



From Confusion to Conversation: Improving Home Language Survey Practices

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WABE 2026

Session Outcomes

- Reflect on current HLS practices
- Practice asset-based conversations
- Understand HLS as a civil rights lever
- Learn how to partner with OSPI





Norms

- Interactive session
- Share honestly
- Assume positive intent
- Learn from each other

Think–Pair–Share:

Think: 1 minute

When you explain the HLS, what message are families receiving about their home language?

Pair - Share: 2-3 minutes

Share Out:

**What sounded asset-based?
What felt deficit-based?**

Key Reframe

✗ Compliance Form

✓ First Message to Families About Language

Why This Matters:

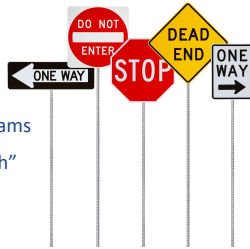
Civil rights obligation

Determines access to services

Misunderstanding → lost opportunities

Common Family Concerns

- Fear of labeling
- Immigration concerns
- Misunderstanding bilingual programs
- Belief child “already knows English”



Let's practice the conversation.

Scenarios

10:00

In groups:

1. Read your scenario
2. Rewrite the response to be:
 - o Asset-based
 - o Clear
 - o Culturally responsive
3. Prepare to share

Content examples:

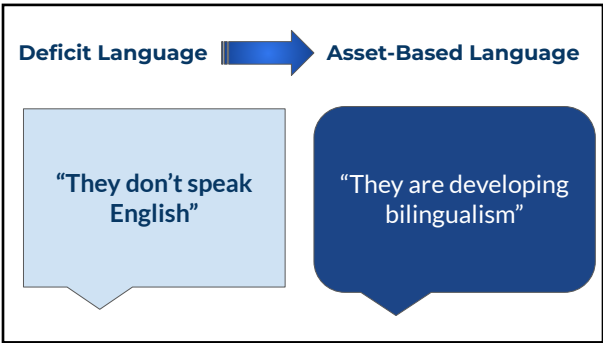
- "I don't want my child labeled."
- "I'm worried about immigration."
- "My child already speaks English."

What did you shift?

Key Moves



- Lead with empathy
- Normalize concerns
- Reframe services as support
- Affirm home language



What needs to shift in our systems?

OSPI as a Thought Partner

Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

You don't have to navigate this alone

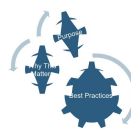
Support with:

- Complex cases
- Family conversations
- Compliance + best practice

Home Language Survey Resource: FAQs and Family Engagement Strategies

When to Reach Out:

- Opt-out situations
- Conflicting HLS responses
- Family concerns or misconceptions



Purpose

The Home Language Survey (HLS) is the foundational step in identifying students who may qualify for English language development services under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Washington State's Translational Bilingual Instruction Program (TEBIP). This process is not simply a compliance requirement; it is a civil rights obligation that ensures equitable access to educational opportunities for multilingual learners. Accurate and thoughtful implementation of the HLS is essential because it determines whether students receive the language support they need to succeed academically. When the process is rushed or misunderstood, students may lose needed support, and families might decide based on confusion instead of accurate information.

Why This Matters

The HLS is more than a form—it is a gateway to essential language services that help students develop English proficiency while honoring their cultural context. Missteps in implementation can lead to serious consequences, including civil rights violations and academic disparities. Families sometimes decline services because of misconceptions, such as concerns about labeling, bias related to immigration status, or misunderstanding about bilingual education. For this reason, district staff must approach the HLS process with cultural responsiveness, empathy, and clarity. Providing accurate information and addressing concerns proactively ensures that families make decisions based on facts rather than assumptions or prejudice.

Best Practices for Supporting Families During the HLS Process

What is one shift you will make?

