

## APS Parent Academy Video Blurb

**This video was created by the Office of English Learners. It provides a brief overview of English Learner services available in Arlington Public Schools. It addresses how English Learners (ELs) will be supported both academically and emotionally during this time of distance learning.**

Office of English Learners: Update on Distance Learning

00:02

Welcome to the Parent Academy in Arlington Public Schools. My

00:05

name is Sam Klein. I'm the Supervisor of the Office of

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English Learners and you are participating now in the Parent

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Academy for parents of English learners. Thank you for being

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here. I'm excited to have you here and excited to have you as

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part of the APS family. I'm going to go ahead and share my

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screen so that you're able to see a presentation. I'm going

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to talk to you a little bit about English learner services

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and things that you can do

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during distance learning, and in the current situation that

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we're in. First, one of the most common questions I get is how was

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my child is identified for English learner services. Great

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question. In the United States, there's a law for all public

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schools that when a child is registered for school, they must

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fill out a home language survey. In Virginia, all of our school

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systems use the same home language survey questions, if

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a parent answers "yes" to any of the questions and the questions

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are about first language used in the home or the languages spoken

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by the child.

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If they answer yes to any of those questions, then we must

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have the student taken English language proficiency assessment.

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It's part of the WIDA assessments that will indicate

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whether they are a level 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 or that they are English proficient

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and do not need English learner services. A parent has a right to

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refuse English learner services, but every year when we give the

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annual WIDA access for ELs English language proficiency

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assessment. For all students who are English learners, even those

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who have opted out are required to take the assessment. Every

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year, those assessments are done between January and March, and

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that information gives us a great data to share with

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teachers so they know exactly the best ways to teach your

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child, but also so they know how your child is progressing

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through the English language proficiency levels, or if they

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became English proficient. The focus of the assessment

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is reading, writing, and speaking and listening through

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the content areas.

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So what happens when you get the assessment back? Well, the

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assessment is done and it determines if a student a level

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1-2-3-4 or are they English Proficient. Level 1 would

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typically be for the most recent arrivals who might not have had

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schooling in English previously. As students learn English and

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attain English, then when they are assessed the next year,

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they might move to the next level to a level 2 or Level 3

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and as they go on they progress through the levels they become

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proficient or a level 6.

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Level 6 is called English proficient, but even those

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students are still learning academic English.

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So every student has a score in this. At minute 2:55 in the video shows a score report

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A parent has a score report and the schools

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have the student score report at school. Teachers take a look

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specifically at these. The reason why is because if you

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look at the bottom where it's circled in red, that's the

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overall score. So you see it's a 3.4 which falls into the L Level

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3 range. However, their scores aren't exactly the

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same for listening,

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speaking, reading and writing. This is really

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helpful for a teacher to know that a student has stronger

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listening skills. Here the example being a 4.0, then

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they do speaking skills. See teachers like to build on the

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strengths of the students and then also work on things like,

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in this case, speaking what additional speaking

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opportunities can the teacher provide for the students for

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them to practice their speaking in order to move up

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there speaking score.

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WIDA, as I mentioned, is an assessment, but it's also a set

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of standards, and one of the things WIDA does is they

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create what we call "can do descriptors". These are in the

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hands of teachers. So a teacher says, "oh, this student is a 3.4

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and their listening level 4. Here's what they should

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be able to do. Of course, not everything written here is

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exactly the same for each student because each student is

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very unique. However, this level of information is very helpful

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for teachers. As they build their lessons to know that

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this student's going to need additional support in speaking

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as they develop their other skills of reading, writing and

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listening as well.

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So I'm going to talk in two parts about the role of the

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English learner teacher. I'll talk about it now and then in a

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few moments. So at Elementary, the EL teachers work very

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closely with the grade level teachers...say a second grade

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teacher or a fourth grade

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teacher. There, the English learner teacher's role is to

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focus on the English language development. They work in

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collaboration with the grade level teacher so all the grade

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level teacher is focusing more on the content, whether that's

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fractions or the water cycle. the English learner teacher is

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focusing on the language development that goes along with

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that content. Most of the time, the EL teacher goes into the

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classroom and works together. So there are two teachers in the

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classroom working with the

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students. But there are occasions where the EL teacher

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pulls out a group of English learners to work on something

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specific. At secondary, our program is a little different.

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What that means is if you look at a child schedule for middle

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school or high school they'll have a first period, second period,

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levels one and two, they will have an ELD English Language

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Development class for language arts or actually have two for

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language arts. They might have one for Science and social

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studies. The other way it happens is a co-taught class where

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student who's in a science class. That class might be co-taught,

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so that you have your science teacher and your English

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learner teacher, the English learner teacher is focusing on

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the English language development, while the science

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teacher is focusing on the content of science. Although I

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have to say they both understand both content and language go

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together and they work on

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teaching them in tandem.

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We also have a group of specialized teachers called EL

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Resource Teachers. They're only at the secondary level, and they

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specifically work with our students who are eligible for

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both English learner services and special Ed Services. If you

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have questions...if you if your child is a child who has both of

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these services and you have an EL resource teacher, please contact

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the school. If you have questions about the work that

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they're doing, but they're really looking at all the needs

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of the student, making sure



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that all of their needs in language development and content

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attainment are met.

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We have two other positions that I'd like to point out that are

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very, very important in the school. One of them is the EL

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counselor, so for the EL counselors are at middle and

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high schools in their main role is to support English

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learners who currently are experiencing trauma or possibly

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experienced trauma in the past or other hardships. You know,

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during the pandemic, a lot of students have had some social

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emotional needs and the EL counselors role is to provide

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support for them.

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All of EL counselors are bilingual and some of the things

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they can help with is overcoming difficulties with acculturation.

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For example, when a student comes to a new country and finds

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things very different, or for some of our students, they have

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been separated for a period of time from their family and now

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their reunified. The re-unification is a beautiful

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process, but for some students and parents it's difficult. The

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EL counselors are trained in helping the students and the

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families to get together and work well on the unification.

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Most importantly, the EL counselors are an important member

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of every school's counseling team and they know how to focus on

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the students social, emotional growth and progress. If you have

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concerns about your child's social emotional well being at

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this time, please make sure you contact the school and get a

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hold of the EL counselor. They'd be happy to work with you.

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Another very important role in our schools is the bilingual

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family liaison. The bilingual family liaison is, I like to say,

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is the member of the faculty who holds the door open for all

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families and encourages everybody to participate in the school

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activities and in their child's education, specifically the

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bilingual families, welcome new immigrant families into the

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school. They help them with enrollment, providing tours if

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necessary, but really they're the connection between the

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school and the community.

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Our BFL's as we call them, bilingual families liaisons like to

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do outreach and have meetings with parents and get parents

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into the school as much as

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possible. Another thing, some of our bilingual family liaisons do is

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run programs, whether it's on reunification, as I just talked

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about, or about ways of talking to your teenager. They run a

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variety of workshops. My suggestion for you is if you do

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not know your schools bilingual family liaison, please feel free to

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contact the school and ask for the bilingual family liaison.

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They'll get in touch with you and they will help you connect

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to the school. But more importantly if you have

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questions they are a great first step so they can connect you to

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the EL counselor or a General Education counselor or possibly to our

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instructional technology staff. They are very good at knowing

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who the person is in the school that you need to talk to.

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So our EL services person. I started to mention them

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previously. I just want to walk a little bit more closely through

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them at elementary as I talked about. The EL I teacher typically

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goes into a grade level class, whether that's kindergarten or

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third grade and the grade level teacher and the EL teacher plan

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or teach together. Again, the EL teacher focuses on the

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English language development and the grade level teacher focuses

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on the content. Oftentimes the

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teachers. EL teachers might work with a

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group of EL students in the classroom as well, or on rare

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occasions they might pull out a small group of English learners

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to work on something specifically during distance

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learning time. I'm going to talk about, in a few moments, something that's

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looking a little different. Another role that English

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learner teacher has is they might consult or talk to the Gen

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Ed teachers or the specialists to say "hey, here are some

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strategies to that will work with your English learners."

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At secondary again, our classes are typically self contained,

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so they're learning language and content in the same class

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taught by an EL teacher, so they're getting their content

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in their English language development together, or

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possibly in a co-taught class which would be, for example, as

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I mentioned before, the science teacher and an EL teacher with

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a focus on the content and the English language development.

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Distance learning. So distance learning in the spring is going

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to look a little different in the fall will look a little

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different than it did in the spring. Our teachers are really

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working hard to make sure that their classes are so full of

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language rich and that they're ready for the students

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to be able to practice their language while also learning

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their content. So one of the things I talked about is,

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generally in the school, the EL teachers work at elementary

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inside the grade level classroom. During distance

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learning, they will continue to sometimes work in the grade

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level classroom in the big class, but other times they will

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be pulling out small groups of students. The reason for this is

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that they can focus on those small groups on the four

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language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and

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listening. Specifically, the small groups will give the

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English learners more opportunities to engage in

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sustained reciprocal

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interaction around content. What does that mean? That means

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two or three students can have a conversation about the content.

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That is a conversation back and forth. Not a simple question.

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For example, what is the water cycle? This will be more of an

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in depth conversation about. For example, if they're learning

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about plants, one student might say "what does a plant need to

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grow?" The other student might say "one of the things they need

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is sunlight, and here's what the sunlight does" and the other

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student might say, is there anything else they need?

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And the student will respond, "They need soil which provides

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nutrients", and then they might ask, "are there other things that

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you think they need?" and it's a conversation back and forth.

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That's where a lot of languages are developed by the students.

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They're learning the content and they're practicing their language.

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And in distance learning those small groups will give more

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opportunities for the students to have those kinds of

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conversations. At secondary, because the classes are, you

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know, kind of first period, second period, third period...

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those classes will continue online to be similar in the

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sense that the English language development class with an EL

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teacher will be taught the same way. They too will be using some

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smaller groups, because as you can imagine, a large

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group of students doesn't give the small group interaction as

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much opportunity. So by having smaller groups they will be able

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to encourage and create.

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Opportunities for the sustained reciprocal interaction around

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content is very important for students. In addition, it

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will give teachers some time to work specifically on the reading

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and writing needs of each individual English Learner.

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Overall in Arlington Public Schools we talk a lot about the language

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in content goals of any classroom lesson. When a teacher



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goes to write their lesson plans, they should have in mind

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the language goal in the content goal. Let's start with the

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content goal. So imagine a teacher is a social studies

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teacher and they're going to be teaching about westward

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expansion. That will be their content goal. Something specific

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about that topic. The language goal is how the students are

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going to be able to express

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their learning. Or practice their learning about westward

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expansion. The learning goal. I'm sorry, the language goal

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will include something for listening, speaking, reading,

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and or writing. So asking students to write out their

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responses is an example of a language goal. Every lesson has

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some part content and some part language and in Arlington Public

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Schools, we really like to see lessons that involve all four of

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those areas, although not every lesson has all four. Sometimes

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there are three of the areas. Maybe it's just a day of

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reading and responding. So reading and writing.

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So here are a few tips that you can use to help your child

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with distance learning, so this is coming from a parent who had

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a student last year. My child was in high school last year and

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so some of these things came from our experience with our own

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child. One of the most important things you can do to get them

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from that summertime mindset of playing outside and enjoying

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themselves is OK. Now it's time to come in each day at these

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times. Reset times because this is school time in their mind.

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They're thinking I'm not going to the building. Does it need to

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be at this exact time? Schools are going to have schedules, so

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one of the things you can do is help create a schedule. A

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written schedule that you post on the wall for your child

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Number one: it might have the wake up time you want them to

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wake up. It might say "start with a healthy breakfast" and then you

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might have breaks in there as the teachers will have for

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stretching or for having a snack or for exercise. I really.

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think it's important that students realize that they need

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to stand up, walk around, take breaks. I know for me, sitting

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here in front of a computer doing my work, I take breaks

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about every hour where I stretch. I do some exercises or

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I have a snack.

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What are the other things you can do is provide what we call a  
provide what we call a

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quiet area, and if you notice on the left hand of the screen,

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there are two signs. One says "notice quiet zone" and the other

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says "quiet, please...work in progress". Feel free to make up a

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sign like that and put that in the area where the student is

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working. If they're working in the dining room or in the

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kitchen area or on the couch, or even in their own bedroom, you

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can put up a sign reminding all other occupants of the home that

17:01

this is school time. Please be

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quiet. And if it's also helpful...you can say during

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these hours it's quiet time so that we're able to do our work.

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Of course, there are breaks so people can express

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themselves a little louder. Or you can have a TV or music on,

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but during school hours, or when students are doing their

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their work at home, it's better to have a quiet zone or quiet

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time. Now very important too, is that there's a space for your

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child to work on. Whether it's a table or desk somewhere flat for

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them to put their

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device, whether it's a computer or tablet and a place for them

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to be able to write. Whether it's figuring out some

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mathematical problems by paper, or if it's actually writing

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something that they're learning. I always recommend to have a

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bottle of water, which I always have next to me as a friendly

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reminder. It helps students stay hydrated, and that helps them

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with their learning as well. And then, lastly, to reduce

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distractions. If you have a TV on in the background, think

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about turning it off or music. Turn it off or

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If you have an easily distractible child, like I did,

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is removing the toys or any games away from the computer

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area so that they're not tempted when they look at it during

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school. And Lastly, this is a very difficult time for students

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for parents, for teachers, for all of us. So when a student is

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having a difficult time, please be a compassionate listener and

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their educational partner. If you have questions at the end of

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this, I have some suggestions for who to contact, but remember, if

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you're not sure to contact in the school, the very easiest way is

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to start with the bilingual family liaison. They will make sure you

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get to the right person. Something else that's very

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helpful that you can do

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all the time, not just during distance learning, whether it's

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a summer or breaks or just during the year, is to continue

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to use your home language. We know it's important that your

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child is learning English, but it's also very important that

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they maintain their home language and be very proud of

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their home language. Research tells us that students who are

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strong in their home language, especially around reading and

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writing that transfers to them learning English, but even

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speaking and listening, it's important to maintain that home

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language if possible. So some

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suggestions for you is to read to them if they're younger. You

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can read aloud a book in your home language. The Arlington

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Public Libraries have books in many languages. Or if your child  
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is old enough, have them read a book on their own in your home

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language. One of my favorites that we did with our children

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because we raised our children to speak

English and Spanish at

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home is to have debates about fun topics when they were

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younger. We would debate things like what tastes better,

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cupcakes or cookies. And it's really fun to have that kind of

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debate. Especially because your child might not know the word

19:50  
for chocolate chips or frosting in your home language. That's a

19:53  
great opportunity for you to share with them those terms. It

19:57  
could be something fun like that, or it could be a current

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event. We have an election coming up in the United States,

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or maybe you've been following elections in another country. It's a

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great conversation to have. It's a current event. And then

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Lastly, I know this sounds old school, but writing letters to

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family members or in this case maybe the modern way writing

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emails to family members in

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other countries. But using their home language, it gives

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students an opportunity to write in their home language.

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Writing a Journal is another example of practicing the use

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of their home language. Let's make them proud of their home

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language and continue to develop it while on the other

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hand, they are also learning English.

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So Lastly, just some suggestions of questions you can ask. I know

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for our children this is very successful. Sometimes I remember

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when my children were younger I would say how was your day and

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they would say good. That didn't give me a lot of information so

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some of the suggested things that we did is we would instead

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of say how was your day. We would say "what is something you

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learned today that made you smile?" or "what is something you learned

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today that made you laugh" or

21:08

"What is something you learned today that made you say wow? I

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didn't know that" and then have them explain to you why they

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laughed or smiled or why they found that fact so interesting.

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Another example is "what did you do today?" that might get you "I

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don't know." or "nothing" or "I had math" or "I had science" or some

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quick answer. But if you ask it a different way, if you say to

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them "describe the two most interesting things you learned

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today?" now you might get a longer description in a longer

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conversation or "what is something you did today that you

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have never done before?" Again, it might just bring out a longer

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conversation, or instead of saying "what today was fun?"

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the way back to Friday and Thursday. Again just getting

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them to think through things and have to explain a little bit

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longer. It does a couple of things. It helps them practice

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their language and it also get some thinking a little more

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intensely and of course gives you more information about your

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child's day at school.

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So Lastly, I'd like to share with you who to contact again

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and easy start always is our bilingual family liaison in the

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school. They are a great connection to help connect you

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to the right people in the school if your child or if you

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have questions about your child's English language

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development, please contact the English learner teacher. They

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might have more than one, but you'll know the teacher who you

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know. It's the teacher who you, your child, is working the most

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with at elementary. If your child in second grade,

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feel free to contact his or her second grade teacher as well in

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that secondary if it's health and PE or mathematics or

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science, feel free to reach out to that to that teacher

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and again secondary if you have concerns about their social

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emotional well being, please contact the EL counselor and even

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though we don't have our counselors that elementary, we

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do have counselors at elementary, so please reach out

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to the bilingual family liaison at Elementary who can connect

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you to the counselor

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if you have concerns about your child's well being or the

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social emotional well being, that is very important to us

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in Arlington Public Schools that your child feels good and

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is feeling confident and our counselors can really help

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with that. We also have social workers and psychologists.

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Other staff in the building who can help help your

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child. And Lastly, you'll see the link there to the Engage Page

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for Arlington Public Schools. A great way to stay connected

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to Arlington Public Schools.

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Well, that brings us to the conclusion of this Parent

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Academy for parents of English learners, I hope you

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found this very helpful and I hope you're as excited about

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the school year as we are. As I speak the teachers are getting

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ready and getting excited about receiving your children

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into their virtual distance learning classroom where it's

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going to be a fantastic year. So thanks again and my name is

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Sam Klein, the Supervisor of the Office of English Learners,

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and I look forward to hearing about the successes of your

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children. Thanks and have a terrific school year!