Fall 2026

ENGLISH LEARNERS

Strong Schools, Strong Communities

Upcoming Events

Money Moves: Family-Friendly Financial Budget Workshop

Workshop on budgeting basics and practical tips for organizing your family's funds to meet your financial goals.

Date: Thursday, November 5, 2026

Time: 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Location: Gerald R. Ford Academic Center, 851 Madison Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Dad's Cafe

Helping fathers and male caregivers connect and strengthen family involvement in schools.

Date: Thursday, November 19, 2026

Time: 8:45am-11:00am

Location

Host School Burton Elementary

GRPS English Learners Office

DR. MAYDA BAHAMONDE-GUNNELL

Chief Area Instructional Leader - Southwest Quadrant

Heather Quamme | Refugee, Immigrant Coordinator

Van Do | EL Coach

Aleiza Cabrera | EL Newcomers Coach

Jiji Lusamba | EL and Refugee Parent-Community Liaison

Lea Tobar | Parent Liaison

DEAR FAMILIES OF ENGLISH LEARNERS,

We hope your family has had a positive start to the school year. As we move into the fall, this newsletter shares helpful information, resources, and ways to support your child's learning at home and at school.

Learning in Your Home Language Matters!

Your home language is an important part of your child's learning. You do not need to speak English at home to support your child's education.

Talking, reading, telling stories, singing songs, and sharing family experiences in your home language can help children build strong language and literacy skills.

Try these activities at home:

Read together
Read a book with your child in your home language, English, or both.

Tell stories
Share family stories, traditions, and experiences. Ask your child questions and encourage them to tell their own stories.

Talk about their day.
Ask your child what they learned, what they enjoyed, or what was challenging at school.

Sing and listen to music.
Songs, poems, and music are fun ways to build vocabulary and strengthen language skills.

Keep using your home language.
Encourage your child to speak, read, write, and listen in your home language.

Strong language skills in one language can support learning additional languages!

Understanding the WIDA Assessment

What is WIDA?

WIDA is an annual assessment that measures EL students' English language development in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Why is WIDA important?

It helps teachers understand how to best support your child in the classroom.
It tracks your child's progress in learning English.
It helps determine when a student is ready to exit the EL program.

When is WIDA administered?

The testing window runs from January 25 to April 2, and students complete the assessment at their school as part of the regular school day.

How can parents support their child?

Encourage your child to get good rest and eat breakfast on testing days.
Talk, read, and listen to stories together in any language.
Remind your child to try their best; this test helps teachers support their learning!

Seal of Biliteracy - Celebrating Language Skills

The Michigan Seal of Biliteracy recognizes high school graduates who demonstrate strong proficiency in English and at least one additional language. This award celebrates your child's language skills and can be helpful for college admissions and future opportunities.

Why it matters?

Encourages students to maintain and develop their home language.
Shows future employers and colleges that your child has valuable bilingual skills.
Highlights students' hard work and dedication to language learning.

How do students earn it?

Students demonstrate proficiency in English and another language through assessments approved by the state. Once earned, the Seal appears on the student's diploma or certificate.

Talk to your child's teacher or school counselor to learn more about how your child can work toward this recognition.

Additional Contact Information

Transportation:
616.819.6000 | StierL@GRPS.org
Nutrition Services:
616.819.2135 | LanningaJ@GRPS.org
Volunteers:
616.819.1821 | Volunteer@GRPS.org Parent &
Community Engagement:
616.819.2867 | Parents@GRPS.or

NO SCHOOL

November 2026
Monday, November 2
Tuesday, November 3
(Thanksgiving Break): Wednesday, November 25 to Friday, November 27

December 2026
Half Day (Exams): Wednesday, December 16
Half Day (Exams): Thursday, December 17
Half Day (Exams): Friday, December 18
No School (Winter Break): Monday, December 21 to Friday, January 1

GRPS my choice
Grand Rapids Public Schools