

Supporting English Learner Students

Secondary Super Strategies | INTRODUCTION

Who are English Learner Students?

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act defines the term ‘English learner,’ as it pertains to a secondary school student, through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under ESSA, the term ‘English learner’ means an individual—

1. who is aged 3 through 21;
2. who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
3. who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
4. who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and
 - a. who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or
 - b. who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
3. whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual—
 - a. the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;
 - b. the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
 - c. the opportunity to participate fully in society.¹



English Learner Students Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide staff and students with training on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- Create a responsive school environment that reflects the identities of the students who learn there.
- Provide training for staff on current immigration laws to ensure administrators, counselors, and teachers understand the protections provided as well as limitations.
- Translate enrollment documents and information about support services and resources for other special populations in multiple languages. English learners (EL) may be entitled to other support services that help them overcome barriers not related to their level of English proficiency.
- Distribute written information on how to request translation or interpretation services to every parent or guardian during enrollment and registration.
- Train all employees who do registration and enrollment activities in proper procedures for enrolling EL students. Include front office staff who are the first people to interact with visitors and answer phone calls.
- Ask parents and caregivers what forms of communication work best for them: email, notes home, phone calls, face-to-face, etc. and translate any written materials in their preferred language.
- Weave multiple languages into school events and celebrations, not just administrative tasks.
- Make sure everyone in the school is aware of which languages are spoken there.

DID YOU KNOW?

During FY19 in Illinois, English learners made up 12.1% of the total student body with a graduation rate of 72% compared to the overall graduation rate of 86%.²



English Learner Students Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Deter drop out of EL students by implementing intensive and periodic meetings with their school counselor.
 - ✓ Track student progress, provide opportunities for career assessments, assist in goal planning and a tailored graduation plan, and provide academic intervention.
 - ✓ Invite and include parents and family members when appropriate.
- Make the curriculum relevant by embedding stories, readings, and perspectives that focus on history, immigration, and community within the units being taught.
- Model being a language learner by encouraging school projects that allow students to share aspects of their culture with their teachers and peers.
- Use a variety of teaching modalities that accommodate various learning styles.
- Limit the amount of time EL students are pulled out of class for separate instruction as this can limit contact with their peers and put them at a disadvantage for forming friendships and learning new skills.
- Provide opportunities for EL and non-EL students to interact and work together both in and out of the classroom. This could include a multicultural student group or peer mentoring options facilitated by a bilingual individual.
- Develop partnerships with local entities to cover gaps in services that the school does not or cannot provide.
 - ✓ health clinics
 - ✓ advocacy groups
 - ✓ legal clinics
 - ✓ undocumented immigrant support groups



English Learner Students Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Inform students about the different career options within career and technical education (CTE) and how they can get started during high school.
 - ✓ Partner with your local community college for CTE career exploration days.
 - ✓ Inform students of supports and services available at the college for EL students.
 - ✓ Emphasize potential earnings and timelines for completion.
- Be sure to translate any fliers or brochures created to promote career and technical education (CTE) programs in languages represented within the community.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Plyler vs. Doe , the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that children, regardless of the child's or parent's citizenship or immigration status, have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents.⁴



SOURCES:

¹ Every Student Succeeds Act. S.1177, 114th Cong., (2015) (enacted). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177/text>.

² Illinois Report Card: Graduation Rate. (2019). Retrieved May 26, 2020 from <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/State.aspx?source=trends&source2=graduationrate&Stateid=IL>.

³ National Education Association. (n.d.). Partner with Families and Communities of English Language Learners. Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/home/63601.htm>.

⁴ Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 (1982).

⁵ Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act H.R.2353, 115th Cong., (2018) (enacted). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2353/text?r=2>.

⁶ Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. (2017). Best Practices for Serving English Language Learners and Their Families. Retrieved from <https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/TT-ELL-Best-Practices-Guide-WEB-v2-Nov2017.pdf>.