-30.

York-Barr, J., Ghere, G., & Sommerness, J. (2007). Collaborative teaching to increase ELL student learning: A three-year urban elementary case study. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 12, 301-335.