

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · ST. PAUL

Enrolling in School in St. Paul: Four Languages, the Access Card and Immunizations 2026

The admission statute looks only at residence and age. We could not verify the district's enrollment document list, but we did verify the four languages it actually serves and two concrete ways to ask for an interpreter.

SHORT ANSWER

This city has a **single school district, Saint Paul Public Schools (ISD 625)**, so you have no district problem inside the city. Admission turns on state law, and the statute looks only at **residence in the district and the child's age; there is not one word about immigration** in the admission provision. On documents let us be honest: **we could not verify the district's published enrollment document list**, and the verified list from the district across the river **cannot be carried here**; two separate districts, two separate document policies. On language this district has a real difference: the four languages it actually serves are **Hmong, Spanish, Karen and Somali**, which means **Karen is one of the four official languages here** and is not in the neighboring district. **Turkish is not on that list**. In exchange there are two concrete mechanisms that make asking for an interpreter easier, and once enrollment is done **the library card arrives by itself**.

Language: what the district actually does

Saint Paul Public Schools says it serves students who speak **more than 115 languages** at home. But "115 languages" and "service in 115 languages" are not the same thing, and the difference is in the table below. The district's translation team handles more than **200,000 words** of translation a year along with phone recordings, video dubbing, text messages and oral interpretation; on the special education side there is a staff interpreter team for the same four languages, with other languages covered through an on-call list and outside agencies. The district's main line is **651-767-8100**.

SERVICE	WHICH LANGUAGES
Written translation of critical documents	Four languages, in order of prevalence: Hmong, Spanish, Karen, Somali
Viewing the district and school websites	English plus the same four
Phone lines	The same four
Enrollment phone lines	Spanish, Hmong and Karen
Paper application form	English, Spanish, Somali, Karen and Hmong

SERVICE	WHICH LANGUAGES
Other languages, Turkish included	On request

We point out the Karen difference deliberately, because it is easy to assume the two cities' districts are the same. In Minneapolis Public Schools the languages actually served are Hmong, Somali and Spanish and **Karen is not on that list**; here it is. The two districts' immigrant populations differ and so do their interpreter teams. Do not carry "the district serves that language" from a family in the other city to here, and do not carry it the other way either. We also print one conflict: the district's demographics page uses figures from an old census and says **113 languages**, while the current language access page says **more than 115**. We pick no side, but do not use the older page.

How to ask for an interpreter: three routes, all of them work

- 1 Tell school staff directly.** The simplest route, and the district lists it first on its own page.
- 2 Show the Language Access Card.** Saint Paul Public Schools uses a card so a parent does not have to explain the need for an interpreter in speech. For a parent who struggles in English that is a way to make the request without speaking; ask about it at enrollment.
- 3 Use the poster at the school entrance.** A "we can help you" poster hangs at the entrance and a parent points to their language on it. **We could not confirm an equivalent of these two mechanisms in Minneapolis Public Schools**, so they are this district's own practice.
- 4 For Turkish you have to start the request yourself.** The route is a **low-incidence language interpreter on request** and it runs through outside agencies. Make the request **at enrollment and in writing**, repeat it for the next parent meeting, and if Turkish is not on the poster or the card, have them record that you are asking for a low-incidence language interpreter.

THE DOCUMENT LIST: THE HONEST ANSWER, AND WHY THE NEIGHBOR'S LIST DOES NOT CARRY HERE

- We could not verify the published Saint Paul Public Schools enrollment document list.** The Minneapolis Public Schools list was verified (a birth certificate or another document showing name and date of birth, plus immunization records, with no Social Security number on the list) but **that list cannot be carried to this district**.
- What to do:** call Saint Paul Public Schools and ask for the list before you go, in writing where you can. Ask the number question in the same call and note the answer.
- Build your folder today anyway:** the child's birth certificate and a certified translation, the immunization card you brought from Türkiye and its translation, a proof of address (a lease or a bill in your name), and records from the previous school if you have them. Those four items help in every district in this series.
- What we did verify is the admission provision itself:** state law conditions admission on **residence and age** alone and there is not one word about immigration in the provision. Not knowing the document list is not the same as not knowing the admission conditions.

What happens at enrollment, and the immunization side

- **A language survey is completed at enrollment.** If a language other than English is spoken at home, Saint Paul Public Schools conducts a **language assessment**. That is not a barrier but the door to a service: the assessment determines whether your child receives language support.
- **The thirty-day transfer window is in the statute** and it helps a family arriving from Türkiye directly: state law lets a student transferring between schools attend for **up to 30 days** while records are in transit. A translation of an immunization card, or a missing record, does not have to delay your child's start by a month; remind the school of that provision when you enroll.
- **Immunization is required, but there are two exemption routes:** a physician's statement of medical contraindication, or a parent's **notarized statement** based on conscientiously held beliefs. The age thresholds, the vaccine list and the full text of the exemptions are in [the school section of the state guide](#); this guide does not repeat them.
- **Have your immunization record and birth certificate translated into English from the start.** Get report cards translated early too; they help in your immigration file as well.
- **One detail on the district's own programs:** its Hmong two-way immersion program is one of its signature programs and Saint Paul Public Schools writes that it believes it to be the first in the country. If you are choosing a program, ask the district for that list.

THE SIDE BENEFIT OF ENROLLING: THE LIBRARY CARD ARRIVES BY ITSELF

- Enrolling in school has a concrete extra return in this city, and for a newly arrived family it is the most practical way around the identification barrier: **all students enrolled in Saint Paul Public Schools, and many charter and private school students, receive a Saint Paul Public Library card automatically when they enroll.** The program is called **Library Go**.
- **So reverse the order:** instead of going to a branch to assemble a photo ID, proof of date of birth and proof of address, handle the school enrollment first.
- **Saint Paul Public Library is not only books in this city:** free computers and printing (for printing immigration forms), study space, children's programs and language resources all come behind the same card.
- **The child must come in person** and there is no minimum age; a parent or guardian who meets the identification rule, a card mailed by the library, a school class visit or a valid state ID all qualify the child.
- **And one limit:** because there is a single district, moving inside this city does not change the school district, but **moving to a suburb or across the river changes both the district and the library system.** For someone changing cities the question to ask before signing a lease is "which district".



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN ST. PAUL

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Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients in St. Paul and the surrounding area, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation: clinchlaw.com/free-evaluation · +1 866-491-7669

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