



Supporting English Learners and Their Families During COVID-19 Closure

During the COVID-19 remote learning period, the Office of ESOL is providing the following guidance to schools and offices in order to increase engagement and communication between English Learner (EL) families, EL students, and their respective schools. The Office of ESOL understands that these are challenging times for all families, and even more so for those families who struggle with language and cultural barriers. Thus, we have created and identified resources that schools can share with their families as well as resources for teachers and schools on how to effectively communicate with families who speak limited English.

Resources to Share with Families

- A guide of [county-wide resources](#) is available for EL families during this time of crisis. Though this is not a comprehensive list, it does cover an array of organizations in the areas of food distribution, health and medical services, emotional and mental health services, home learning resources, financial support, internet access, utilities, and legal guidance. This guide will be updated on a regular basis, so please be sure to check it regularly.
- The organizations below provide useful information to various immigrant groups around Baltimore County. Please share the sites with your school communities:

Organization	Language Served
Amigos of Baltimore County	Spanish
Somos Baltimore Latino	Spanish
Baltimore Association of Nepalese in Baltimore	Nepali
RISE (Refugee and Immigration Services and Empowerment)	Open to any linguistic representation

- The ESOL Office has worked collaboratively with the Department of Communications to develop language-specific pages for our top 10 languages that provides updated resources related to the closure. These pages are linked on the first page of the website.
 - [Arabic](#)
 - [Burmese](#)
 - [Chinese](#)
 - [French](#)
 - [Nepali](#)
 - [Russian](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - [Urdu](#)
 - [Vietnamese](#)
 - [Yoruba](#)



- Similarly, official communications including information about [free meal sites](#) can be found in multiple languages on the Coronavirus Updates page.
- The ESOL Office has developed language-specific voicemail for families who speak Russian, Spanish, Chinese, and Urdu and have been unable to connect with their school or teacher. These numbers have been shared with families through the “Communicating with your Child’s School” multilingual document on the BCPS website.
- The ESOL Welcome Center now has a [Facebook page](#). Please review this page and encourage your EL families to “like” it in order to see regular updates about resources available. Additionally, resources are shared via Twitter at @BCPSESOLWelcome.

Resources for Schools and Teachers to Effectively Communicate with Families Who Speak Limited English

General guidance for communication to families who speak limited English:

- As much as possible, use clear, concise English in all communications.
- Avoid excessive wordiness and idiomatic expressions.
- When communicating verbally, slow your speech and check frequently for understanding.
- When possible, connect with families via Google Meet so that you can use visuals to relay your message.
- Keep in mind that some families may not have literacy in their first language. Therefore, it is always best practice to follow up written communication with spoken communication using Language Line (see below).

Tools for Spoken Communication:

- Use Language Line, a telephonic interpreting system, to communicate with your families on a regular basis:
 - Dial 1-866-874-3972
 - Provide Client ID 530771
 - Indicate the language you need assistance in
 - Provide Access Code 505171
 - Give the interpreter the phone number of the family you would like to call
 - Start the three-way phone call
- Use Language Line in collaboration with Google Meet for communication with families:
 - Dial 1-866-874-3972
 - Provide Client ID 530771
 - Indicate the language you need assistance in
 - Provide Access Code 505171



- Give the interpreter the dial-in phone number for your Google Meet meeting
- Start the three-way phone call

Note: Teachers may not use Language Line when utilizing Google Meet to class discussions. Language Line should only be used to communicate with families.

- Fluency is open as a tool for schools to request a contractual interpreter. If you need help with Fluency, please e-mail [Angela Dregier](#).

Tools for Written Communication:

- The public Translation Schoology group is kept up to date with all COVID-19-related translations organized by language. To join, use the following access code: 8TS3-QTZ9-RQFGP. The Translation Schoology group currently has the following materials (among other documents) in various languages to support parents and students with technology tools during this time:
 - BCPSOne:
 - Create a BCPSOne Account
 - Google Meet:
 - Google Meet at Home for Parents and Students
 - Using Google Meet Poster
 - Schoology:
 - Accessing Schoology
 - Accessing your Child's Account
 - Getting Started in Schoology Mobile App
 - How to Navigate a Remote Learning Course in Schoology
 - Navigating the Student View in Schoology
 - Navigating the Parent View in Schoology
- While we do not recommend using online translation programs that use computer-generated translations, we know that some teachers are utilizing online translations in an effort to reach families. If you are using these tools, please:
 - Keep in mind that online translation apps are not perfect. They will often translate literally word for word, rather than taking the whole meaning of the sentence into consideration.
 - Be sure to use clear, concise English to ensure a more accurate translation.
 - Be aware that some families may not be literate, so providing a written translation may add to the confusion.
 - When possible, check the translation with a native speaker.



If you are still struggling to connect with families and would like additional support, please complete this [form](#) and someone from the Office of ESOL will respond to your question or request within 48 hours.

Please e-mail [Alicia Freeman](#), ESOL Specialist, if you have questions about this information, or call 443-809-6814.