

# Introduction

The mission of the U.S. Department of Education (Department) is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. In this regard, the Department supports families and community engagement. The mission of the Department's Family and Community Engagement Office<sup>1</sup> states that “[w]hen families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits. For schools and districts across the U.S., family engagement is becoming an integral part of education reform efforts.” The Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) produced the *Newcomer Toolkit*, and chapter five speaks to families' important role in their child's education.<sup>2</sup> OELA is a principal office within the Department, which, in addition to preserving heritage languages and cultures, is committed to promoting opportunities for biliteracy and/or multiliteracy skills for all students. OELA accomplishes this in the following ways:

- Providing national leadership by informing policy decisions
- Administering discretionary grant programs to prepare professionals for teaching and supporting English learners (ELs)
- Investing in research and evaluation studies that have practical applications for preparing ELs to meet college and career learning standards
- Disseminating information about educational research, practices, and policies for ELs through the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA)

OELA is pleased to provide this *English Learner Family Toolkit (Toolkit)* with information on questions families may have about public schools in the United States. The chapters are:

1. Enrolling Your Child in School
2. Attending School in the United States
3. Additional Educational Programs and Services for your Child
4. Finding Extracurricular Activities for Your Child
5. The Health and Safety of Your Child at School
6. Helping Your Child Be Successful in School

Each topic covered in the *English Learner Family Toolkit* is divided into five parts: (1) Overview, (2) Family and Student Rights, (3) Suggested Questions to Ask School Staff, (4) Tips for Families, and (5) Resources. All resources in the *Toolkit* are available online free of charge.

The Department would like to thank all EL family members, students, and school staff who contributed information to the *Toolkit*.<sup>3</sup>

*Other than statutory and regulatory requirements included in the document, the contents of this guidance do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/resources/family-and-community-engagement>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2023). *Newcomer Toolkit*. Washington, D.C. [Newcomer Toolkit \(ed.gov\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> The [National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition](#) (NCELA) supported the development of the *Toolkit*.