Nashville Public Education Foundation

What you need to know about

English Learners

NPEF Need to Know Series
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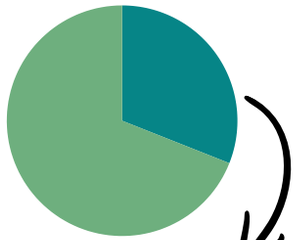
November 2026

English Learners (EL)

English learners (EL) are students whose families use a language other than English as their primary language at home. Under federal law, EL students in public schools are guaranteed an individualized learning plan with **English-second-language (ESL) support**. English learners fall under the broader group of **multilingual learners (MLL)**, which includes any student who learns in more than one language.

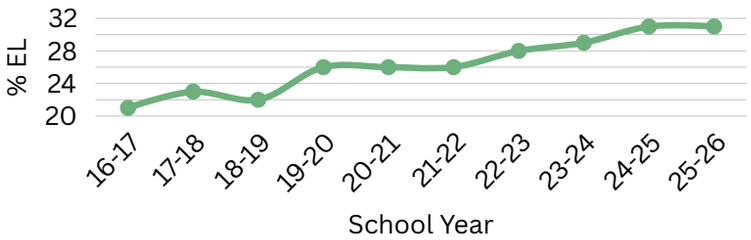


31%

of MNPS students are English learners (highest in Tennessee)

MNPS has **24,000+** EL students who speak **over 130 languages**

Over the last decade, the number of EL students has increased 145%



What services are available for EL students?

Direct ESL

A minimum of **one hour per week** with a **certified ESL instructor**, in a **one-on-one or small group setting.**

Indirect ESL

Accommodations (multi-language signs, bilingual worksheets, and more) to ensure **general classroom content is accessible**.

English learners take an English proficiency test every year to see if they still need EL support. After four years of meeting proficiency standards, EL students are no longer considered English learners. **Looking at the data during, transitioning from, and after receiving EL services can tell us a lot.**

Achievement data for English learners often shows achievement scores lower than non-EL peers.

However, this data only counts students actively receiving support or transitioning.

This leaves out EL students who successfully transition, effectively undercounting the long-term success of EL students.

According to a study from the University of Chicago,

76%

of kindergarten English learners were proficient by the time they reached 5th grade.

When compared to never-EL peers, *former* English learners had on average:

- **better cumulative GPAs**
- **higher SAT scores**
- **higher graduation rates**
- **more consistent attendance**

English learners who successfully transition **regularly meet or exceed** benchmarks compared to non-EL peers.

Sources: MNPS Office of English Learners; Tennessee Board of Education; University of Chicago Consortium on School Research; The 74.