

ENGLISH LEARNERS IN TENNESSEE

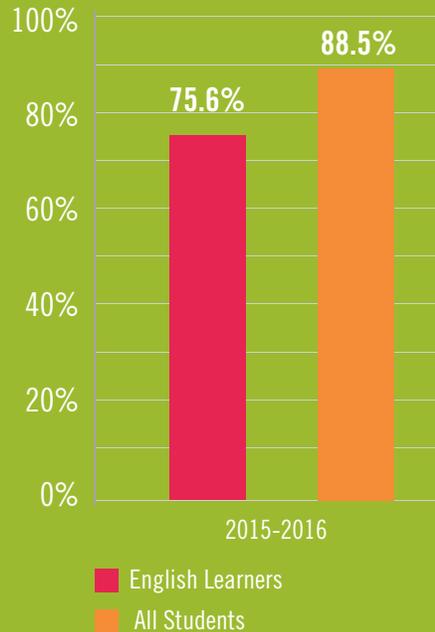


tn educational equity coalition

3X

Tennessee's foreign-born population is growing at a rate three times faster than the rest of the country.

GRADUATION RATES



56,528

56,528 children enrolled in Tennessee schools are English Learners.

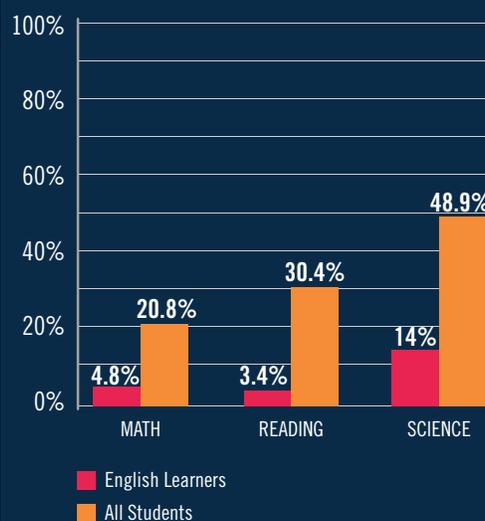
322,200

About 322,200 Tennesseans are foreign-born. 46.5% are from Latin America, 30.1% are from Asia, 10.5% are from Europe and 9.8% are from Africa.

65%

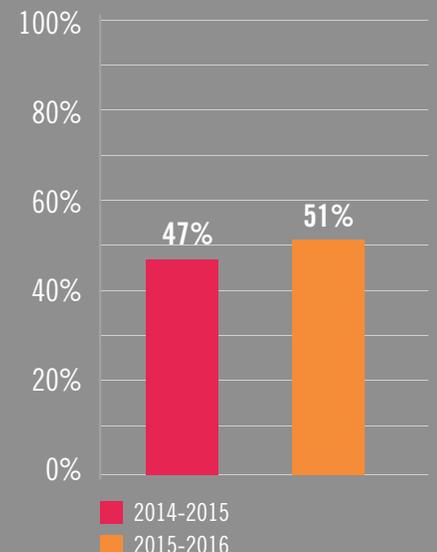
65% of K-12 English Learner students were born in the United States.

ACHIEVEMENT TN READY



PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SCORING PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED ON 2016 TNREADY ASSESSMENTS.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY



PERCENTAGE OF ELS MEETING GROWTH STANDARD ON WIDA ACCESS

TOP 6 EL Enrollment by County

1. Davidson
2. Shelby
3. Knox
4. Rutherford
5. Hamilton
6. Hamblen

ESSA & THE TENNESSEE PLAN

THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed by Congress in December 2015, contains a number of meaningful levers that advance education equity for all students. ESSA includes major changes that recognize the needs and diversity of English Learners (ELs), which are designed to close persistent achievement gaps between them and other students. They include:

- Moving English Learners from Title III to Title 1, which governs accountability for all students.
- Requiring states to include English Learners in overall school ratings, giving them a higher profile due to their increasing numbers nationwide.
- Requiring states to classify students using the same standard entrance and exit requirements across every district, providing important consistency for students with high mobility rates.
- Requiring schools to test students for EL services within 30 days of enrollment.
- Requiring states to adopt English language proficiency standards and a corresponding assessment.
- Requiring states to establish long-term and interim goals for English Learners' progress towards English proficiency.
- Requiring states to demonstrate how they will support schools in meeting goals, including interventions for schools where ELs are not adequately progressing.
- Requires states to report on the number of students who are identified as Long Term English Learners.
- Requiring states to disaggregate ELs with disabilities from the overall EL student group.
- Allowing states the option to include former ELs in subgroup accountability.

THE TENNESSEE ESSA PLAN

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) submitted their final ESSA state plan on April 13, 2017, and they included many important new provisions for English Learners based on the federal ESSA requirements listed above. These changes will require districts and schools to develop systems for gathering additional data, training staff, and providing resources and supports. Highlights include:

Inclusion of ELs in School Ratings:

- Starting in December 2018 Tennessee will rate all schools using an A-F letter grade. If a school has 10 or more English Learners, their progress towards English proficiency will count as 10% of a school's overall letter grade.
- This measure will be included on both school and district ratings, and is called **ELPA** (English Language Proficiency Assessment).
- The TDOE estimates 40% of districts will now be held accountable for the performance of their EL students.

Assessments

- Tennessee uses the WIDA ACCESS assessment to measure English Learner proficiency and it is the performance of English Learners on this assessment that will determine a school's ELPA rating.
- Schools can base their ELPA rating on either achievement (% of students exiting EL status) or growth (% of students meeting or exceeding the growth standard).
- **Recently Arrived English Learners** (RAELs) will take TN Ready state assessments in Mathematics and Reading/Language Arts, but their performance will be incorporated gradually into accountability, as follows:
 - Year 1: RAELs' TN Ready scores will be used only for baseline achievement information.
 - Year 2: RAELs' TN Ready scores will be included in a school's metric for growth, based on their year 1 performance.
 - Year 3: RAELs' TN Ready scores will be included in a school's metric for both achievement and growth.

School Improvement & English Learners

- Under ESSA, schools that have one or more chronically low-performing student groups can receive a Focus School designation, which will be denoted by a minus (-) on their overall school's letter grade. If a Focus School is identified based on the low performance of ELs they will receive targeted support and interventions that are uniquely suited to improving outcomes for English Learners.
- Focus schools that fail to demonstrate improved outcomes for ELs after three years will be classified as Priority schools.

Classification

- Students who demonstrate fluency on the WIDA ACCESS exam are exited from ESL services, but will be monitored for the next four years. These students, identified as transitional former ELs, are included in the EL subgroup for Title 1 reporting and accountability purposes.
- Students who remain in an English Learner program for 6 years or more are identified as **Long-term English Learners**. The number of Long-term English Learners in a school or district will be reported on the state report card.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: HOW ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS IDENTIFIED AND WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR EXITING THE EL PROGRAM?

A: **Entry:** Under ESSA, upon initial enrollment, districts are required to administer the **Home Language Survey** to identify the home language of the EL student. Additional information will be gathered, including previous educational experiences, and exposure to English at home. Potential EL students in grades 1-12 take the WIDA Screener, and Kindergarten students must take the **WIDA APT** test, within 30 days of enrollment in a school. They will then be placed in EL services according to their results.

Exit: Students will continue to receive ESL services until they achieve a composite and literacy score of 5.0 on the administered **WIDA ACCESS** exam, which is conducted annually. Once exited, a student is considered a transitional former EL for the next four years, and will be monitored academically during that time and will remain eligible for EL-specific testing accommodations.

Q: HOW DOES THE STATE DEFINE THE GROWTH STANDARD FOR PROFICIENCY FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS?

A: Tennessee has not yet defined the growth standard for proficiency of English Learners. Research-based evidence suggests that English language proficiency growth is non-linear and varies according to each student's grade level and proficiency upon entering school. Typically, students at lower proficiency levels or lower grade levels have higher growth rates than their peers at higher proficiency levels or grade levels. As a student progresses in ESL their academic content increases in complexity, and students are required to engage at deeper levels with this content. This concept of "lower is faster, higher is slower" is at the center of the state's approach as they develop standards and metrics for student growth in English proficiency. These standards and metrics will be included in the state's implementation guide in August 2017 and will require differentiation across grade and proficiency levels.

Q: WHAT IS THE PERCENTAGE OF LONG TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS (LTELs) IN TENNESSEE AND HOW WILL SCHOOLS ENSURE THE TIMELY EXIT OF STUDENTS FROM THE EL PROGRAM?

A: The state estimates that 6-20% of active EL students are considered Long Term ELs. Under ESSA, the state defines LTELs as those still in the program at the end of their sixth year of services. ESSA requires schools and districts to report on the percentage of students identified as Long Term English Learners on the State Report Card. The state's long-term goal is for 75% of all ELs to meet the expected growth standard on the WIDA ACCESS exam. The state plans to reduce the number of LTELs, and will do so through additional staffing, training, and resources for schools that have large numbers of LTELs, or schools where students are not meeting the growth standard.

Q: WHO ARE MIGRANT STUDENTS IN TENNESSEE AND WHAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OR SUPPORTS DO THEY RECEIVE?

A: Migrant students, who are the children of migrant farmworkers, attend schools across the state. Migrant students experience multiple challenges that affect their schooling, including extremely high rates of mobility, social isolation, language barriers, and poverty. A high percentage of migrant students are English Learners. These students are served by the federally funded Migrant Education Program, whose goal is to mitigate barriers to academic success by providing supports and interventions that promote school attendance and academic achievement.

Q: WHAT IS TENNESSEE'S POLICY ON ELS WITH DISABILITIES AND HOW DO THEY FACTOR INTO ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY?

A: Schools do not typically assess newcomer EL students for special education services during the first six months of their enrollment in school, unless the student displays obvious signs of physical or cognitive impairments. Typically, assessment for a disability can be complicated by a lack of limited English proficiency, possible interrupted schooling, and other affective factors. If a school does identify an EL student as requiring support from special education, then the student should get both kinds of services — it's not a question of one or the other. EL students diagnosed with a cognitive disability shall be administered the WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment. Research suggests that under-identification of EL students for special education is a national problem, but one that ESSA notes as an area for schools and districts to monitor more closely. Beginning in 2018, schools and districts must disaggregate and report on the number of EL students with disabilities on annual report cards.

KEY TERMS

English Learner (EL): As defined by the US Department of Education, an English Language Learner (ELL) student is defined as an individual enrolled in an elementary or secondary institution who: Was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; Is a Native American or Alaska Native; Comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English proficiency; Is migratory and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant.

English Language Acquisition: The process of acquiring the capacity to comprehend and produce the English language; measured within the realm of the four language domains, reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Recently Arrived EL (RAEL): English learners who arrived to the U.S. within the last twelve months and are within their first year of ESL services. These students could be refugees, students with interrupted formal education, and immigrant children who recently relocated to the United States. This does not include ELs enrolled in preschool or kindergarten or ELs who were born in the United States.

Long Term EL (LTEL): Definition may vary across states and their respective ESSA plans; in TN, a LTEL is an English Learner student who has not tested out of the program after their sixth consecutive year of receiving ESL services.

ELPA: English Language Proficiency Assessment; Indicator for measuring English proficiency among EL students.

CAL: Center for Applied Linguistics; Nonprofit organization committed to promoting access and equity for linguistically diverse populations through research and collaborative projects. CAL and WIDA collectively created the ACCESS exam used in Tennessee to assess English learner proficiency.

WIDA: World-class Instructional Design and Assessment; the organization that creates EL standards and corresponding assessments.

ACCESS: Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State; Standards-based assessment for measuring English language proficiency in grades k-12; serves as a measure for student growth, ESL program effectiveness, and student language proficiency attainment.

ALTERNATE ACCESS: Version of WIDA ACCESS exam for EL students with cognitive disabilities.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

DON'T WAIT until the release of the 2018 report cards to take action! Here are some steps you can take to ensure your school is well positioned to support English Language Learner students in the upcoming year:

- **ASK FOR EXISTING DATA** on English Learners in your school or your district. What are the home languages of your English Learners? How many are Long Term ELs? Newcomers? How are they performing on state assessments? All of these students and their families have different needs, which should inform the school's allocation of staffing, resources, and training.
- **ASK HOW TITLE III FUNDS ARE CURRENTLY ALLOCATED** at the district and school level to support English Learners. Under Title III of ESSA, funds must be allocated to support the academic achievement and language proficiency of ELs. The funds can be used for staffing, professional development, tutoring or academic supports for students, or activities to engage parents and the community. Ensure that Title III activities and strategies are research based and aligned to your school's unique population of English Learners.
- **ENSURE THERE IS COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION** between EL instructors and content-area teachers. English Learners (and former ELs) attend classes in all subject areas, which makes this coordination essential. The state recommends that lessons include both a language standard and academic content standard to support language acquisition and mastery of academic content for EL students. This requires consensus and understanding across faculties and staff, and will greatly increase the chance of success English Learners.
- **STAY CONNECTED** to the Tennessee English Learner Network, and events hosted by Tennessee Educational Equity the Coalition and the Tennessee Department of Education in order to stay up to date on upcoming opportunities in areas such as advocacy for ELs, the role of WIDA ACCESS and the new growth metrics that will be implemented for evaluating English proficiency, and strategies for supporting Long Term English Learners.