

**PARENT INTERVIEW FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)**  
**A GUIDE FOR INTERPRETERS**

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The following guide includes additional information regarding the questions included in the Parent Interview for English Language Learners (ELL). Each section included in the interview is discussed below.

**IDENTIFYING INFORMATION**

Names of student, teacher, parent, interpreter, etc. Complete as indicated.

**INTRODUCTION**

We thought it would be important to explain to the parents that the purpose of the interview is to collect information to better understand if the student may need additional support at school. Many parents of English Language Learners report that they were unaware their child was having any difficulties at school. We are very interested in how the parent describes the student's strengths and weaknesses at school. Since we are telling the parent the concerns expressed by the teacher, you need to find out what those are in advance (e.g., student is reading below grade level; student is very distractible; student is not making progress, etc.)

**SOCIAL AND FAMILY HISTORY**

Questions included are necessary to understand the effects of cultural/language factors on the student's learning.

1. **Who does child live with?** Self-explanatory.  
**The child is the** \_\_\_\_\_ (first, second, third, etc. child) **of** \_\_\_\_\_ (1? 2? 3? 4? children).
2. **Birthplace of?** Self-explanatory
3. **How long in the U.S? Friends and family in community?** This is asked to assess acculturation and the family's network of support
4. **Parents' level of education and occupation?** Self-explanatory
5. **Child separated from parents?** We have found out the many ELL students have been separated from their parents even before they came to the U.S. It is important for us to know for how long, where, who took care of the student while separated from parent, if all siblings were separated from parents, etc.
6. **First language.** The first language the child learned to speak. Usually it is the same as the parents' native language. However, responses may vary.
7. **Language child speaks at home?** Self-explanatory
8. **Language child speaks with friends?** Self-explanatory

9. **Language spoken to the child by different family members?** Self-explanatory
10. **Language child hears in the community?** Self-explanatory
11. **Parents speak English?** It could be that only one parent does. Be specific.
12. By "**interpretation**" we mean **orally** communicating the meaning from one language to another. We would like some idea of how well the student can do it and the frequency.
13. **Dominant language?** The language the student has more facility, feels more comfortable using, etc. from the parents' perspective. Some parents explain that for school, English is the dominant language and for home-related topics, Spanish is the dominant. Other parents say that clearly Spanish is the dominant language.

### **HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL INFORMATION**

Questions included help us determine if health/medical issues require further consideration.

1. **Problems with pregnancy/delivery?** If yes, please get an explanation
2. **Significant illnesses?** If yes, please get an explanation
3. **Hospitalizations?** If yes, please get an explanation
4. **Medications?** If yes, please get an explanation
5. **Serious head injury?** If yes, please get an explanation
6. **Problems with vision or hearing?** If yes, please get an explanation
7. **Developmental milestones** (e.g., sitting, crawling, walking, talking, etc.). Some parents cannot remember well when a particular milestone was reached. Encourage parents, but if they can't remember, ask if the child's overall development appeared normal or not.
8. **Different in the development than siblings or other children his age?** Again, if the answer is "yes", please get details.

### **FAMILY OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE STUDENT**

Questions included in this section give parents a good opportunity to discuss strengths and weaknesses observed at home.

1. **Getting along with siblings?** Can child play well? Does he/she disrupt siblings play? Age-appropriate behaviors? Aggressiveness?
2. **Friends?** Similar as question 1 but with other children. Games? Nintendo only? Solitary games or games that involve other children? Can child take turns?
3. **Behaviors of concern?** Circle any response that applies and add any other response from parent if necessary

4. **Other behavior problems?** Other problems may include wetting bed, destroying things, hiding or running away from parent, etc.
5. **Learning new concepts?** How does the child learn new things? Can he/she learn some things more easily than others?
6. **More difficulty than other children in the home?** Do younger children seem to know things the student doesn't know? Does child demonstrate more difficulty than when siblings were the same age?
7. **Speech clear and intelligible?** Can the student be understood when he/she speaks? Is the student's speech more typical of a younger child? You could give the parent examples of speech errors. For instance, in Spanish saying "Tis" instead of "Luis", "quelo" instead of "quiero." Some parents tell us that their child "mocha las palabras" ("chops" words).
8. **Express ideas appropriately for age?** Can the student express himself/herself effectively? Can student express complete ideas? Or people have to guess what child is trying to say?
9. **Reading at home?** We are very interested in the barriers/obstacles that family may encounter with reading at home.
10. **Homework?** Same as for reading.
11. **Parents' biggest concern with student?** This is very important. Often times, the referral concern (e.g., child can't read) is not a serious problem for the parent. Therefore, we need to know what the parent is concerned about and possible solutions for the referred problem(s) from the family's perspective.

## **SCHOOL HISTORY**

Questions specific to educational opportunity both in the U.S. and in the home country.

1. **Preschool:** Any kind of program prior to kindergarten
2. **School:** From kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
3. **School outside the U.S.:** We need details as indicated by the bulleted questions
4. **Prior reports of concerns at school:** If no concerns are reported, you could also ask what previous teachers said about the student (e.g., good at art; learning English well, etc.)
5. **School in the U.S.:** Details please. If possible include the name of each school attended.
6. **Missing school in the U.S.** Attendance is an important issue to explore. Also, find out if child has gone back to country of origin for more than a week and perhaps attended school there.
7. **Other family with language or learning difficulties?** If you want you could ask, "Who does the referred child remind you of in the family?"

## **COMMENTS**

Please encourage parent to mention anything he/she would like to say and to ask questions. It is critical for parents to know that we are a team working together to understand the needs of their child. If parents have more questions, please refer to their child's teacher. The teacher in turn could contact the appropriate team member as necessary.