



English Learners in Minnesota Report

2024-25

English Learner Education in Minnesota

Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) ensures educational equity for multilingual learners through supporting school districts and charter schools to develop, implement and evaluate research-based language instruction educational programs (LIEPs) so that multilingual learners, including students with English learner (EL) status, attain academic language proficiency and achieve state academic content standards.

Unless otherwise noted, this report provides information using the previous state fiscal year's data on funding available for ELs, EL demographics and achievement. It includes statutory and regulatory references pertaining to English learners and describes MDE's support of local educational agencies (LEAs) in implementing effective LIEPs to ensure ELs are able to reach their full academic potential. MDE thanks Minnesota districts and charter schools, universities, families and community members for their continued efforts to collaborate with each other to implement effective systems and programs that continue to increase equitable educational outcomes and opportunities for all ELs!

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Minnesota Multilingual Learner Education Strategic Framework

MDE is committed to ensuring educational equity and access for multilingual learners through high-quality language instruction and rigorous academic instruction. MDE supports school districts and charter schools (referred to as local educational agencies (LEA)) to develop, implement and evaluate research-based language instruction educational programs so that multilingual learners attain academic language proficiency and achieve state academic content standards.

Definitions

English Learner (EL) – As defined in Minnesota [under Minnesota Statutes 2025, section 124D. 59, subdivision 2](#), an English learner is:

“a pupil in kindergarten through grade 12; an early childhood special education student under Part B, section 619, of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, United States Code, title 20, section 1419; or a prekindergarten student enrolled in an approved voluntary prekindergarten program under [Minnesota Statutes 2025, section 142D.08](#) or a school readiness plus program, who meets the requirements under subdivision 2a or the following requirements:

1. the pupil, as declared by a parent or guardian uses a language other than English, comes from a home where the language usually spoken is other than English, or usually speaks a language other than English; and
2. the pupil is determined by a valid assessment measuring the pupil’s English language proficiency and by developmentally appropriate measures, which might include observations, teacher judgment, parent recommendations, or developmentally appropriate assessment instruments, to lack the necessary English skills to participate fully in academic classes taught in English.”

Immigrant Children and Youth – The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Section 3201[5]), defines an Immigrant student as someone who:

3. is a child who is aged 3 through 21;
4. was not born in any state or any U.S. territory; and
5. has not been attending one or more schools in any one or more states for more than three full academic years (on a cumulative basis).

Note: While most immigrants in Minnesota are also English learners, students who are not ELs can also be immigrants. Also, not all ELs are immigrants. For additional information, see the MDE web page on [Immigrant Children and Youth Grant](#).

Long-term English Learners (LTEL) – Minnesota does not have a formal definition of LTELs within its statute, and ESSA does not formally define long-term English learners. However, under ESSA, all states are required to report the number and percentage of ELs who have not attained English language proficiency within five years of initial classification as an English learner and first enrollment in the local educational agency [ESSA, Section 3122(a)(6)].

Migratory Children – According to sections 1309 of the ESSA, a child is a “migratory child” if the following conditions are met:

1. The child is not older than 21 years of age; and,
 - a. The child is entitled to a free public education (through grade 12) under state law, or,
 - b. The child is not yet at a grade level at which the LEA provides a free public education, and,
2. The child made a qualifying move in the preceding 36 months as a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher, or did so with, or to join a parent/guardian or spouse who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; and,
3. With regard to the qualifying move identified in [2], above, the child moved due to economic necessity from one residence to another residence, and,
 - a. From one school district to another; or,
 - b. In a state that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or,
 - c. Resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence.

Recently Arrived English Learners (RAEL) – A RAEL is an English learner enrolled in a school in one of the 50 States in the United States or District of Columbia for less than 12 months (ESSA 1111(b)(3)(A)).

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) – A student with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) is an English learner with limited or interrupted formal education [and] is an English learner under subdivision 2 who has at least two fewer years of schooling than the English learner's peers when entering school in the United States.

Never English Learner – A student with a home language other than English who did not qualify for English language instructional support because they tested English proficient on the WIDA language screener.

English Learner Education Legislation

Both state and federal legislation address needs of English learners. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 initially determined that students who do not demonstrate English language proficiency have a right to a language instruction educational program that provides them access to the academic content instruction that all children receive. Court decisions and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights with the United States Department of Education have described in more detail the responsibilities of LEAs. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), delineated more specifically the responsibilities of LEAs and state education agencies (SEAs). For a detailed list of state and federal laws as well as Supreme Court cases, see [English Learner Education Legislation](#).

WIDA™

Minnesota joined the WIDA Consortium (formerly known as World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) in 2011 and adopted the WIDA English language development (ELD) standards in Rule in January of 2012. WIDA provides language development resources to states and districts to support the academic success of multilingual learners. They offer a comprehensive, research-based system of language standards, assessments, professional learning and educator assistance. The consortium consists of 41 states.

The ESEA, as amended by ESSA (2015), requires that states set standardized procedures all districts must follow to screen and identify English learners. As part of Minnesota's entry criteria and procedures, all students must have a parent or guardian complete the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS). Students who's completed MNLS indicates that the student uses or understands one or more other language in addition to English must be screened for language proficiency level. Minnesota districts use the WIDA Screener appropriate for the student's grade level.

Under the ESEA, identified as ELs be assessed annually for English language proficiency, including students who receive special education services. Minnesota uses the ACCESS for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) and the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs as the annual state English language proficiency assessment. Based upon stakeholder input, Minnesota established proficiency definitions for all English learners. The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an assessment of ELD for students with English learner status in grades 1–12 who also have significant cognitive disabilities that prevent their meaningful participation in the ACCESS for ELLs assessment.

The WIDA framework consists of four different components:

- WIDA ELD Standards Statements provides educators with a link between content classes and language development.
- Key Language Uses. There are four different types of language use across disciplines that narrate, inform, explain, and argue. Educators utilize the language use to help prioritize curricular planning to integrate language and content in the classroom.
- Language Expectations assist both educators and students to understand the language use within the content classroom.
- Proficiency Level Descriptors. Educators are able to see the growth and development of students across the six level of English proficiency.

For further information visit [ELD Standards Framework | WIDA](#).

The Five WIDA English Language ELD Standards Statements:

- **ELD Standard 1:** English language learners communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting.
- **ELD Standard 2:** English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of language arts.

- **ELD Standard 3:** English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of mathematics.
- **ELD Standard 4:** English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of science.
- **ELD Standard 5:** English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of social studies.

Some Applicable Uses of the WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors

- Collaboration between language development and content area educators
- Professional learning activities about language development
- School team discussion about the language growth of multilingual learners
- Conversations with families in their preferred language
- To help design and scaffold classroom instruction and assessment tasks (among other tools)
- To support teacher and student discussions around language performance in relation to learning goals
- To monitor progress of multilingual learners as they show language growth over time
- To evaluate evidence from student work (portfolio of speaking and writing samples) to inform instruction

Inappropriate Uses of the WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs)

The PLDs should not be used as restrictive examples or as a finite list of student abilities. Nor should they be used to limit access to complex texts and grade-level materials, participation in rigorous learning, or engagement in meaningful classroom discussions. Finally, the grade-level cluster PLDs should not be used to lower expectations. For more on intended and inappropriate uses of the PLDs, see page 35 of the [WIDA ELD Standards Framework](#).

WIDA™ Resources

MDE embraces an asset-based approach in providing equity and meaningful access for multilingual learners. Minnesota focuses on expanding staff access to training and resources to improve instruction and assessment. Following are resources available to Minnesotans:

- [Minnesota ELD Standards Page](#)
- [ELD Standards in Action](#)
- [WIDA ELD Standards Framework - 2020 Edition](#)
- [Minnesota WIDA Membership Page](#)
- [WIDA Focus Bulletins](#)

Learn more about the WIDA Consortium, its assessments, the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, resources and training for educators on the [WIDA website](#).

Funding for English Learner Education

State Funding

The primary responsibility in meeting the needs of ELs lies with the LEA. The LEAs cover the costs associated with addressing student needs by leveraging a variety of state and federal resources, which are used to supplement (but not supplant) local resources. Students with EL status qualify for the same revenue that every Minnesota child in public education generates. In addition, ELs also generate supplementary state aid. State funding sources that can be used for quality EL programming include: general education revenue, state EL funding, compensatory funding, transition revenue, and others.

State EL funding is allocated to students who:

- have been identified as English learners by state definition ([Minnesota Statutes 2025, section 124D.59](#));
- have generated fewer than seven years of average daily membership (ADM) in Minnesota public schools; and,
- are served in a language instruction educational program for English learners during the current fiscal year.

State EL funding status is not to be used in determining service for ELs. The funding formula exists simply to distribute the state funds available for ELs in an equitable manner across all the LEAs in the state.

Table 1 shows an increase in funds to districts and a corresponding increase in funds to charter schools. In 2022, the state began adding an additional two million dollars for the cross subsidy for ELs.

Table 1. Actual State EL Funding in Millions of Dollars, 2021 to 2025

Fiscal Year	Districts	Charters	Total
2021	43,358,060	11,610,207	54,968,267
2022	45,261,026	11,978,978	57,240,004
2023	48,195,841	12,620,684	60,816,525
2024	87,049,500	24,136,106	111,185,606
2025	93,677,617	24,884,811	118,562,428

Source: Minnesota Funding Reports, December 2025

FY2022 through FY2025 include English Learner Cross Subsidy revenue.

Federal Funding

Title III, a component of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, is another source of funding to supplement the resources of a LEA. These funds aid the district in enhancing: 1) language instruction educational programming for ELs and immigrant students; 2) English learner's parent, family and community engagement opportunities; 3) and professional development for staff working with English learners. The federal government awards Title III grants to all states, including Minnesota, based on their EL and immigrant student enrollment numbers, and Minnesota, in turn, distributes the funds to LEAs based on their number of enrolled students identified as English learners as well as immigrant counts. Figure 1 shows that Title III funding amounts for Minnesota have increased from \$7 million in 2006 to \$10.5 million in 2025.

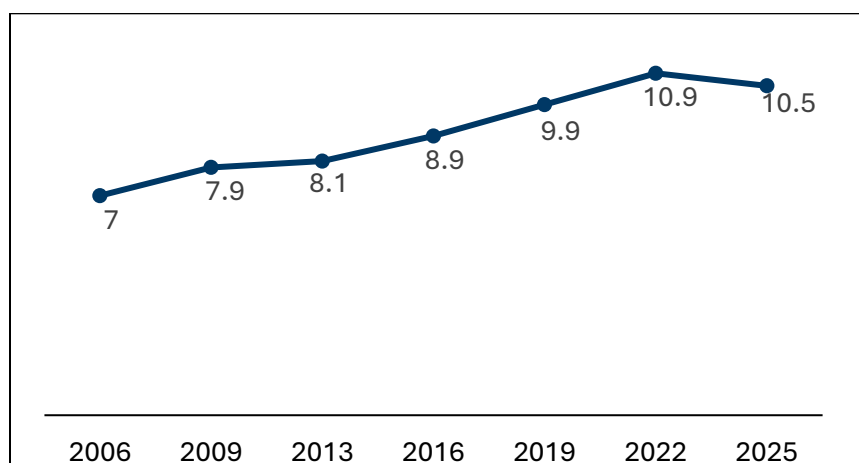
In order to be eligible for Title III funds, an LEA must enroll enough students identified with English learner status to generate a minimum of \$10,000 in aid, based on each year's per pupil funding unit. An LEA that does not meet the threshold may join other LEAs and form a consortium to reach the \$10,000 requirement and apply for funding.

In addition, states must set aside a certain percentage of the grant allotment for LEAs highly impacted by a significant increase of immigrant children and allocate these funds to eligible LEAs.

ELs are eligible on the same basis as all students to receive both state and federal funding. LEAs need to consider the allocation and coordination of all state and federal funding to coordinate services to meet all student needs including students identified with EL status or immigrant status.

Note: The federal fiscal year is calculated differently than the Minnesota state fiscal year. The 2025 federal fiscal year runs from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025.

Figure 1. Minnesota's Federal Title III EL Education Funding, in millions 2006 to 2025



Source: [United States Department of Education](#)

English Learners in Minnesota

In 2025, 876,746 PreK—12 students were enrolled in Minnesota public schools with 91,138 students, or 10% of students identified as English learners. Figure 3 displays fall enrollment data from 2020-21 through 2024-25. The data indicates enrollment of ELs had continued to increase consistently since 2020-21. In the 2020–21 school year, in the first full school year impacted by COVID-19, enrollment of ELs and non ELs dropped, while in 2021–22 there continued to be a drop in overall enrollment but an increase in EL enrollment. Figures 2 through 5 and Table 2 are sourced from [MDE Data Reports and Analytics’ Enrollment reports](#).

Figure 2. Total PreK-12 and English Learner Enrollment in Minnesota Public Schools, 2021 to 2025

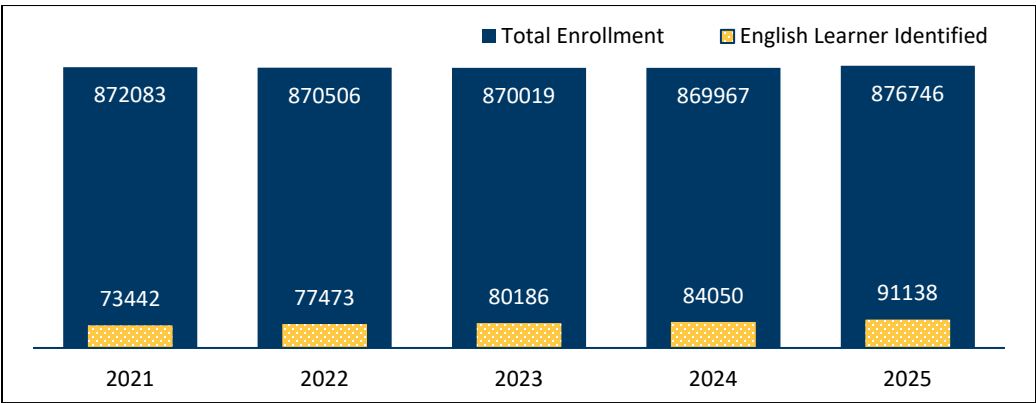


Figure 3 shows the distribution of Minnesota’s ELs across the grade levels. The number of ELs in primary grades (averaging over 8,200 students per grade in grades K–4, dropping to 6,739 in grade 5) is much higher than in secondary grades (averaging about 5,200 students per grade in grades 6–12), which is due in part to students reaching proficiency in English and exiting EL status.

Figure 3. Distribution of K-12 Students Identified as ELs Enrolled in Minnesota Public Schools by Grade, 2024–25

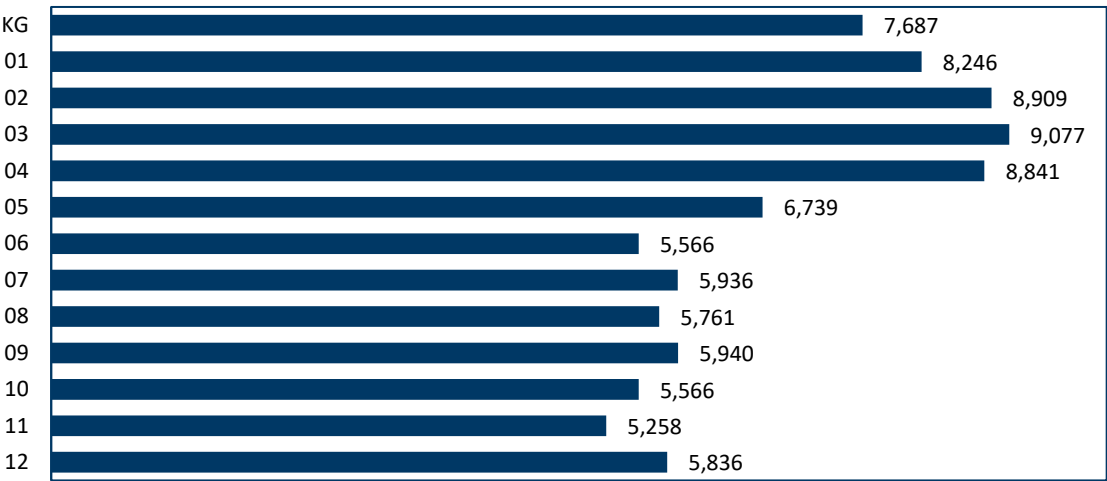


Table 2 illustrates the growth in the number of ELs within the 15 LEAs serving the most English learners in the state. Eleven LEAs showed increased numbers of ELs (Anoka-Hennepin, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Osseo, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage, Bloomington, Robbinsdale, Columbia Heights, Worthington, South Washington and Roseville). The two largest increases from 2020 to 2025 were in Anoka-Hennepin and Columbia Heights school districts. Of the 15 LEAs, Minneapolis and St. Paul showed the most significant decreases in EL enrollment, followed by St. Cloud and Rochester.

Table 2. English Learner Enrollment in the 15 Minnesota Public School Districts with the Most ELs, 2020 and 2025

School District	2025	2020
South Washington County Schools	1410	985
Worthington Public School District	1412	1265
Austin Public School District	1423	1062
Rochester Public School District	1632	1852
Bloomington Public Schools	1650	1434
Columbia Heights Public School District	1697	992
Robbinsdale Public School District	1719	1426
Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District	2030	1601
St. Cloud Public School District	2128	2400
North St. Paul-Maplewood Oakdale Public School District	2143	1436
Osseo Public School District	2577	2296
Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan	2739	2275
Anoka-Hennepin Public School District	3906	2728
Minneapolis Public School District	6739	6591
Saint Paul Public Schools	9425	10484

Figure 4 shows that growth in numbers of English learners has increased in the seven-county metro area of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties (57,958 in 2020 to 69,894 in 2025) and has remained fairly consistent outside the seven-county metro area (18,403 in 2020 to 21,244 in 2025).

Figure 4. Minnesota Pre-K through Grade 12 EL Enrollment Comparing Seven County Metro Area and Non-Metro School Enrollment, 2020 and 2025

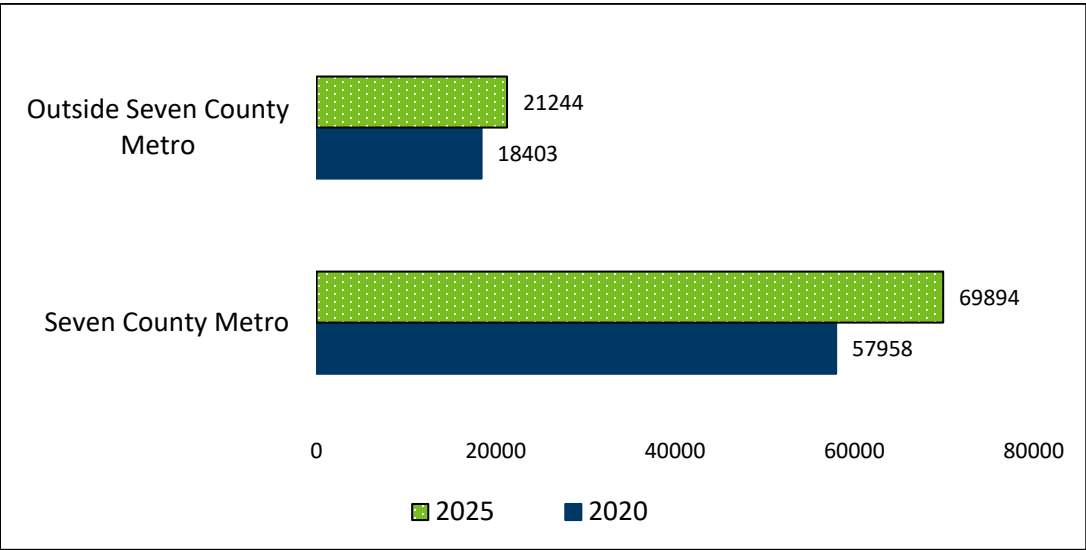
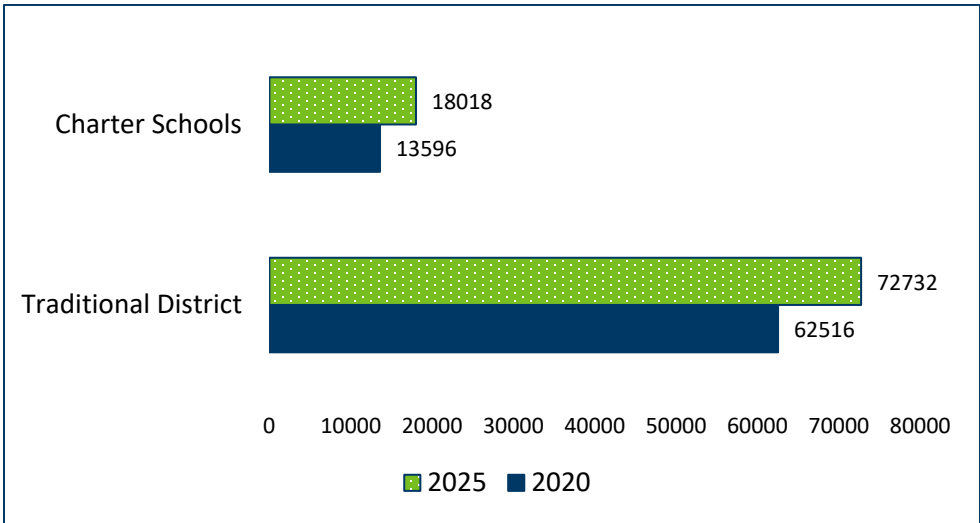


Figure 5 shows that English learner enrollment in charter schools) has increased (from 13,596 in 2020 to 18,018 in 2025). Both traditional school districts and charter schools EL's growth has been positive. The charter school growth rate was higher than traditional school districts (from 62,516 in 2020 to 72,732 in 2025).

Figure 5. Minnesota EL Enrollment Comparing Traditional School District and Charter School Enrollment, 2020 and 2025



Primary Home Languages

In the 2024-25 school year, 348 languages, including English, were reported for the 851,268 students identified in the data set of “Primary Home Language Totals” located in the MDE Data Center. All districts report the individual student’s home language to MDE. While EL totals could not be identified at the state level using public data, a primary home language that is not English is the first step in the identification of an English learner.

Table 3 provides information on the top 12 primary languages other than English, comparing 2020 and 2025. The top 12 languages spoken by English Learners generally do not change drastically from year to year. However, there was a noticeable increase in the number of English learners who speak Spanish and a decrease in the number of English learners who speak Somali in 2025 compared to 2020, which may be due, in part, to an increase in the number of Spanish speakers who have settled in Minnesota.

Table 3. Minnesota's Top 12 Languages Other than English for English Learners in 2020 and 2025

Home Primary Language	2025	2020
Spanish	41454	29361
Somali	16212	17012
Hmong	11348	10908
Karen	3419	3268
Arabic	1664	1584
Oromo, Afan Oromo, Oromiffa	1568	1194
Russian	1245	895
Vietnamese	1033	1239
Amharic	948	836
Swahili, Kiswahili	765	567
French	667	459
English, Creolized	649	685

Source: MDE Enrollment Data

When comparing the top 12 languages spoken by all Minnesota students to the list of English learners only a slightly different list of languages emerges (see Table 4). For both groups, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong continue to be the largest languages spoken by Minnesota students other than English. However, overall, across the state the number of students speaking a language other than English has grown across all language groups.

Table 4. Comparison of Minnesota's Top Languages Other than English Spoken by English Learners Versus All Students, 2025

Home Primary Language Counts of ELs	ELs 2025	All Students 2025
Spanish	41454	64526
Somali	16212	27518
Hmong	11348	20271
Karen	3419	5320
Arabic	1664	3363
Oromo, Afan Oromo, Oromiffa	1568	3297
Russian	1245	2606
Vietnamese	1033	3071
Amharic	948	2379
Swahili, Kiswahili	765	1463
French	667	1444
English, Creolized	649	1035

Source: [MDE Enrollment Data and Data Reports and Analytics Languages report](#)

Table 5 represents the 2024-25 distribution of the top 12 primary home languages spoken by English Learners, reported for the top eight EL-enrolled Minnesota counties.

Hennepin County has the largest number of English learners (25,091). Among them, Spanish (13,574, 54%) is by far most identified as the primary home language, followed by Somali (6,373, 25%) and Hmong (2,592, 10%). The second largest enrollment of English Learners is in Ramsey County (18,861); of those, Hmong (6,036, 32%) is by far most frequently identified as the primary home language, followed by Spanish (5,356, 28%) and Somali (3,206, 17%). The third largest enrollment of English learners is Dakota County (7,000). Among them, Spanish (4,405, 63%) and Somali (1,359, 19%) are the most frequent languages represented in the county.

Table 5. The Top 13 Languages Spoken by English Learners in the Top Eight Minnesota Counties by Enrollment, 2025

Home Primary Language	Anoka	Dakota	Hennepin	Olmstead	Ramsey	Scott	Stearns	Washington
Amharic	77	320	147	19	247	15	<10	82
Arabic	506	140	261	189	275	17	19	81
Chinese, Mandarin	38	75	165	45	75	17	13	98
English, Creolized	82	17	418	<10	19	<10	<10	17
French	83	75	199	10	113	10	23	35
Hmong	1074	134	2592	27	6036	<10	<10	917
Karen	14	16	<10	<10	2634	<10	<10	52
Oromo, Afan Oromo, Oromiffa	449	143	312	<10	492	<10	10	94

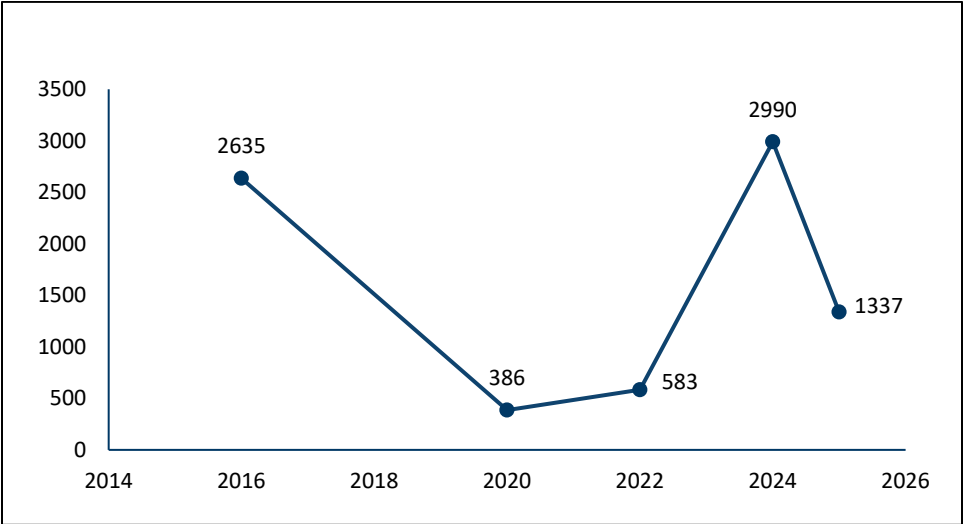
Home Primary Language	Anoka	Dakota	Hennepin	Olmstead	Ramsey	Scott	Stearns	Washington
Russian	195	136	500	<10	23	156	<10	23
Somali	637	1359	6373	489	3206	543	1861	184
Spanish	3250	4405	13574	742	5356	1089	1050	1012
Swahili, Kiswahili	64	48	242	<10	234	30	11	28
Vietnamese	122	132	320	22	163	72	22	76
Total ELS	6592	7000	25109	1565	18861	1963	3028	2699

Source: Minnesota Department of Education Enrollment Data

Primary Arrivals in Minnesota

Using information provided by the Refugee Processing Center (RPC) operating within the Office of Admissions at the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), which is the humanitarian bureau of the U.S. Department of State, Minnesota has seen an overall increase in primary immigrant arrivals to Minnesota from 2012 to 2024 with a significant drop in 2025. Due to changes in federal procedures and policies, there were fewer primary refugee arrivals between the years 2016-20, especially noticed during 2020 and 2021, when the COVID pandemic reduced movement globally. Since 2022, the number of primary refugee immigrants to Minnesota has been increasing, however nearly all new arrivals to the United States stopped in January 2025 causing a drastic decline in arrivals.

Figure 6. Primary Refugee Arrivals in Minnesota, 2016 to 2025

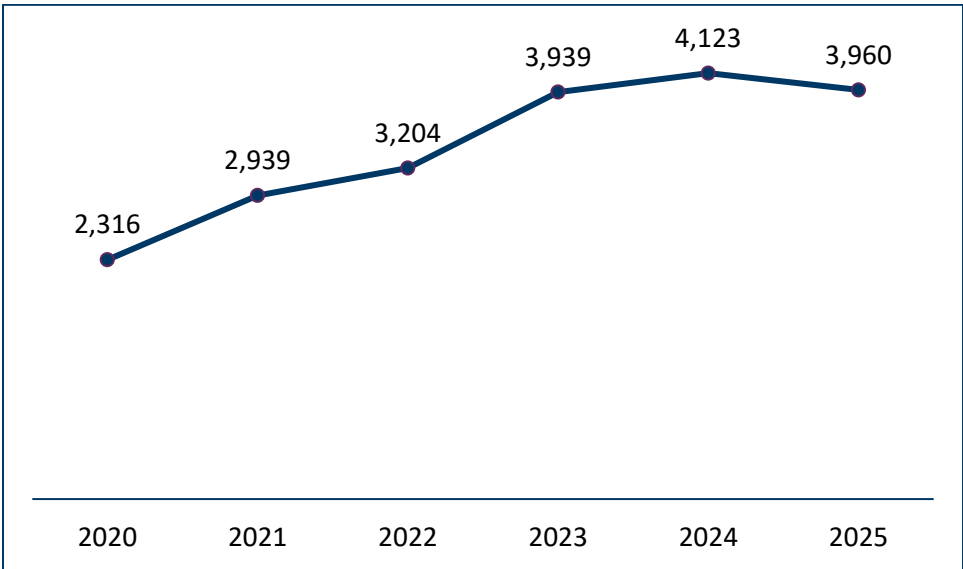


Source: [Refugee Processing Center - Archives](#), 2016 to 2025

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)

Each year, Minnesota districts report the number of SLIFE enrolling in their districts to MDE. Figure 7 shows the number of SLIFE reported for the past five years, which has steadily increased from 2,316 in 2020 to 3,960 in 2025. For the most current definition for SLIFE, please visit [MDE’s SLIFE webpage](#).

Figure 7. Number of SLIFE Reported to MDE, 2020 to 2025

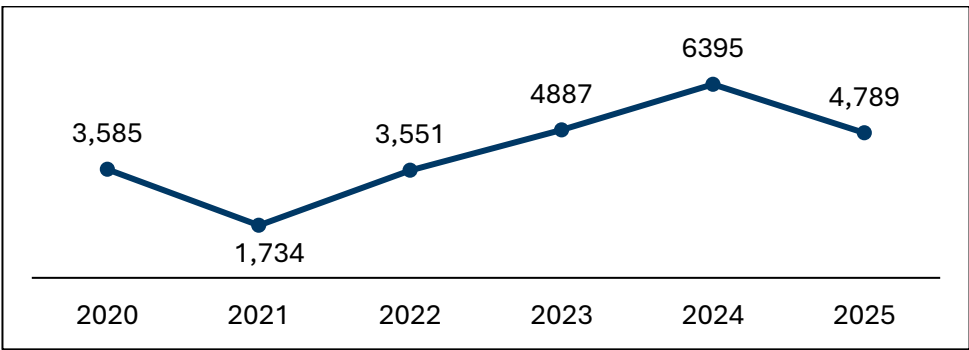


Source: Minnesota Department of Education State Student Data Collection (SSDC)

Recently Arrived English Learners (RAEL)

Numbers of RAELs in Minnesota are reported to the SSDC by June 1 annually. Figure 8 shows that numbers of students identified as RAELs have risen from 3,585 in 2020 to 4,789 in 2025, a slight drop from 6,395 in 2024.

Figure 8. Number RAELs Reported to MDE, 2020 to 2025



Source: Minnesota Department of Education State Student Data Collection (SSDC)

Long-Term English Learners (LTEL)

[Minnesota does not have a formal definition of Long-term English learners \(LTEL\)](#) within state statute. The data displayed represents the number of students who have been identified as English learners for five or more years. According to Figure 9, there is a significant difference in the number of students with LTEL status between grades 4 (97 students) and 5 (2,763 students). From grades 5 through 12, the number of LTELs ranged from 2,763 (in grade 5) to 3,419 (in grade 12). Grade 8 had the highest number of LTELs at 3,470. Of LTELs in grade 4, 54% were dual identified as eligible for both EL and Special Education programs. The highest percentage of dual identified (both EL and Special Education) students was 33% in grade 12. On average, about 30% of LTELs in grades 5-12 were dual identified for EL and Special Education programs.

Table 6. Number of Students Identified as LTELs by Grade and Special Education Status, 2025

Grade	LTEL in Special Education	Total LTEL
4	52	97
5	792	2763
6	961	2957
7	970	3358
8	963	3470
9	896	3131
10	848	2912
11	851	3011
12	1117	3419

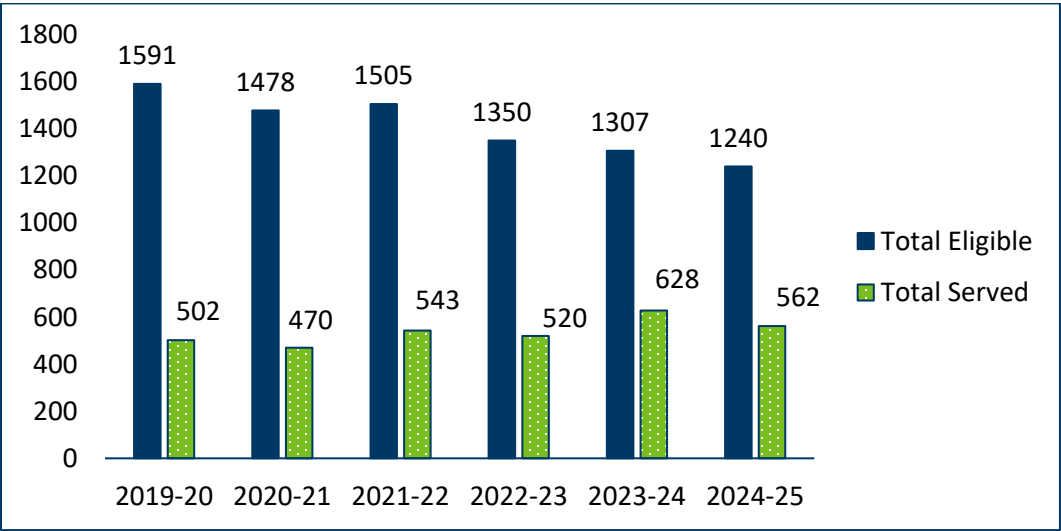
Source: Minnesota Department of Education Enrollment Data

Migratory Children

In the summer of 2025, Minnesota supported migratory children (see definition) through seven summer migrant education programs (MEPs). Throughout the school year, migrant liaisons in each district are expected to seek to identify eligible migratory families and provide advocacy to address migratory children’s unique language, social and academic challenges due to high mobility. Migrant education programming in Minnesota ensures that migratory children fully benefit from the same free public education provided to other children. For more information, visit the MDE Migrant Education Program website.

As shown in Figure 9, between the 2019-20 and 2024-25 school years, eligible migratory child numbers have declined slightly. However, the number of students served remained relatively stable.

Figure 9. Total Eligible Migrant Children and Total Served in Minnesota (ages 3 through 21), during School Year 2019-20 to 2024-25



Source: Minnesota Department of Education Consolidated State Performance Reports (2020 to 2025)

Forty-seven percent of migratory students ages 3-21 in Minnesota were identified as ELs. Table 7 shows the breakdown of eligible migratory children and those also identified as English learners by grade level. The percentage of migrant students identified with EL status in grades K through 6 is an average of 60%, while the percentage in grades 7 through 12 is an average of about 42%.

Table 7. Eligible Migratory Children in Minnesota (ages 3 through 21) by EL status in the 2024-25 Performance Period

Grade	Count EL	Count Not EL
	2023-24 MEP EL	2024-25 MEP EL
Ages 3 to 5	20	23
KG	54	50
1	64	61
2	72	64
3	59	65

Grade	Count EL	Count Not EL
	2023-24 MEP EL	2024-25 MEP EL
4	53	58
5	55	53
6	51	52
7	40	47
8	46	49
9	30	32
10	31	42
11	20	25
12	14	17
Out-of-School	3	1
Total	612	639

Source: Minnesota Department of Education Consolidated State Performance Reports (2024-25)

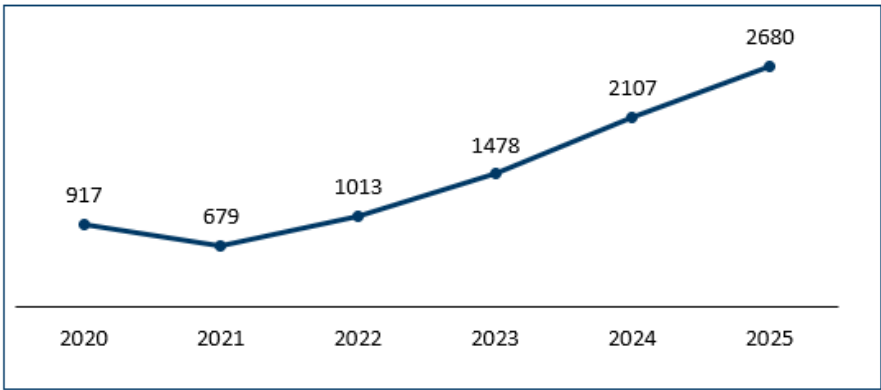
English Learners Experiencing Homelessness

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, the term “homeless children and youths” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youths who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals; who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned

buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and who are migratory children who live in one of the above circumstances.

Figure 10 below shows the number of English learners identified as homeless. Numbers of homeless ELs have been increasing rapidly since 2020.

Figure 10. Number of Minnesota English Learners Identified as Experiencing Homelessness, 2020 to 2025



Source: MDE Enrollment Data

English Learners and Special Education

Title III of ESSA and other federal laws require that ELs who also qualify for special education services (dual-eligible students) receive both EL and special education services. Under the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, EL students who have a disability must be identified and evaluated for special education services in a timely manner, as would any student suspect of a disability. For more information on dual identification, see Part II, Section F of the January 7, 2015, guidance letter from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

Table 8 shows the distribution of Minnesota ELs and all students with disabilities in 2025. English learners who are dually identified are most likely to have a specific learning disability (38.2% of the total), followed by autism spectrum disorder (19.7%), speech or language impairment (13.7%), and developmental delay (9.2%), each seeing an increase in the past year. English learners are overrepresented in the specific learning disability, autistic, and mild to moderate cognitive disabilities compared to all students in special education.

Table 8. Distribution of ELs and all students with Disabilities, 2025

Disability Type	All Special Education	ELs in Special Education
Specific Learning Disabilities	24.3%	38.2%
Autistic	17.2%	19.7%
Speech Language Impaired	16.6%	13.7%
Other Health Impaired	12.0%	6.0%
Developmental Delay	12.0%	9.2%
Emotional Behavioral Disorders	9.7%	3.0%
Low Incidence Disabilities	3.5%	4.0%
Mild to Moderate Mental Impairment	3.3%	4.2%
Deaf	1.5%	1.7%

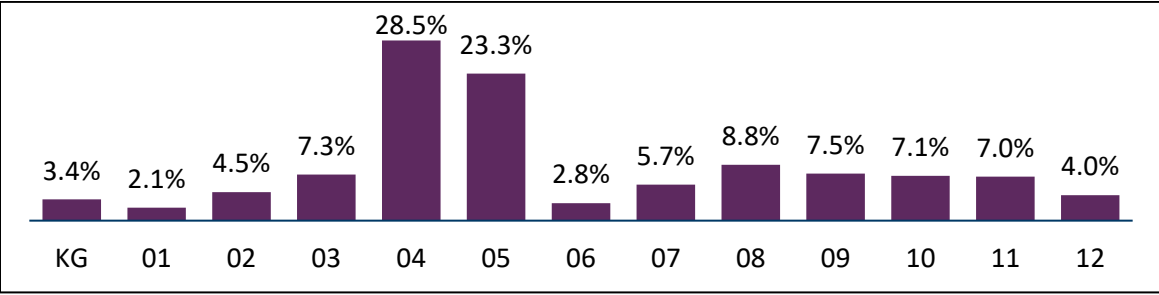
*Low Incidence Disabilities: for the purpose of this report, Low Incidence Disabilities include Severe/Profound Developmental/Cognitive Disorders, Deaf-Blind, Traumatic Brain Injury, Blind/Visual Impairments, Physical Impairments and Severe Multiple Impairments.

Source: MDE Enrollment Data

Assessment of English Language Proficiency

English learners assess for English language proficiency (ELP) on an annual basis by taking the WIDA ACCESS assessment. Results of the assessment, as seen in Figure 11, show that English learners are most likely to test proficient in grades 4 and 5. Figure 11 and Table 9 are sourced from MDE Data Reports and Analytics Assessment reports.

Figure 11. Percentage of English Learners Assessing Proficient on the WIDA ACCESS, by Grade Level, 2025



The distribution of ELs at each of the proficiency levels on ACCESS are displayed for the overall composite and each domain in Table 9. Many students progress to higher proficiency levels in listening, which is reflected in the significantly larger percentages of students at listening proficiency levels 5 and 6 as compared to the other domains. Typically, the productive domains of speaking or writing are the most difficult for students to master.

Table 9. Percent Distribution of Students at Each Proficiency Level on WIDA ACCESS, K–12 Composite and Domain Scores, 2025

Subject	Percent Level 1	Percent Level 2	Percent Level 3	Percent Level 4	Percent Level 5	Percent Level 6
Composite	19.85	21.9%	37.0%	18.5%	2.6%	0.2%
Listening	13.9%	11.3%	18.2%	11.8%	14.7%	30.1%
Reading	28.6%	24.1%	17.9%	8.9%	13.0%	7.4%
Speaking	23.4%	25.3%	32.8%	14.6%	2.0%	2.0%
Writing	221.3%	20.8%	44.5%	12.7%	0.6%	0.1%

The Alternate ACCESS is given to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, with levels ranging from 1-5 for the overall composite and most domains. As seen in Table 10, most students score in level 1 for composite and all domains. The highest percentage of ELP levels 3-5 are in listening and reading domains. More students score in level 1 and 2 for speaking and writing.

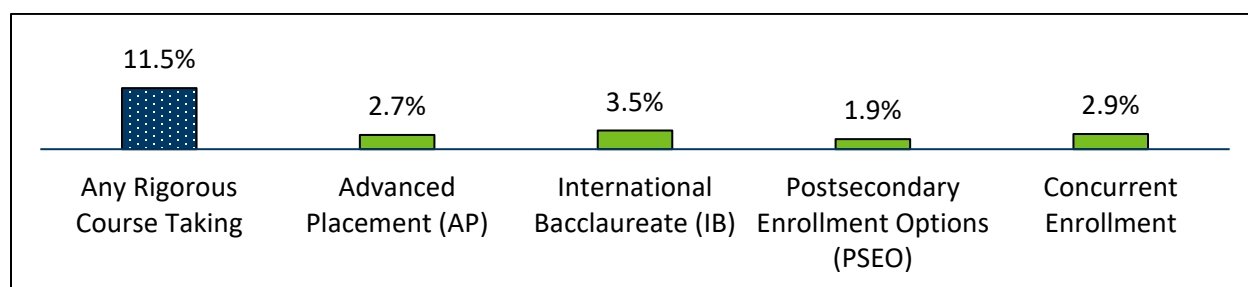
Table 10. Percent Distribution of Students at Each Proficiency Level on WIDA ALT-ACCESS, 1-12 Composite and Domain Scores, 2025

Subject	Percent Level 1	Percent Level 2	Percent Level 3	Percent Level 4	Percent Level 5
Composite	55.6%	16.6%	12.5%	8.2%	7.0%
Aural Listening	36.9%	13.0%	20.3%	16.4%	13.4%
Reading	47.8%	16.5%	16.2%	9.5%	9.9%
Speaking	61.3%	17.0%	9.3%	4.3%	8.1%
Writing	62.4%	13.2%	10.1%	6.5%	7.9%

Academic Achievement

Figure 12 shows the percentage of English learners who participated in rigorous coursework in high school, disaggregating for four types (Advanced Placement [AP], International Baccalaureate [IB], Postsecondary Enrollment Options [PSEO] and concurrent enrollment). While the percentages reported are fairly low, some large EL districts did not report AP and IB data to MDE. Percentages are likely underestimates for these types of rigorous courses and for overall rigorous courses taken.

Figure 12. English Learners Participating in Rigorous Courses, 2025



Source : MDE PSEO, Concurrent and Minnesota Common Course Catalogue Data

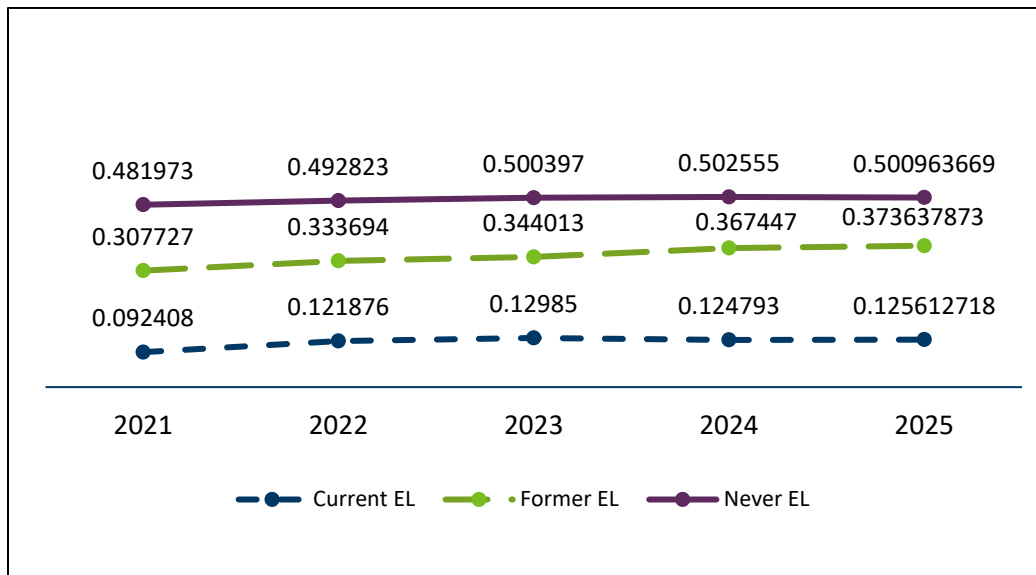
In 2025, the majority of current English learners did not meet standards on the statewide mathematics assessments (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)). Table 11 shows that current English learners are much less likely to meet or exceed standards than former ELs and never ELs who met or exceeded standards at 44% and 50% respectively. Figure 13

shows that all groups had slight improvements in percent proficiency between 2021 and 2025. However, because many students did not complete the tests in 2021, caution should be taken when interpreting the changes between years. The following tables 11 through 15 and figures 13 through 18 are sourced from MDE Assessment Data.

Table 11. Math Achievement Levels by English Learner Designations on Statewide Assessments, 2025

Math Achievement Level	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL
Does Not Meet Standards	70.9%	33.9%	27.1%
Partially Meets Standards	16.6%	28.7%	22.8%
Meets Standards	10.5%	25.7%	31.1%
Exceeds Standards	2.1%	11.7%	19.0%

Figure 13. Math Percent Proficient by English Learner Designation on Statewide Assessments, 2021 to 2025



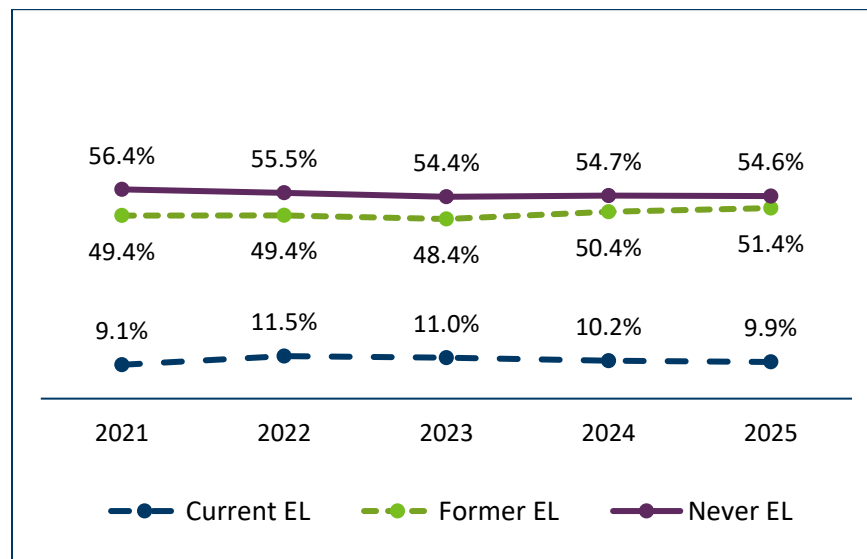
Achievement on the reading statewide assessments shows a similar pattern of results as in math with 73.2% of current ELs not meeting reading standards for their grade level. Figure 14 shows that former ELs and never ELs tend to meet or exceed standards at 50.4% and 54.7% respectively. Table 12 shows

that reading achievement levels on MCAs have remained relatively unchanged since 2021 with former ELs and never ELs averaging 52% meeting or exceeding reading standards.

Table 12. Reading Achievement Levels by English Learner Designation on Statewide Assessments, 2025

Reading Achievement Level	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL
Does Not Meet Standards	73.2%	21.6%	25.1%
Partially Meets Standards	16.9%	27.1%	20.3%
Meets Standards	9.1%	41.9%	38.7%
Exceeds Standards	0.8%	9.5%	16.0%

Figure 14. Reading Achievement Levels by English Learner Designation on Statewide Assessments, 2021 to 2025

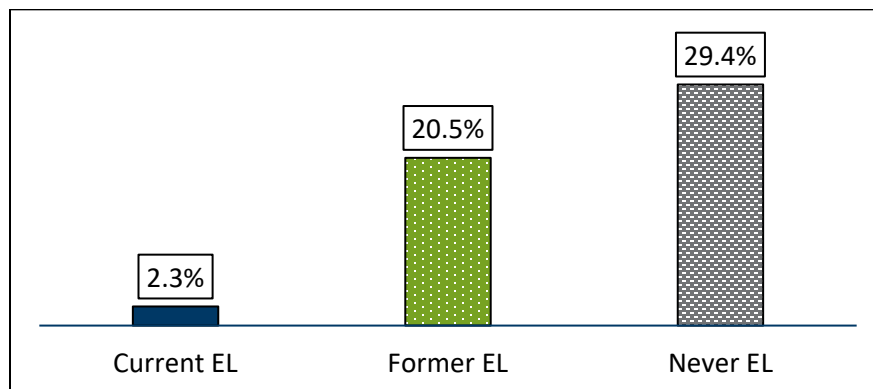


Achievement on the science statewide assessments highlights that 87.7% of current English learners are not proficient on science standards, with former ELs and never ELs are not proficient 48.3% and 41.1% respectively. Table 13 shows the science achievement data broken down by achievement level and Figure 15 shows the 2025 meets and exceeds proficiency rates of current ELs, former ELs and never ELs.

Table 13. Science Achievement Levels by English Learner Designation on Statewide Assessments, 2025

Science Achievement Level	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL
Beginning	87.7%	48.3%	41.1%
Intermediate	10.0%	31.2%	29.5%
Meets Standards	1.8%	17.1%	23.3%
Exceeds Standards	0.6%	3.4%	6.2%

Figure 15. Science Meets and Exceeds Achievement Levels by English Learner Designation on Statewide Assessments, 2025



Students who are identified as eligible for English learner and Special Education services are referred to as “dual-identified” students. Figure 16 shows a higher percentage of dual-identified students proficient in math and reading (13.1% and 10.3% respectively) than those receiving Special Education services (10.4% and 8.2% respectively). In science dual-identified students score higher (2.7%) than those not receiving Special Education services (1.5%).

Figure 16. Percent of Dual-identified and not Dual-identified Students Proficient in Math, Reading and Science, 2025

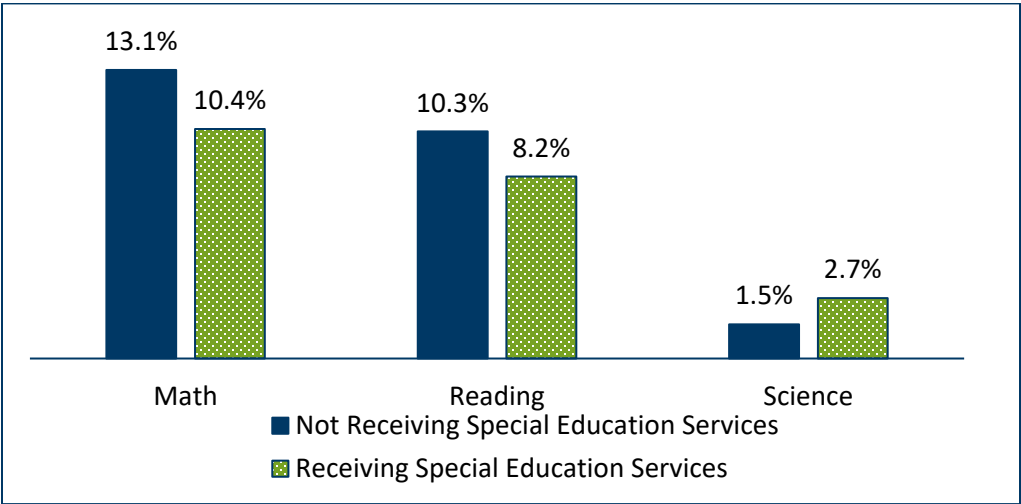


Table 14 shows how the amount of time English learners were enrolled in Minnesota public schools corresponds to proficiency in math and reading, demonstrating that English learners demonstrate proficiency in math sooner than reading (in English). Students designated EL for five or more years have a significant drop in percentage proficient with a 7.3% proficiency rate in math and a 9.4% proficiency rate in reading.

Table 14. Length of Time Enrolled and Proficiency in Math and Reading, 2025

Time	Math Percent Proficient	Reading Percent Proficient
Less than 1 Year	7.9%	5.0%
1 – 2 Years	8.9%	7.5%
2 – 3 Years	15.8%	10.7%
3 – 4 Years	22.7%	14.7%
4 – 5 Years	19.3%	12.6%
5 or More Years	7.3%	9.4%

English Learners’ Graduation Rate

The four-year graduation rate is a graduation rate based on a cohort of first-time grade nine students plus transfers into the cohort within the four-year period, minus transfers out of the cohort within the four-year period. Table 15 demonstrates that having been an English learner prior to high school increases the rate of graduation as compared to students who were identified in high school. It should be noted that the continuing category includes students who may be on a five or six-year graduation plan and may account for graduation data after the four-year graduation mark. For more information on the graduation rate, please visit the MDE [Accountability Indicators webpage](#). All data for figures in this section are sourced from MDE Graduation and Enrollment Data.

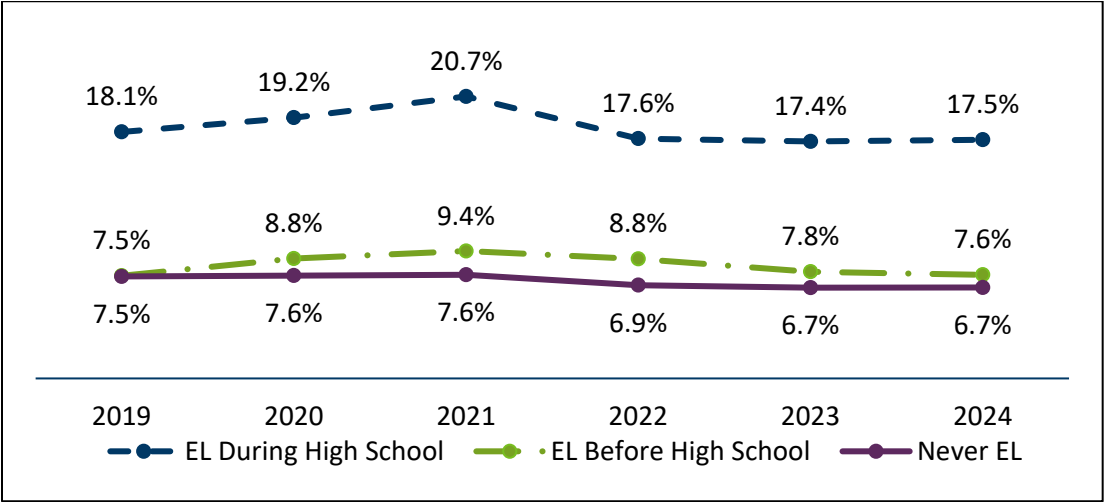
Table 15. 4-Year Graduation Rate by English Learner Designation, 2024

EL Designation	Graduated	Continuing	Dropped Out	Unknown
EL During High School	67.2%	17.5%	9.2%	6.0%
EL Before High School	86.1%	7.6%	3.0%	3.3%
Never EL	85.6%	6.7%	4.1%	3.6%

Graduation, dropout, and continuing trends for 2019–24 are depicted in Table 15 and Figures 17 and 18. All figures show that students who were English learners before high school have similar graduation outcomes to students who were never English learners. In Figure 17 less than 10% of EL Before High School and Never ELs continued in high school after the four-year graduation timeline. About 18-20% of Students who were identified as EL During High School continued in high school after the four-year graduation timeline.

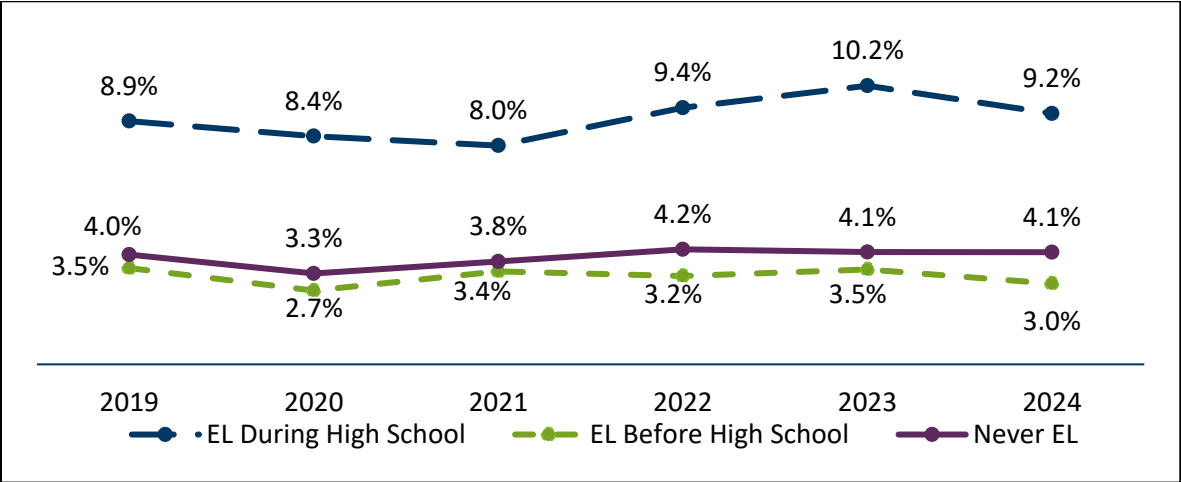
Graduation, dropout, and continuing trends for 2019–24 are depicted in Table 14 and Figures 17 and 18. All figures show that students who were English learners before high school have similar graduation outcomes to students who were never English learners. In Figure 18 less than 10% of EL Before High School and Never ELs continued in high school after the four-year graduation timeline. About 18-20% of Students who were identified as EL During High School continued in high school after the four-year graduation timeline.

Figure 17. Four-Year Continuation Trends by English Learner Designation, 2019–24



While students who are English learners in high school are more likely to continue high school enrollment beyond their fourth year of high school, they are also more likely to drop out, and dropout rates have risen between 2019 and 2023 with a 1% drop to 9.2% in 2024 (Figure 18). Figure 18 also shows that students who were identified EL before high school are less likely to drop out than students who were never ELs with an average 1% lower than the never EL average of 4%.

Figure 18. Four-Year Drop-out Trends by English Learner Designation, 2019–24



Conclusion: Strengths and Challenges in English Learner Education

Minnesota demonstrates a strong commitment to educational equity for multilingual learners through research-based language instruction programs, robust state and federal funding, and the adoption of WIDA standards to guide language development. Enrollment of English learners has steadily increased, now representing 10% of the state's pre-K through grade 12 population, with notable growth in both traditional districts and charter schools. The state's asset-based approach, professional development initiatives, and collaboration among educators, families, and communities are key strengths that support language acquisition and academic success. Graduation rates for students who were English learners before high school are comparable to those of students who were never ELs, reflecting positive long-term outcomes.

A major strength in recent years is the **substantial increase in funding for English learner education**, including an additional \$2 million cross-subsidy beginning in 2022 and continued growth through 2024 and 2025. These resources provide districts and charter schools with greater capacity to implement **high-quality, targeted instruction** that accelerates academic English development and ensures access to rigorous content learning.

However, achievement data reveal persistent challenges. Current English learners continue to perform below their peers in meeting state standards for reading, math, and science. While **Figure 12** shows that many EL students achieve English proficiency and exit EL status by grades 4 and 5, **Table 13** highlights that students with three to five years of EL program support demonstrate higher academic proficiency rates than those with less than three years or more than five years of support. This pattern underscores the critical role of timely, high-quality instruction during the early and intermediate years of EL programming to accelerate academic English growth and ensure success in content areas.

Moving forward, Minnesota must leverage increased funding to strengthen instructional practices that integrate language development with grade-level content, expand access to advanced coursework, and address the unique needs of diverse EL subgroups, including SLIFE and RAEL students. **Analyzing EL data at the state, district, and school levels is essential for identifying trends, monitoring progress, and informing systemic improvement efforts.** Data-driven decision-making enables educators and policymakers to allocate resources effectively, design responsive programs, and close persistent achievement gaps. Continued investment in professional learning, family engagement, and cross-sector collaboration will be key to ensuring that all English learners have equitable opportunities to thrive academically and socially.