

# ESCN English Learner Update – January 2015

The following information was received from the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, which jointly issued guidance to school districts on equitable educational access for English learner students. We have also provided the fact sheet for your review.

Thank you,  
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Sharon Rodriguez, Elementary Instruction Coordinator  
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Dear Colleague:

The U.S. Departments of Education and Justice today released [joint guidance](#) reminding states, school districts, and schools of their obligations under federal law to ensure that English learner students have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential.

In addition to the guidance, the Departments also released additional tools and resources to help schools in serving English learner students and parents with limited English proficiency:

- A fact sheet in [English](#) and in [other languages](#) about schools' obligations under federal law to ensure that English learner students can participate meaningfully and equally in school.
- A fact sheet in [English](#) and in [other languages](#) about schools' obligations under federal law to communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand.
- A [toolkit](#) to help school districts identify English learner students, prepared by the Education Department's Office of English Language Acquisition. This is the first chapter in a series of chapters to help state education agencies and school districts meet their obligations to English learner students.

This is the first time that a single piece of guidance has addressed the array of federal laws that govern schools' obligations to English learners. The guidance recognizes the recent milestone 40th anniversaries of *Lau v. Nichols* and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), as well as the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. The EEOA, similar to *Lau*, requires public schools to take appropriate action to help English learner students overcome language barriers and ensure their ability to participate equally in school.

Thank you,

Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education

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