
**MINNESOTA MULTILINGUAL EQUITY NETWORK:
ENGLISH LEARNER-EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT INITIATIVE**

POLICY BRIEF



COALITION OF
ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERS



Minnesota
Education Equity
Partnership

Advancing **Race Equity** & Excellence



COALITION OF
ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERS

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www.caalmn.org

The **Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL)** is a network of multi-sector, multi-ethnic and multi-generational leaders who actively harnesses our collective power to improve the lives of community in Minnesota. Towards this mission, CAAL connects leaders, creates spaces for learning, and builds powerful community-centered agendas on the shared priorities of education and economics. We believe that our diversity is our asset, and building cohesion and unity among and across communities to be powerful ensures our multi-racial, multi-cultural democracy works for its entire people. CAAL deploys the following strategies to make meaningful impact for community.

- We **weave relationships** together across our community's complex identities so that leaders maximize their knowledge, resources and experiences to get things done together for greater progress.
- On the community's shared priorities of education and economics, CAAL leaders **develop shared analysis and action agendas** based on research, lived experiences and power building of the most impacted community members in order to influence and inform systems.
- Lastly, we **uplift and support the brilliance of Minnesota's diverse Asian populations** to lead inside and outside of our communities so that Minnesota's leadership in all systems reflects its population.



Minnesota
Education Equity
Partnership

Advancing **Race Equity** & Excellence

www.mneep.org

The **Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MnEEP)** uses a race equity lens to transform educational institutions, organizations, and leaders to ensure that students of color and American Indian students achieve full academic and leadership success. We envision a just society in which an equitable educational ecosystem ensures all students achieve their full potential. Achieving this vision would mean that race is no longer a predictor of educational success. MnEEP utilizes research, policy development, and community empowerment models to build strong networks of communities of color, American Indian communities and education system leaders for systems, structural and cultural shifts in education.

MnEEP focuses on five big, bold goals:

Big Bold Goal 1: Minnesota school systems are culturally responsive in their policies and approaches to education.

Big Bold Goal 2: Minnesota school climates foster positive student engagement to eliminate discipline gaps by race and support students of color and American Indian students for academic and leadership success.

Big Bold Goal 3: Minnesota educators reflect student demographics.

Big Bold Goal 4: Minnesota schools utilize heritage and home language to support academic excellence for English Language Learners and the multilingualism of all students.

Big Bold Goal 5: Minnesota institutions of higher education will support student achievement by providing greater access and equity to students of color and American Indian students, with a focus on financial aid.

**MINNESOTA MULTILINGUAL EQUITY NETWORK:
ENGLISH LEARNER-EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT INITIATIVE**

POLICY BRIEF

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ACRONYMS

- ACCESS:** Assessing Comprehension & Communication in English State to State
- CAAL:** Coalition of Asian American Leaders
- DLL:** Dual Language Learner
- ECE:** Early Childhood Education
- ELP:** English Language Proficiency
- EL:** English Learner
- ESEA:** Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- ESSA:** Every Student Succeeds Act
- HLS:** Home Language Survey
- LTEL:** Long Term English Learner
- MCA:** Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment
- MDE:** Minnesota Department of Education
- MnEEP:** Minnesota Education Equity Partnership
- MN LEAPS:** Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success Act
- NCLB:** No Child Left Behind Act
- RAEL:** Recently Arrived English Learner
- SLIFE:** Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education
- USDE:** United States Department of Education
- W-APT:** WIDA ACCESS Placement Test
- WBWF:** Minnesota World's Best Workforce Act
- WIDA:** World-class Instructional Design and Assessment

MINNESOTA MULTILINGUAL EQUITY NETWORK: EL-ESSA INITIATIVE

To address the disparities that English Learners (ELs) and their families face in the Minnesota education system, the Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL) and the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MnEEP) founded the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network and launched the Minnesota EL-ESSA Initiative in July 2016. This initiative aims to create and coordinate conversations within and between advocacy organizations and the students, families, and communities that are the most impacted by the EL policies and practices of Minnesota school districts. Guided by a diverse EL-Stakeholder Advisory Group and with input from researchers, the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network implemented a responsive community engagement process to develop an equity agenda and specific recommendations for MDE to use when incorporating the educational needs of ELs into Minnesota's ESSA implementation plan.

The following principles are the foundation of the equity agenda and its recommendations for MDE:

1. Measurement of ELs' progress and proficiency in academic achievement supports excellence in teaching and learning for K-12, college, and career success.
2. Authentic and deep community engagement is necessary to ensure that systemic and school-specific EL department plans and programs are responsive, relevant, and transparent to families of ELs.
3. Academic native language literacy and content instruction enhance English language development and academic learning while supporting ELs' social-emotional and cognitive development; building on and meaningfully using the native language of students are linked to long-term higher academic achievement and persistence in schooling.
4. Minnesota teachers and education leaders must have quality professional development and curriculum support in academic native language literacy, content instruction, and teacher judgment to meet the higher academic goals and social-emotional development needs of ELs.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past 20 years, the number of English Learners (EL) in Minnesota has increased by 300 percent, making them Minnesota's fastest growing student population. ELs are an increasingly significant group within schools throughout the United States. Despite this, families and communities that support these children are often underrepresented in policy discussions regarding early learning and K-12 education. From 1996 to 2013, the academic progress of ELs plateaued compared to their white, non-EL peers. Although ELs are the fastest growing student group in many Minnesota school districts, they often remain invisible or inaccurately represented in education accountability metrics. Although academic assessment proficiency and graduation rates are appallingly low, such statistics have not triggered intervention due to the legacy of English-only language practices and societal behavior.

Building on their individual strengths in education equity advocacy, the Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL) and the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MnEEP) founded the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network and launched the Minnesota EL-ESSA Initiative in July 2016. The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network provided specific recommendations for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) as they developed their plan to meet the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a federal law established in December 2015. The ESSA is the most recent reauthorization of the



Elementary and Secondary Education Act which was created in 1965 to better serve historically disadvantaged students by providing targeted education funding to US states.

The ESSA requires states to include progress toward English language proficiency as an indicator in their school accountability systems. This requirement creates an increased need to use standardized measurements for ELs and is an opportunity to ensure that Minnesota's education system adequately considers the academic success of this growing student population. By taking appropriate and timely action, the state can move toward providing quality education that prepares all children for academic and career success.

The federal requirement for the implementation of the ESSA in Minnesota is an opportunity to adopt equity-focused principles and policy recommendations below. The Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (MN LEAPS) Act, passed in 2014, provides an excellent foundation for this work but has not been fully implemented due to resource and capacity limitations. Education stakeholders and leaders can utilize the development of the state's ESSA implementation plan to further the groundbreaking leadership of the MN LEAPS Act, expand the engagement of EL stakeholders, and clarify policies and practices that support ELs in all the state's schools and districts.



Educational policies that are meaningful, relevant, and inclusive to ELs are critical to their achievement, integration, and future leadership. By fully supporting multilingualism and educational equity, Minnesota can simultaneously create short-term education benefits for all students while simultaneously creating long-term workforce and social benefits for the entire state.

The following principles ground the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network's equity agenda and recommendations to MDE for implementing the ESSA:

- Measurement of EL student progress and proficiency in academic achievement supports excellence in teaching and learning for preK-12, college, and career success.
- Authentic and deep community engagement is necessary to ensure that systemic and school-specific EL department plans and programs are responsive, relevant, and transparent to families of ELs.
- Academic native language literacy and content instruction enhance English language development and academic learning while supporting ELs' social-emotional and cognitive development; building on and meaningfully using the native language of students are linked to long-term higher academic achievement and persistence in schooling.
- Minnesota teachers and education leaders must have quality professional development and curriculum support in academic native language literacy, content instruction, and teacher judgment to meet the higher academic goals and social-emotional development needs of ELs.

The following recommendations should be considered by MDE for the state's ESSA plan regarding ELs:

1. Family Engagement:

Provide resources and support for family engagement staff to work with EL families in meeting the evolving and diverse educational needs of their children.



2. Academic Native Language Literacy:

Strengthen academic native language curriculum and courses to support rigorous literacy development, increased educational content access, and global citizenship for ELs.

3. English Language Proficiency (ELP) Goals:

Provide a more robust and multidimensional calculation of growth toward academic ELP.

- Target Goals: at a minimum, use standard ELP target goals for student categories [five years to achieve ELP for elementary students, seven years for middle/high school students, ten years for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)] and, ideally, develop target goals based on entering language level.
- Calculation: provide a robust picture of EL progress within the multiple dimensions of ELP by developing a composite indicator with three measurements:
 1. percentage of students attaining target growth based on language level;
 2. percentage of reclassified ELs; and
 3. percentage of long-term ELs (5+ years)
- Weight and Sample Size: weight ELP indicator as at least 20% of the total ESSA accountability indicators and standardize the sample size, or n-size, of 10 for the state's federal accountability system and academic performance reporting, including graduation rates.
- Tying ELP to state academic assessment: link ELP with the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) in a manner which considers the limitations of the assessment as a valid, reliable, and sole measure of ELP growth.



4. Standardized Entry/Exit Criteria:

Create consistent and objective criteria and school practices, including family discussions, for EL program placement and reclassification.

- Maintain the definitions, criteria, and associated systems recommended by the WIDA Consortium for program entry, including developing a standardized Home Language Survey (HLS) to be used consistently across school districts; continuing the use of screener assessments with the condition that an acclimation period is provided for students to become familiar with computerized testing and the school setting; and developing a rubric for teachers and administrators to consistently interpret and respond to HLS responses.
- Standardize program exit criteria by using a “proficient” score on the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment and developing a complementary rubric for teacher judgment to support program exit.

5. Options for Inclusion in Assessment and Accountability:

Establish and maintain high standards for all ELs using baseline data from assessments of recently arrived students to properly measure growth.

- Assess and report MCA scores on Reading/Language Arts and Math for the first year a student is enrolled, but do not include in the accountability system. In the second year, compare first and second year scores to establish a measure of growth and include this in the accountability system. In the third year, include proficiency in the accountability system like all ELs.
- Include reclassified ELs for four years in EL student group in accountability systems, but disaggregate their data in reporting.



6. Early Childhood Education (ECE):

Prioritize support and acquisition of federal funding for early development of dual language learner (DLL) students.

- Include pre-K teachers in professional development: prepare ECE workforce to work effectively with DLL students and explore strategies to increase their collaboration between schools.
- Improve DLL student identification and reclassification: follow standardized identification procedure for K-12 ELs and expand the use of flexible reclassification tools, such as mid-year assessments, to ensure that ECE programs accurately classify and reclassify DLL students.
- Strengthen accountability through Parent Aware quality rating and improvement system and expedite the process: include dual language instruction as an indicator and involve more ECE programs to broaden accountability.

7. Comprehensive Improvement Plans:

Use school improvement and other federal funding sources to strategically strengthen professional development and programs to support ELs and their families, particularly in low-performing schools.



I. BACKGROUND

“Education equity means that when my students finish high school, they have the same skills as any mainstream student would have to succeed.”

– ST. PAUL KAREN PARENT



MINNESOTA ENGLISH LEARNERS

An English Learner (EL), according to Minnesota statute, is:

- 1. “the pupil, as declared by a parent or guardian first learned 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... lacks the necessary English skills to participate fully in academic classes taught in English.”¹*

ELs are an increasingly significant student group within schools throughout the United States. Despite this, families and communities that support these children are often underrepresented in policy discussions regarding early learning and K-12 education. This exclusion has academic ramifications for ELs.² From 1996 to 2013, the academic progress of ELs plateaued compared to their white, non-EL peers; students of color that were not classified as EL made academic progress in the same comparison.³ Even after ELs are reclassified and enter traditional academic tracks, they are less likely to enroll in advanced coursework or courses that lead toward college readiness.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), 8.3% of Minnesota's K-12 public school students were identified as ELs in the 2015-2016 school year.⁴ Figures 1 and 2 illustrate EL population trends in the largest Minnesota public school districts.⁵ While enrollment of ELs has historically been significantly higher in urban districts, EL enrollment in suburban and rural districts has increased in recent years. This presents new challenges and opportunities, as non-urban districts must incorporate and support the needs of this unique student group that has not historically been part of their student population or wider community.⁶

Minnesota is unique within the broader region regarding the scale of change within the education system. From 2010 to 2015, the Minnesota EL population grew 17.5 times faster than Illinois, 8.75 times faster than Michigan, 5 times faster than Ohio, and twice as fast as Wisconsin.⁷ Considering this, Minnesota can be a regional leader in supporting ELs.

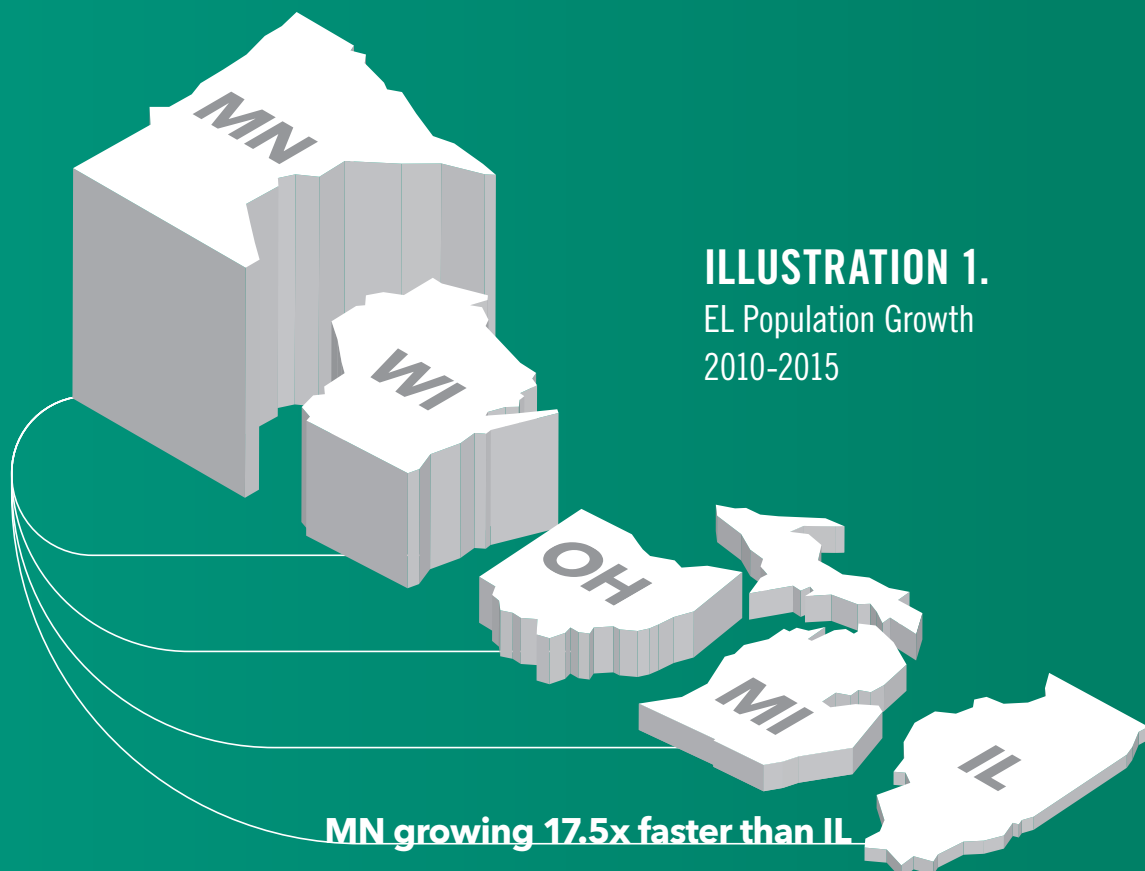
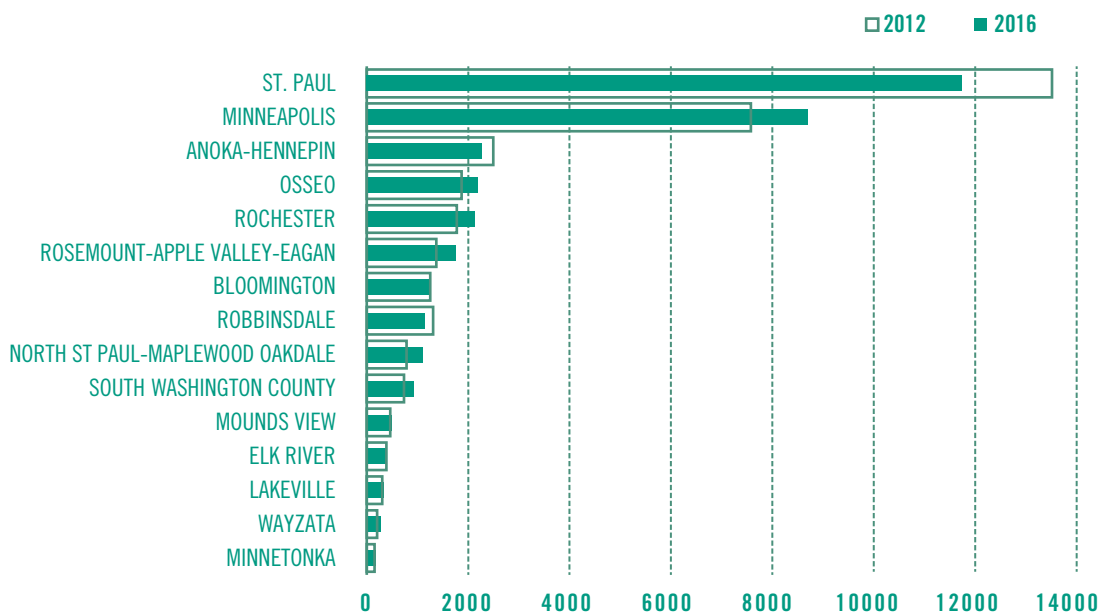
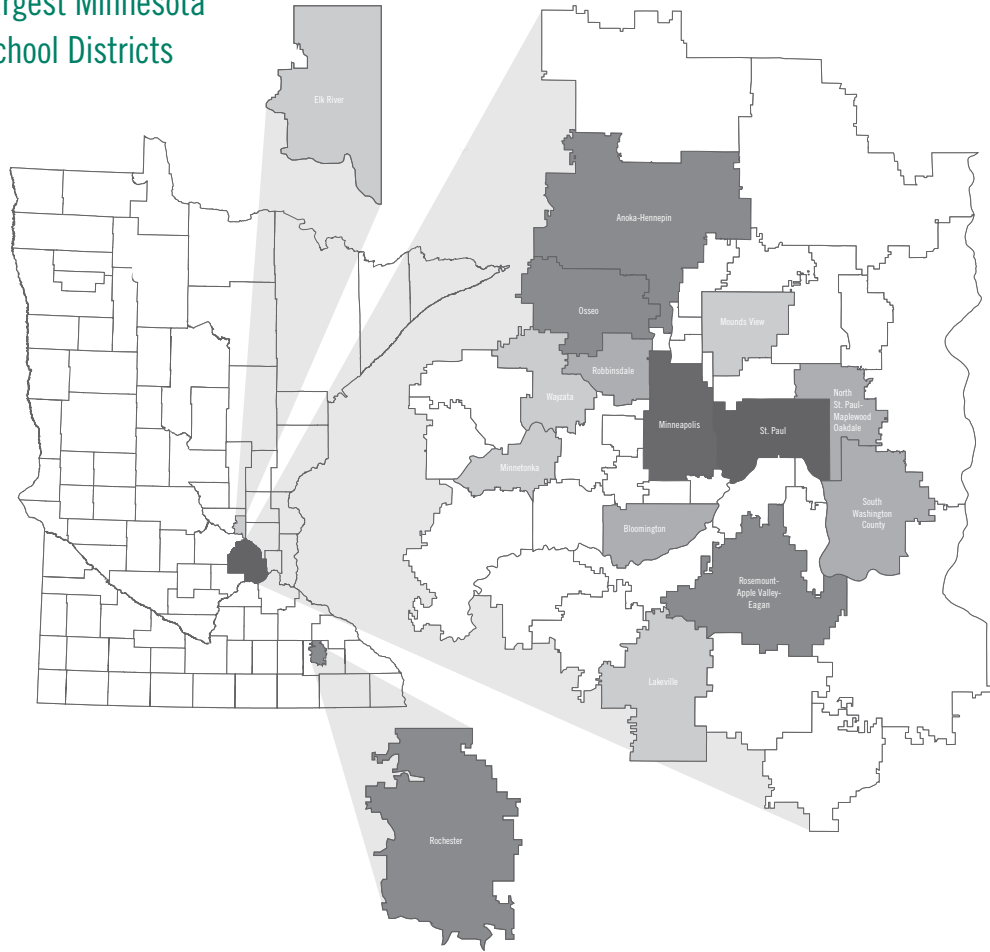


FIGURE 1.
English Learner Enrollment
in the Largest Minnesota
Public School Districts



Minnesota has also seen growth in the number of languages spoken by EL students. In 2012, the state ranked 15th nationally for language diversity and 3rd in the Midwest behind Illinois and Michigan.⁸ The top five languages spoken by ELs in Minnesota are Spanish (37.6%), Somali (17.2%), Hmong (16.4%), Vietnamese (3.6%), and Karen (3.2%).⁹

Second generation immigrant and refugee families have more history in the United States and often retain home languages and cultures. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, as seen in Table 1, almost two-thirds of school-aged children who were reported as ELs were born in the US, with a larger share among elementary school children than older students.¹⁰

TABLE 1.

K-12 EL Children Born in the United States by Grade Level			
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-12	Total
Minnesota	70%	47%	60%
United States	83%	56%	71%

Source: Migration Policy Institute, 2014.

Children from immigrant and refugee families are diverse; some arrive highly educated whereas some come with little to no formal education.

Children from these families are often classified as Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). These students are defined under the Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (MN LEAPS) Act as an EL who:

“comes from a home where the language usually spoken is other than English, or who usually speaks a language other than English; enters school in the US after grade 6; has at least two years less schooling than the English Learner’s peers; functions at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics; and may be preliterate in the English Learner’s native language.”¹¹

The progress of these students is slowed by the combination of navigating a new education system while also developing language and literacy. While schools and districts are required to identify SLIFE and report their academic and linguistic growth on an annual basis, disaggregated data reporting practices create challenges for targeting and implementing adequate intervention strategies.

Due to the scale and diversity of its EL population, Minnesota

FIGURE 2.

Non Metro Non-Charter Have Seen a Large Increase in ELs Over the Past 5 Years

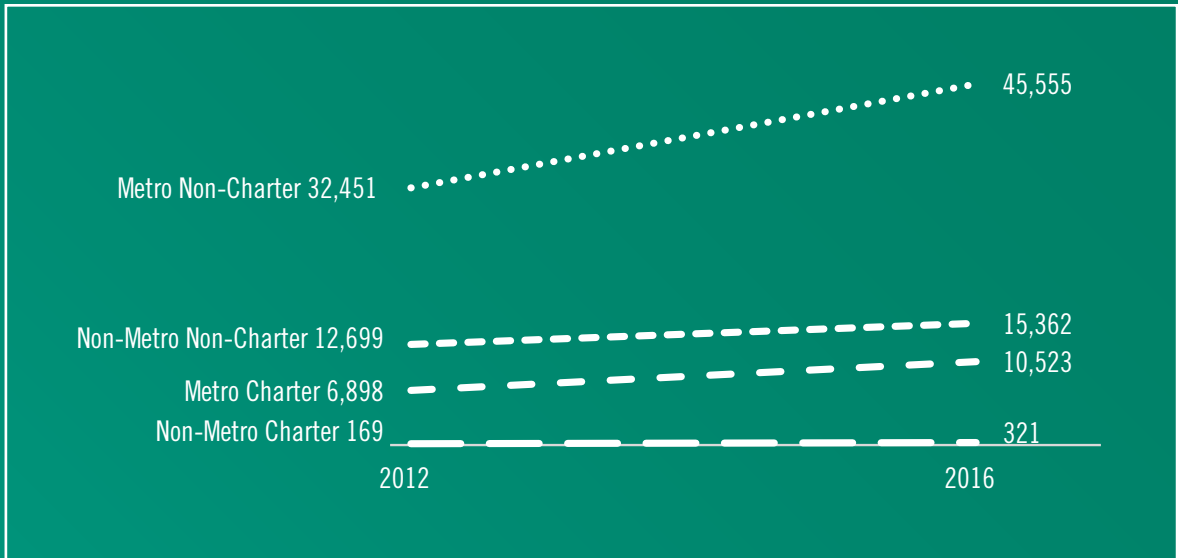


FIGURE 3.

Minnesota's Top 12 Languages Other Than English

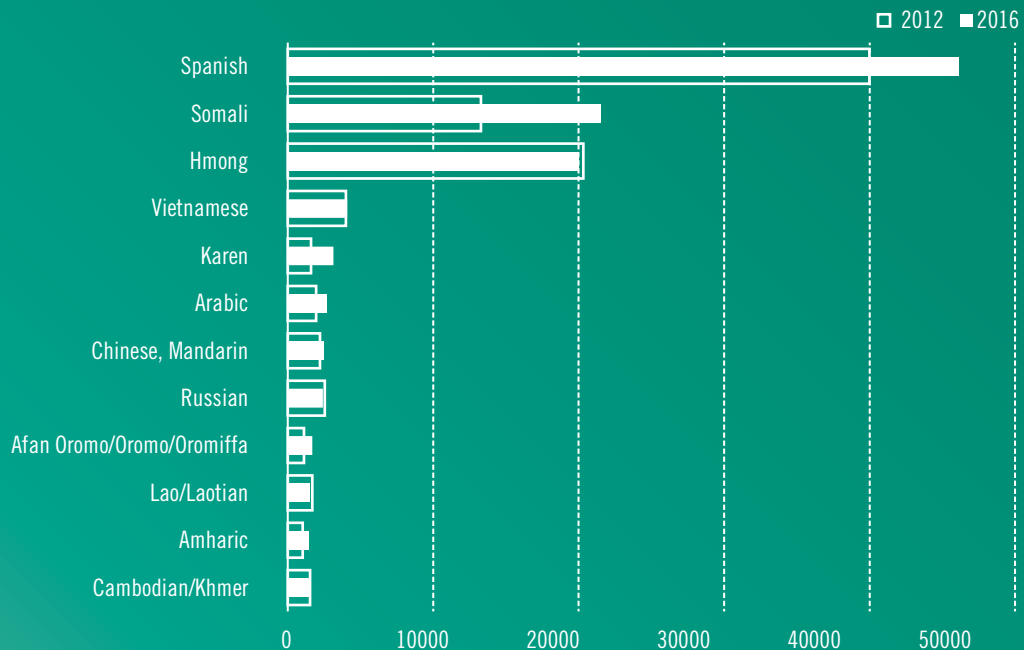


FIGURE 4.
Comparison of English Learners to All Students on Statewide
Achievement Tests in Math, Reading, and Science

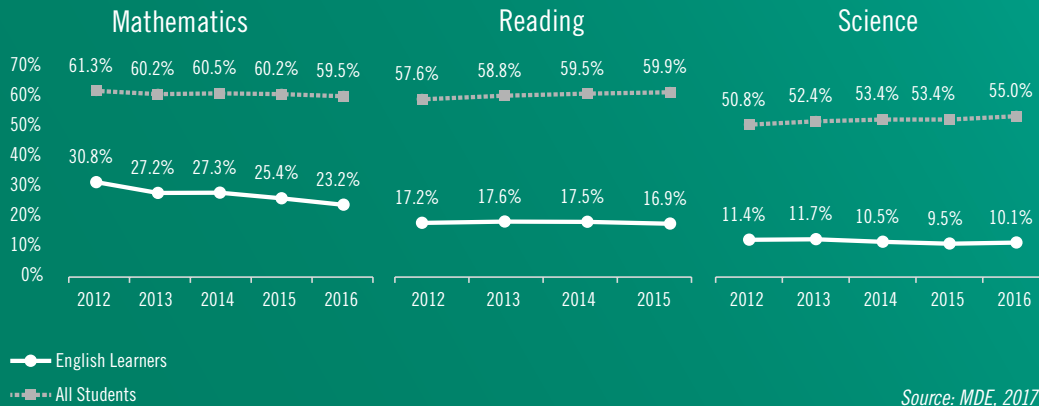
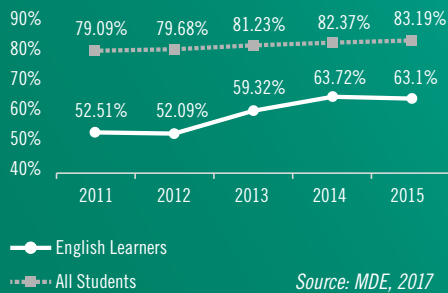


FIGURE 5.
Minnesota Four Year Graduation
Rate Trends Comparing ELs and
Non ELs



is uniquely positioned to be a leader in advancing a multilingual workforce that can create advantages and opportunities within a competitive economy. By successfully integrating multilingual communities, the state could see a major positive effect on its schools, workforce, and economy.¹²

Test Scores and Graduation Rates Reflect Systemic Inequities in Serving ELs

Although ELs are the fastest growing student group in many Minnesota school districts, they often remain invisible or inaccurately represented in education accountability metrics. Figures 4 and 5 show their academic assessment proficiency and graduation rates are appallingly low. But such statistics have not triggered intervention due to the legacy of English-only language practices and societal behavior.¹⁷

Historical Policies and Practices to Exclude ELs in US Education

Research shows that state academic assessments—such as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA)—have low validity in determining the language proficiency of ELs and result in educational inequalities throughout the country^A. This is due, in part, to such assessments originating from policies and practices that have historically promoted English-only instruction^B. Although the US does not have an official language policy, it has struggled to overcome this educational legacy and strengthen its commitment to properly supporting and assessing ELs^C. Furthermore, the US has historically considered the achievement of English monolingualism as the final step for immigrants in a multi-generational assimilation process.

The 1974 Supreme Court decision *Lau v. Nichols* determined that schools had an obligation to address any language barriers that prevent ELs from fully participating in the educational system^E. Despite this, efforts to advance bilingual education in the late 1970s and 1980s were increasingly met with opposition^F. As a result, ELs are still required to take state academic assessments in the same format and environment as native English-speaking students. This is despite the availability of proven accommodations that provide a more valid assessment of an EL student's academic abilities such as test translation, glossaries, and extended testing time.

The cumulative effect of social, political and economic inequity over multiple generations results in an “education debt” paid by today's students of color and American Indian students. These students consistently achieve lower academic outcomes than their white peers on an annual basis, further compounding the educational debt of historical inequities and exacerbating future disparities^G.

APPLYING AN EQUITY LENS TO EL EDUCATION

The Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MnEEP) makes a distinction between race equality and race equity. Race equity is achieved when those most affected by inequities have the space to build shared power and lead through collective action. Race equity in education is achieved when all students can achieve their full academic potential regardless of their unique educational needs.

For many students of color and American Indian students—a student group that contains most ELs—this potential is often hindered by institutionalized assumptions about their academic potential. Such assumptions can influence subsequent decisions regarding academic interventions and methods for accessing academic growth. If left unchecked, these assumptions and the barriers they create force students of color and American Indian students into the lowest levels of achievement^H.

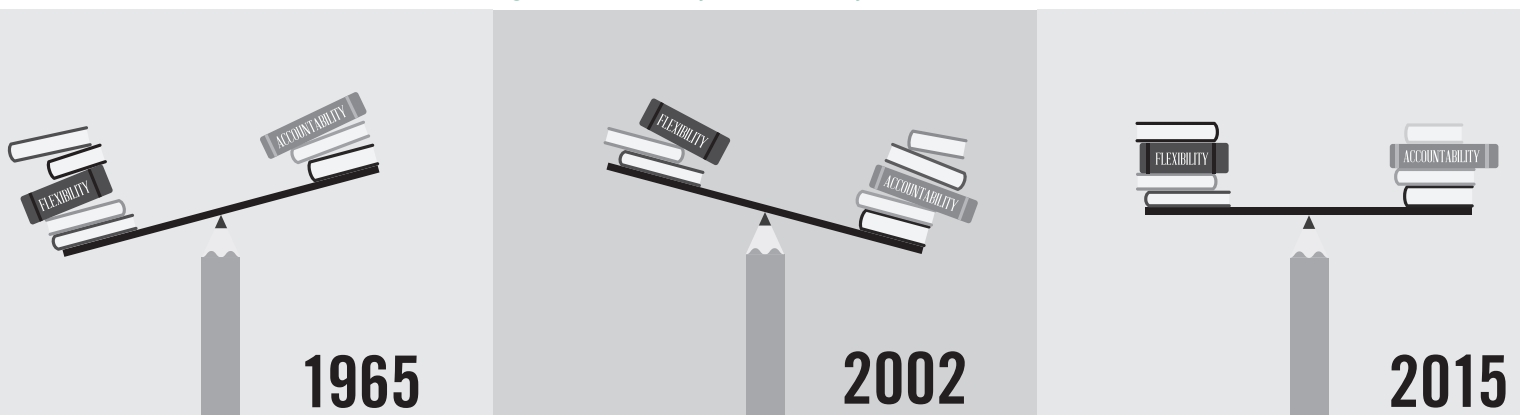
THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) became federal law in 2015 and will be fully implemented in the 2018-2019 school year. The ESSA is the most recent reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which was originally passed in 1965 to increase educational services to historically disadvantaged groups of students by increasing federal education funding to US states. It has been reauthorized several times since 1965 with the most notably being the 2002 reauthorization known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. It is important also to note that the ESEA is grounded in civil rights. The law came in the wake of the groundbreaking Civil Rights Act of 1964 and sought to address racial disparities in education. Therefore, any reauthorization of the ESEA must address such disparities and uphold civil rights. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.¹⁸ Examples

of discrimination covered by Title VI include racial harassment, school segregation, and denial of language services to ELs.

To understand the importance of the ESSA, it is helpful to know how the federal government's relationship with states has changed over the years regarding education. This relationship has evolved in flexibility, also referred to as local control, and accountability. Flexibility addresses the degree to which states and their school districts are given the power to tailor their policies and practices to address disparities experienced by the students that the ESEA is obligated to protect and support. Accountability addresses the obligation of the federal government to monitor and account for the performance of states under the ESEA. Historically, the federal government has focused heavily on either state flexibility or accountability, but the ESSA attempts to balance these two concepts, as seen in Illustration 2.¹⁹

ILLUSTRATION 2. Balancing Accountability + Flexibility



Source: Adapted from IL State Board of Education

Student outcomes will still comprise much of the accountability system under the ESSA, but will be supported by more meaningful indicators:

- **Proficiency** in state learning standards still counts, like NCLB, on state assessments such as the MCA.
- **Student growth** or another academic indicator must be included for elementary students, as measured by MCA scores year to year.
- **Graduation rates** are included for high schools, as measured by the percentage of students who graduate high school in four to seven years.
- **English language proficiency** would also be incorporated for ELs, which has not been measured before under Title I.
- **At least one more indicator** of student success and school quality is also required. States can choose how to define this. This indicator could include measurements such as chronic absenteeism, access to advanced course work, suspension and expulsion data, and freshman-on-track rates. As of March 2017, Minnesota has not decided on what this indicator will be.

ILLUSTRATION 3.

Because English Language Proficiency is required in the accountability system, the ESSA contains several new provisions that can be used to advance equity and excellence for ELs:

- 1 **Access to learning opportunities focused on higher-order thinking skills;**
- 2 **Multiple measures of equity;**
- 3 **Resource equity; and**
- 4 **Evidence-based interventions.**

The NCLB Act took a major step toward supporting the needs of ELs by disaggregating achievement data and holding schools accountable for improving ELs' reading and math achievement and graduation rates under Title I.²⁰ However, NCLB created a separate accountability system for English language acquisition that only applied to districts and states receiving federal funding under Title III, which targets EL and immigrant students. This division in accountability and funding for EL programs created confusion. Further, it sent the message that helping ELs was a secondary concern to meeting other academic targets. Under the ESSA, English language proficiency is a required indicator in every state's school accountability system, creating the need for standardized measurements. However, the ESSA combines federal Title I and Title III accountability, and this creates implications for ELs,

families, and advocates. Combining these programs could increase competition for federal funds between recipients and reduce accountability for how schools and districts spend federal funding to support EL programming.

All states are required to submit a new state plan for implementing the ESSA to the US Department of Education (USDE) by September 18, 2017, and will be implemented in the 2018-2019 school year. MDE is working with school districts, education stakeholders, and the public to develop the state's ESSA implementation plan and hopes to release a draft for public comment in summer 2017. This is an opportunity for all states, including Minnesota, to better support the academic success of growing EL populations. Providing this support ensures that all students have access to a quality education that prepares them for academic and career success.



"Our caseloads are too big to effectively service our students. Sometimes I only see a student for 15 minutes, but they need much more help."

- FARIBAULT EL TEACHER

STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS: THE ESSA IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE FOR ELS IN MINNESOTA

The creation of a state's ESSA implementation plan is an opportunity to bolster existing Minnesota laws aimed at supporting ELs. The state has two comprehensive education laws that should be considered: the Minnesota's World's Best Workforce (WBWF) Act and the Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (MN LEAPS) Act. By aligning the state's ESSA implementation plan with these state laws (Table 2), Minnesota can continue to work toward ensuring the academic success of all students by responding to their diverse and evolving needs on multiple levels.

The LEAPS Act passed in Minnesota in 2014 and revised many state statutes to add an increased emphasis on supporting ELs. The legislation created space for further EL education reform at both state and local levels. The basis of this legislation is:

- Multilingualism and multiculturalism are assets, both educationally and economically.
- Teachers and administrators must be appropriately prepared and evaluated to support ELs.
- Culturally relevant practices and approaches must be embedded across the education system.

However, the implementation of the MN LEAPS Act has been slower and more complex than anticipated, according to teachers, district administrators, and MDE. The non-partisan think tank New America identified various implementation obstacles:

1. The major provisions of the act have yet to be backed by sufficient resources.
2. The pace and fidelity of the act's implementation have been challenged by how it was conceptualized and designed, such as the degree that stakeholder engagement and institutional inertia were considered.
3. There is little evidence that the MDE, as it is currently structured, is prepared to oversee and support district-level efforts to implement the law.⁶⁵

The ESSA significantly strengthens accountability regarding ELs and significantly increases funding for EL support programs. This focused support has the potential to help Minnesota address the implementation obstacles that limit the MN LEAPS Act and reinforce the goals of the WBWF Act. For more information on these laws, see Appendix A.

TABLE 2. Comparing Federal and State Laws


PROVISION	ESSA	WBWF	MN LEAPS
Measuring interim progress of ELs	Requires states to measure interim progress and performance indicators for “all students” and for each student group, and require local education agencies (LEAs) to produce biennial reports with information on ELP and reclassification rates	Academic growth at elementary and middle school level, academic disparities, academic progress gaps	Must use longitudinal data on student engagement and connection and other student outcome measures... including academic literacy, oral academic language, and achievement of ELs
ELs meeting state achievement goals	Requires measurements of interim progress, state-defined performance indices for EL academic achievement, and meaningful differentiation of public schools based on school performance in these indicators. Tracks individual and group EL performance over time	Academic proficiency, English language proficiency, graduation rates, career and college readiness	Same as NCLB: adopts short-term, Annual Measurement Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), comprising: progress; (2) proficiency; and adequate yearly progress. Tracks differences in performance between EL grade-based populations from year to year, but does not incorporate an actual measure of progress
Exclusion of recently arrived ELs from state academic assessments	Allows states to exclude ELs from reading/language arts accountability in the first year, include a measure of student growth in the second year, and start including their proficiency scores beginning the third year (Recommendation)	Same as NCLB: states may exclude ELs from taking reading/language arts assessments, and exclude results of their reading/language arts and mathematics assessments from accountability for the first year	
Inclusion of formerly EL-classified students in the EL group for reporting and accountability purposes	Extends this period to up to four years	Same as NCLB: includes ELs for a period of up to two years after they have been reclassified	
Identification of long-term ELs	Requires additional disaggregation of disabled ELs from the EL group, and reporting of numbers of ELs who have not attained English proficiency within five years after identification	Same as NCLB: no provisions to address this special case	Same as NCLB: there is no limit on the amount of time students can participate. Students must be served until they are reclassified
Standardization of entry/exit criteria	Standardized within states, and includes consultation with LEAs	Not standardized within state	
Accountability for academic and English proficiency	Academic performance continues to be part of Title I and adds ELP to Title I. No accountability for academic outcomes or ELP in Title III	Part of Title III: Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students	

II. EQUITY AGENDA AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A large group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are seated at long tables in a conference room. They are looking towards the front of the room where a man in a suit is standing and presenting. The room has a modern design with large windows and a high ceiling with recessed lighting. The overall atmosphere is professional and focused.

"An equitable education for ELs is working to provide a level playing field."

- MINNEAPOLIS PARENT



Given their increasing prominence, the educational needs of ELs must be fully considered and supported in Minnesota’s ESSA plan. These students deserve an education that will help them prepare for college, a career, and a future in the state. The state’s economic future will be heavily influenced by the degree that these students are provided an equitable education in the years to come. The following recommendations uphold the principles of the EL-ESSA Initiative equity agenda:

1. Family Engagement:

Provide resources and support for family engagement staff to work with EL families in meeting the evolving and diverse educational needs of their children.

The active and sustained engagement of EL communities is essential for solving the challenges faced by ELs in Minnesota schools. While many solutions to education challenges are technical,

providing an equitable education to ELs requires a multi-faceted approach that includes non-technical solutions. The influence of cultural values, personal experiences, and societal stigmas must be considered within the educational context. Engaging and building the increased involvement of EL families and communities is the best way to understand these influences and tailor technical solutions for EL programs and assessments.

MDE’s Theory of Action, a requirement of the ESSA, focuses on equity for underserved student groups through leadership development, meaningful stakeholder involvement, and teaching that is culturally relevant. To actualize these outcomes, the state must conduct community engagement that transcends information sharing and one-off consultation. Empowering community stakeholders with the understanding and sense of urgency regarding the academic needs of ELs is necessary to push the

ESSA planning process forward and maintain the momentum for achieving systemic change.²¹

While immigrant and refugee families develop more autonomy over time, many that have recently arrived in Minnesota face challenges navigating the complexity of the education system. Many rely on their children to translate important information such as permission slips, program requirements, and report cards. Thus, more advocacy support for EL families is needed

and refining the policies that affect EL education. These stakeholders bring valuable insight that can complement the professional training and experience of EL teachers and their colleagues. For example, families that attended EL Parent Advisory Committee meetings—co-hosted by the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network and family engagement and cultural liaison staff in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Faribault school districts—shared that being identified as an ELs stigmatizes their child and lowers their self-esteem. Figure 6 illustrates family

“While we want our kids to get the help they need for academic success, the EL label stigmatizes our students and lowers their self-esteem”.

– S O M A L I P A R E N T

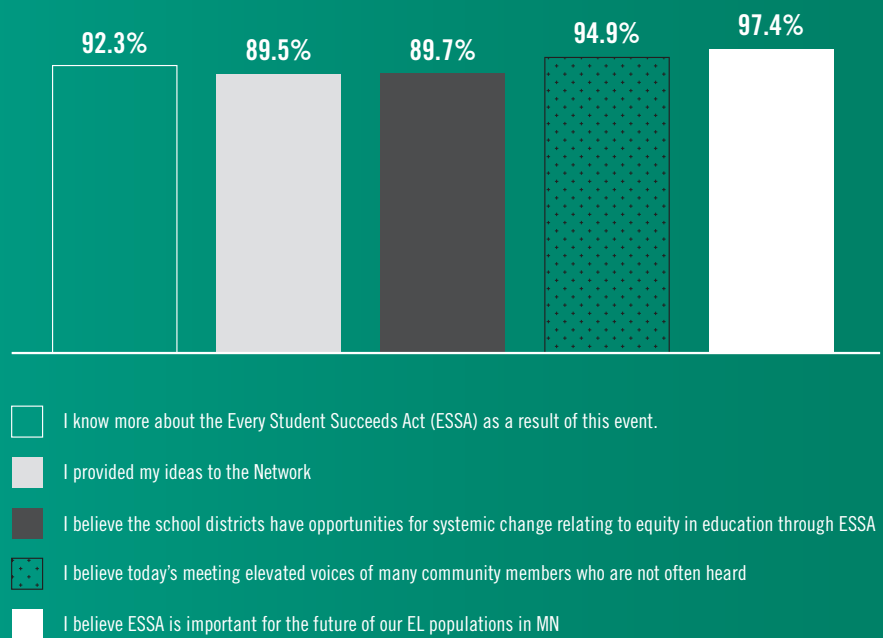
throughout the state. While some districts have well-established family engagement teams, many districts do not engage families sufficiently. Such district-level support provides the liaisons and cultural specialists that help connect EL families to their schools and districts.

Beyond providing support for EL families to understand their children’s educational experience, these families and the communities that support them should be engaged in developing

feedback to the EL-ESSA Initiative gatherings and the importance of community engagement in planning the implementation of the ESSA.²²

These parents also shared that they do not receive adequate information regarding the EL programs available, with some parents noting that what information they do receive from teachers regarding their child’s achievement level and progress is not in-depth enough to support their future involvement. This challenge is

FIGURE 6.
 EL-ESSA Initiative Family
 Feedback Events 2016-2017:
 Post-Event Survey Results



exacerbated by the lack of adequate family engagement staff in some districts.

EL families at district meetings also shared that schools and districts vary in their capacity to tailor EL support for the different cultural needs of EL families and communities. While one approach may work well for one cultural group, it may not meet the communication needs of others. To guide this tailored approach, parents suggested that schools and districts ask parents how they want to be engaged and use this input to design and refine high-quality engagement. MDE can support this by developing

a guide for schools and districts on promising practices and resources for developing and refining EL family and community engagement.

EL families at district meetings also pointed out that the education services their children receive are often based on structural inequity that inherently limits the academic progression of ELs. EL parents and family members also agreed that a lack of resources at the district and school level is the primary barrier to the structural change necessary to support their children. They shared that, regardless of their background, every student deserves to receive a high-level education that



supports their unique learning needs to equitably develop a high standard of knowledge and skills at the time of graduation. They recognized that this requires hiring teachers who understand the native languages, cultures, and student backgrounds. They agreed that entrance and exit criteria must be transparent and involve multiple measurements.

Building deeper EL family and community involvement in managing their children's education requires investing in the human resources and infrastructure to help these stakeholders navigate the US education system and its expectations. MDE can support this in multiple ways:

- The first is by providing dedicated EL support staff for working with district staff on cultural responsiveness, liaising with parents, and advocating for the rights of EL families. Following up from previous ESSA EL focus groups is one way that MDE staff can begin making and maintaining these connections.
- MDE could also develop an information and resource guide on EL education that districts and schools can provide families to encourage their self-agency

and advocacy. Merely translating all documents may work for some communities, but MDE needs to understand better how different communities want to receive and interact with information.

A framework for culturally responsive community engagement should be the overlaying practice for MDE, districts, and schools as they plan on how to strengthen the participation of EL families. The best way to understand what is culturally responsive is to involve families early in the process of developing any framework and planning for EL policies and practices. The successful implementation of the ESSA and progress toward educational equity for all students depends on the meaningful inclusion of the parents and communities that represent ELs.²³

2. Academic Native Language

Literacy: Strengthen academic native language curriculum and courses to support rigorous literacy development, increased educational content access, and global citizenship for ELs.

Dual language acquisition through academic native language education is an important consideration when measuring the progress of Minnesota's ELs toward English language



for true multilingualism, content knowledge and literacy should be meaningfully developed through students' native languages

proficiency. Many EL families and communities want their children to develop and retain their native language as a valuable link to their culture and heritage. Furthermore, academic native language instruction can help SLIFE students' transition into a new school system and develop a base of literacy.

For true multilingualism, content knowledge and literacy should be meaningfully developed through students' native languages. Immersion programs and content courses in a native language can simultaneously support academic native language and English language development by ELs.²⁴ Because Minnesota families speak many languages, it is a great opportunity for students to develop skills in their native language rather than in another less culturally relevant language that is required simply to fulfill graduation requirements. Multilingualism drives global citizenship, creating a unique advantage for Minnesota to develop a diverse and competitive workforce.²⁵

New data on the growing number of ELs in Minnesota highlights another driver of education debt: uneven opportunities for multilingual education.²⁶ While the state is home to nearly 100 language immersion schools, they are predominantly oriented toward native-English-speaking students. As a result, very few ELs benefit from multilingual education and the cognitive advantages it provides.²⁷ Most Minnesota programs accessible to ELs are overwhelmingly English-only rather than multilingual.²⁸ Such an emphasis can erode rather than capitalize on the rich linguistic resources and academic potential of ELs. Research continues to indicate that ELs are most likely to academically succeed in all areas, including English proficiency, when they have opportunities to develop and build upon their native languages.²⁹ By educating EL families on the importance of native language development and creating language resources in schools, Minnesota can create higher education pathways for more students.³⁰



The MN LEAPS Act includes provisions that validate and support the development of academic native language instruction in the education continuum.³¹ Under these provisions, schools can issue bilingual and multilingual diploma seals to students who demonstrate proficiency in multiple languages. The MN LEAPS Act also

support of native language literacy. In 2010, Illinois passed legislation that requires public schools to develop bilingual education programs for preschool students between the ages of three and five, making it the first state to extend a bilingual education mandate to early childhood education. The law requires school districts create

academic native language literacy should not be promoted at the expense of English language arts proficiency

adds the acquisition of academic native language literacy to the required reporting on performance measures in all Minnesota schools.³² MDE monitors which languages are spoken in the state and districts³³ and schools should use this information to develop rigorous literacy and academic content instruction through native languages so that all students have access to meaningful academic content.

While the MN LEAPS Act has been nationally recognized as a comprehensive piece of EL legislation, other states have gone further in

a transitional bilingual education program for every foreign language spoken in preschools that serve twenty or more ELs who speak the same home language.³⁴

Although the ESSA's accountability focus is on English language proficiency, including academic native language instruction affirms multilingualism as an important skill. Minnesota can support multilingualism through its ESSA implementation plan, beyond a focus on measuring English Language Arts proficiency in the MCA. The Minnesota Multilingual Equity



Network maintains that proficiency in English Language Arts is important for academic achievement. Therefore academic native language literacy should not be promoted at the expense of English language arts proficiency. Both are important for college and career readiness.

However, proficiency in a native language is not assessed statewide and therefore does not count toward a student meeting state academic standards. These standards are based on English Language Arts proficiency. This is largely due to the legacy of English-only instruction in the state, as well as the fact that native language assessment tests are not widely available in Minnesota. Those districts that do provide assessments must do so on their accord and struggle because of lacking funding and expertise. Based on family surveys, MDE cites a low demand for the state to develop native language assessments. The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends that MDE review the survey regarding native language assessments to check for question bias and revise the tool to reflect current research. Further, it is recommended that the survey also address native language instruction.

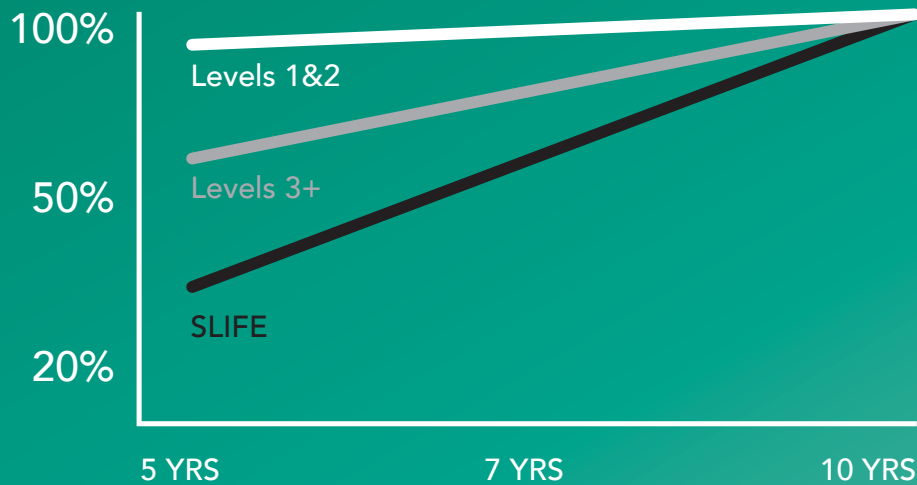
It is important to standardize native language assessments and to involve MDE assessment experts in the process. This will help to ensure the inclusion of appropriate linguistic development and academic language literacy metrics. Minneapolis Public Schools received a technical assistance grant from the University of Minnesota to review the district's intake and placement procedures for new ELs. As an extension of that work, a Native Language Literacy Assessment was developed in five languages. This assessment tool was released in fall 2016 with free, open access. It provides an excellent template for developing native language assessments for the whole of Minnesota.³⁵

Tracking the growth of native language literacy is also critical for ensuring that districts and schools are providing a quality education to ELs over time. Thus, any standardized assessment tool should be paired with a standardized system for review, documentation, and intervention. By developing native language assessments alongside native language literacy curriculum and courses, ELs are set up for success under the ESSA.

FIGURE 7.

Sample Trajectories

Target Goals to English Language Proficiency:



3. English Language Proficiency

(ELP) Goals: Provide a more robust and multidimensional calculation of growth toward academic English language proficiency.

Under the ESSA, progress toward ELP is one of the main indicators in school accountability. This is a new development in federal education law that is an opportunity to create a more accurate calculation of EL growth over time. Before the ESSA, ELP—defined as the ability to use the English

language in academic contexts—was only considered for EL program enrollment. However, research states it takes between four to seven years for an EL to achieve academic English proficiency.³⁶ It is important that ELs participate in programs that push them toward increased ELP over this time frame.

Any ESSA accountability measures for ELP must be fair for all schools regardless of their EL population size, as to not create any demographic advantages or disadvantages

in academic accountability. The following recommendations support the development of equitable ELP accountability measures.

- **Target Goals:** at a minimum, use standard ELP target goals for student categories (five years to achieve ELP for elementary students, seven years for middle/high school students, ten years for SLIFE) and, ideally, develop target goals based on entering language level.

Students entering at lower language levels tend to achieve ELP faster than students entering at higher language levels who tend to plateau and grow slowlyⁱ. The proficiency timeline is longer—seven to ten years—for SLIFE students because they have limited or no formal schooling and must develop general literacy^j.

Overall, initial language level heavily influences EL growth and must be factored in when setting target goals for ELP. By considering the unique characteristics and needs of ELs in setting target goals, MDE can maximize accountability data and use it to ensure an equitable system.

The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network proposes aligning target ELP goals to initial language level as seen in Figure 7. A student with a lower language level is not necessarily also

in a lower grade level. For example, SLIFE students arrive in grade six or later but may have a low level of English language proficiency. Another example is that second-generation students in elementary school tend to have higher language levels than newly arrived immigrants or refugees of the same age. Target growth must be based on research and historical trends in student performance. English language development drives academic content performance, so it is in the best interest of an accountability system to ensure students are meeting ambitious targets based on relevant research.

- **Calculation:** provide a robust picture of EL progress within the multiple dimensions of ELP by developing a composite indicator with the following three measurements:
 1. percentage of students attaining target growth based on language level;
 2. percentage of reclassified ELs; and
 3. percentage of long-term ELs (5+ years)

The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends measuring ELP progress on a per school basis by using the percentage of students who have attained annual target growth based on language level, as indicated by the World-class Instructional

Design and Assessment (WIDA) Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS) assessment.

Other measurement methods are inadequate for ELs. Measuring the percentage of students who meet a standard annual progress fails to account for the variable proficiency timelines for ELs and SLIFE entering at different academic levels. Equally, measuring the percentage of students who move from not being English proficient to being English proficient also produces an inaccurate measurement because of variable EL proficiency timelines, particularly regarding SLIFE. Measuring the percentage of students who meet annual target growth based on language level best illustrates the various levels of growth among Minnesota’s EL population and affirms growth as seen in Illustration 4. SLIFE and higher language level students will not have the pressure to grow as quickly as lower language level ELs who tend to grow faster.

In addition to measuring the percentage of students who meet target growth based on language level, it is important for districts and schools to also consider the percentage of reclassified ELs and long-term EL (LTEL) when evaluating their EL programs and student population. Although the MN

LEAPS Act does not limit the amount of time a student can participate in an EL program, districts and schools should recognize the academic cost of an EL not progressing toward ELP. However, EL programs should also not reclassify students before they are ready to achieve a higher ELP indicator score.

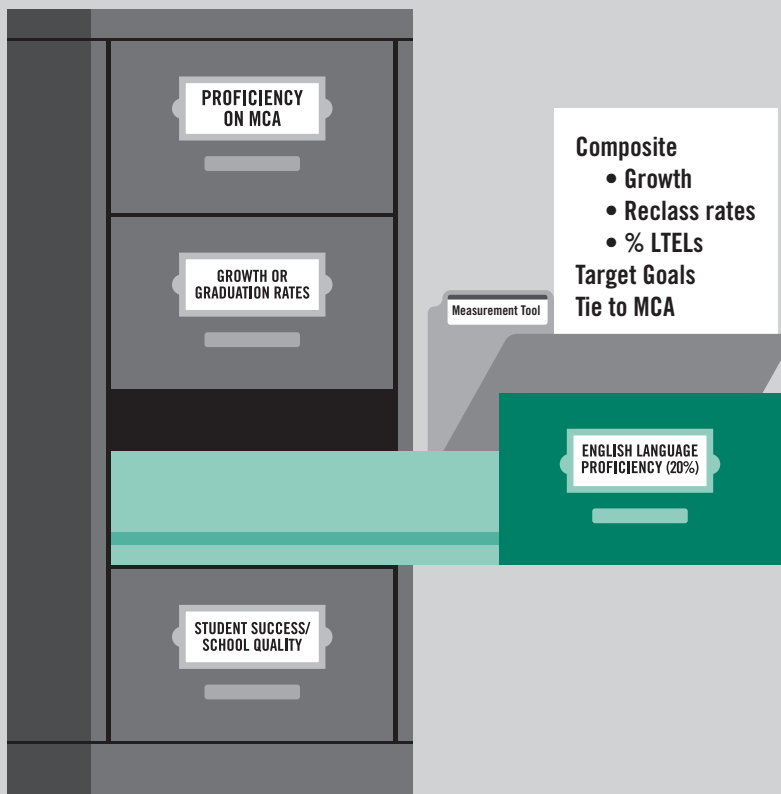
We recommend applying a higher weight to the percentage of students achieving target growth based on language level and applying a lower weighting to the percentage of LTELs. A high number of LTELs, typically because of the slower proficiency timeline of older students and SLIFE, could negatively impact the ELP indicator if not weighted correctly. However, setting goals and weighting criteria should be done in a way that actively maintains high ELP standards for all ELs.

- **Weight and Sample Size:** weight ELP indicator as at least 20% of the total ESSA indicators and standardize the sample size, or n-size, of 10 for the state’s federal accountability and academic performance reporting, including graduation rates.

The ESSA includes five federal accountability system indicators—academic proficiency, student growth or graduation rates, ELP, and student success/school quality—and each must receive a weight. The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network

ILLUSTRATION 4.

ESSA Accountability System



recommends that the ELP indicator is weighted as at least 20% of the total indicators. This avoids creating inaccurate calculations in districts with minimal EL populations.

The sample size, or n-size, that is used to determine whether a school is subject to the ESSA ELP indicator is also important. An n-size is the minimum number of students required to create a student group for accountability and reporting purposes.³⁷ Legally, an n-size

must not reveal identifiable personal information about the student while also providing statistically relevant information. Setting an n-size too high allows the school to avoid reporting a smaller EL group. For example, if the n-size for a school is 30 and there are only 29 ELs, the school does not need to include ELs for their accountability purposes. This allows the school to avoid reporting any disparities between student groups. This often results in ELs being overlooked for academic intervention and support.

Currently, Minnesota's n-size is 20 for federal accountability purposes and 10 for academic performance reporting and graduation rates.³⁸ To best measure and support ELs, the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends that a standard n-size of 10 be used for all measurements. This standard n-size accounts for schools with small student groups, such as ELs, and ensures that their success is monitored. Otherwise, the continued use of larger sample sizes means that schools can avoid including the ELP indicator in their calculations, thus hiding the progress and academic needs of ELs.

Within its Theory of Change, MDE should consider the distribution of ELs throughout Minnesota, specifically regarding different sub-populations of ELs and consider how this would fit with its plans for supporting ELs across the state. Given that a lower n-size is acceptable for academic performance

reporting, MDE should also use a lower n-size for accountability purposes. This is particularly important because Minnesota has a history of using weak accountability measures regarding ELs.

The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recognizes that a lower n-size may burden the ELP indicator if it is also weighted highly, such as the recommended 20%. These recommendations are grounded in the belief that schools must be held more accountable for providing ELs with an equitable education. A lower n-size and a substantially weighted ELP indicator are the mechanisms necessary for achieving education equity through the ESSA. Including reclassified ELs for four years after reclassification increases the n-size for a school, allowing more to reach the threshold. Finally, a substantially weighted indicator has more benefits such as providing accurate information for changing EL practices in a school or district.

a lower n-size and a substantially weighted ELP indicator are the mechanisms necessary to achieving education equity through ESSA

GUIDANCE TO KEY CONCERNS OF A SMALLER N-SIZE

- **Student Privacy.** According to the National Center for Education Statistics, a state can set an n-size of ten students, even as low as five students, and fully meet requirements for statistical reliability and student privacy. One way to protect student privacy is to suppress results for groups of up to nine students and to use whole percentage numbers. The NCES has published a set of rules to protect student privacy while maintaining a low n-size.³⁹ Minnesota can follow similar rules as it does for state reporting since the n-size is already 10. Currently, Minnesota is one of only eight states with an n-size of 20 for federal reporting; 13 states have already set their n-size to 10 or lower. Other states that use lower n-sizes have captured more student groups and included more schools in their accountability systems, leading to a stronger foundation and credibility for academic interventions.
- **Data Volatility vs. Accountability:** For meaningful accountability, 95% of students within a student group should be counted, and this is achieved by using a lower n-size. Although this transition could cause short-term data volatility in the rating system and administrative challenges to support an increased number of identified schools, these are necessary trade-offs for creating a more equitable education accountability system in Minnesota in the long run. When students are not counted, they are not included in the accountability system and can end up being invisible—receiving less attention and fewer resources than they need. Greater Minnesota has smaller EL populations, but they deserve as much accountability from their school as their peers in the Twin Cities metro area. By not using the same n-size for federal accountability and reporting, the accountability system is undermined by eliminating student groups that fall below the sample size. A lower n-size helps capture the data of these smaller groups, providing useful information for schools when they develop their evidence-based school improvement plans.

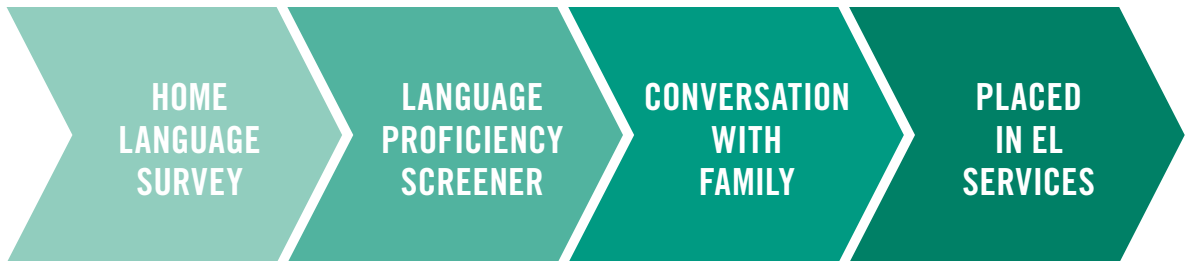
- Tying ELP to state academic assessment: link ELP with the MCA in a manner which considers the limitations of the assessment as a valid, reliable, and sole measure of ELP growth.

Studies investigating the relationship between ELP and academic content performance have found a positive relationship between both assessment types.⁴⁰ In other words, if an EL is not proficient in English, they will most likely not be considered proficient on

state assessments. Additionally, the MCA uses a normative growth model which compares scores among similarly performing students. Thus, MCA scores are not formed with specific consideration of the unique needs of EL populations and are not likely to reflect the gains of these students. In 2010, Minnesota adopted the Common Core for English Language Arts and the WIDA standards for English language proficiency, which are strongly aligned.⁴¹ However, some teachers have expressed that the MCA is not



ILLUSTRATION 5: CLASSIFICATION



fully aligned with the Common Core standards. This is a concern due to the essential relationship between content knowledge development and academic ELP for EL success. These two areas must be concurrently taught within EL programs so that measurement is accurate, useful, and aligned to MCA proficiency.

should receive them, such as recently arrived refugees and immigrants. However, there are inconsistent entry and exit practices for EL programs throughout the state and these must be standardized under the ESSA. To ensure equity for ELs and their families in this process, the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends:

4. Standardized Entry/Exit Criteria:

MDE and schools should create consistent and objective criteria and school practices, including family discussions, for EL program placement and reclassification.

In principle, schools should see multilingual students as multicultural assets rather than classroom deficits. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Many EL families have stories of how deficit thinking has created a stigma for their ELs due to their last name, skin color, or accent. Stakeholders and families agree that students who need language services

- Maintain the definitions, criteria, and associated systems recommended by the WIDA Consortium for program entry, including developing a standardized Home Language Survey (HLS) to be used consistently across school districts, continuing the use of screener assessments with the condition that an acclimation period is provided for students to become familiar with computerized testing and the school setting, and developing a rubric for teachers and administrators to consistently interpret and respond to HLS responses.



All Minnesota families enrolling a child for the first time in a district or school must complete a series of enrollment forms, including the HLS—previously known as the Home Language Questionnaire. The HLS asks multiple questions regarding the language or languages a student first learned, what languages are spoken in the home, and what languages the student most often speaks. In Minnesota, a student is identified as an English Learner and becomes eligible for entry to EL programs if two conditions are met: if the HLS indicates that there is another language at home; and if that student does not obtain a proficient score on the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT).⁴² While a parent has the right to refuse EL program placement, inconsistent practices in districts and schools sometimes result in the placement decision being made before parents are informed of this option.⁴³ The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends prioritizing family

rights through meaningful engagement during the EL program entry process as seen in Illustration 5. Thorough parent-teacher-student communication is crucial for determining if a student would benefit from EL program placement and support.

This should be paired with a HLS that is presented as welcoming and affirming of multilingualism. Limited information, paired with the stigma of an EL label, can result in families providing incorrect information on the HLS. In meetings with EL communities, the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network has heard that parents often do not want to indicate another language on the HLS because they know it could mean that their child would be automatically enrolled in an EL program. Further, families and other EL stakeholders often express that the HLS, which can vary from district to district, is not an effective instrument for assessing the need for EL services and can have negative effects.

“My student’s EL program is not rigorous. The program should be purposeful to get students to progress towards a higher level.”

– ST. PAUL HMONG PARENT



ILLUSTRATION 6: RECLASSIFICATION



Clearly stating the purpose of the HLS within the larger context of EL services and creating mechanisms for eliminating bias based on name or home languages are crucial for ensuring that surveys are completed accurately. The HLS's goal should be to help gauge the language environment a child is currently exposed to and the likelihood a child has acquired English before enrolling in a US school.⁴⁴ To this end, the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends that the HLS have a standard number of questions used for consistent EL program classification throughout the state.

A Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network review found that some districts only rely on the three HLS questions that are mandatory for MDE compliance while other districts include up to three additional, non-mandatory questions. The effectiveness of these additional questions should

be reviewed, and standard Minnesota HLS should be created. Before being implemented, the new HLS should be tested by EL families and interpreters. Further, family engagement and intake staff should be trained in how to explain the survey to reduce stigma and ensure its proper completion. Finally, the HLS should be less influential in placement decisions and outweighed by parent-teacher-student discussions.

The W-APT is not sensitive to preliterate or low literate students, and it does not differentiate between students with and without prior schooling. Furthermore, the W-APT score can change depending on when the student takes it. Some educators comment that if a student takes the test on their first day of school, their score tends to be lower than if they took it their ninth day of school. There is an opportunity for the next screener to address these issues. The Minnesota Multilingual



Equity Network recommends changing the entry procedure to wait closer to 30 days to screen a student who appears able to communicate in English, with a longer window for elementary students, to ensure the need for EL services are accurately assessed. EL staff must be trained in a universal assessment interpretation strategy to ensure appropriate and consistent placement.

EL families also question the validity of the screener. All students are academic language learners because even native English speakers develop academic English over time. Therefore, if only the students who indicate another language spoken on the HLS are tested, it assumes another language negatively affects academic English language development and native English speakers would not need similar support.

Finally, parents often express that it is a burden to refuse services annually and therefore the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends providing an option for a standing refusal of EL placement and services.

- Standardize program exit criteria by using a “proficient” score on the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0

assessment and developing a complementary rubric for teacher judgment to support reclassification.

Currently in Minnesota as a result of the LEAPS Act, to be reclassified as a non-EL and exit EL programs, a student must: meet the minimum ACCESS composite score; achieve the minimum scores in each of the assessment’s four domains (Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening); and be given teacher approval as seen in Illustration 6. Although Minnesota uses common WIDA standards and assessments, exit criteria are not standardized, and practices vary between districts. The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network has found that some districts also include MCA proficiency in their EL exit criteria, potentially creating a barrier to reclassification.⁴⁵ On the other end of the spectrum, the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network also found that some students are reclassified with a non-proficient ACCESS score, which does not comply with state regulations. An EL teacher can recommend that a student remain classified as an ELs even if the student has a proficient score on the ACCESS assessment because they believe the student does not have the academic language proficiency to participate in mainstream classrooms.



all teachers must receive comprehensive and continuous WIDA training and support

The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends that a proficient score on the ACCESS assessment include targeted minimum domain scores based on research and historical trends. EL staff have shared that a student's writing score can hold them back from reclassification even when their composite score meets the criteria to exit EL programs. It is also recommended that "teacher judgment" be standardized by developing a rubric for reclassification and professional development for mainstream teachers. These tools should focus on rigor, be applied to all ELs, and propel a student toward success with both ELP and content knowledge development.

To properly support reclassified ELs, it is essential that all teachers are aware of reclassified students as they integrate into mainstream classes and adopt inclusive content and language objectives. EL programs can support supplementary language development within the context of content instruction through co-teaching and scaffolding in mainstream classrooms with reclassified ELs. These "push-in" methods are

often more effective than pulling these students out of mainstream classrooms for individual support. To achieve this, all teachers must receive comprehensive and continuous WIDA training and support. Providing professional development on language development strategies for all teachers benefits all students, not just ELs. Native English-speaking students do not by nature already have academic English language. Further, inclusive professional development ensures that the success of ELs is the responsibility of the entire school faculty. All teachers should support the continual language development of ELs.

Finally, the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends that EL programs be evaluated on the degree that they provide ELs access to the overall curriculum. Structuring course offerings in coordination with EL programs provides greater content access for ELs and improves the overall achievement of these students as they are work to develop academic English proficiency.



5. Options for Inclusion in

Assessment and Accountability:

Establish and maintain high standards for all ELs using baseline data from assessments of recently arrived students to properly measure growth.

Under NCLB, ELs could opt out of their first-year MCA Reading/Language Arts assessment if they were identified as recently arrived ELs, which were considered to arrive to the US within twelve months of their enrollment. They are still required to take the Math and Science assessments in the first year. Additionally, a reclassified EL remains in the EL group for up to two years for NCLB accountability purposes. Some EL teachers have shared that their recently arrived ELs are overwhelmed with the amount of testing they must complete and many question the value extra testing provides for the academic future of these students. The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network supports high standards for ELs, including recently arrived students who deserve equitable preparation.

- Assess and report MCA scores on Reading/Language Arts and Math for the first year a student is enrolled, but do not include

in the accountability system. In the second year, compare first and second year scores to establish a measure of growth and include this in the accountability system. In the third year, include proficiency in the accountability system like all ELs.

Under the ESSA, states have three options for assessment exclusion for recently arrived ELs (RAELs) as shown in Illustration 7:

1. Exclude a student who has been in US schools less than twelve months from one administration of the Reading/Language Arts test and exclude from the accountability system any or all Reading/Language Arts and Math assessments for one year.
2. Assess and report on Reading/Language Arts and Math results for the first year a recently arrived student is enrolled, but do not include their results in the accountability system. In the second year, compare all first and second year assessment scores to establish a measure of growth and include this in the accountability system. Finally, in the third year, include in the assessment results of these students in the accountability system for all ELs
3. Include recently arrived students in the accountability systems in the same manner as all students.



The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends that Minnesota uses the second option for assessment exclusion for RAELs. While it is important to keep expectations high and to include these students in accountability systems as soon as possible, this must be balanced with consideration of their specific education needs.⁴⁶ The second ESSA assessment exclusion method allows a school to ease a RAEL into the accountability system by focusing on their growth before shifting the focus to their academic content proficiency. Allowing one year for growth is particularly important for Minnesota due to the state’s SLIFE population. Establishing

baseline data can help teachers develop effective curriculum planning for RAELs while giving those same students more time to get comfortable with the assessment process, both of which are likely to improve EL programs and student success.

There are challenges associated with this option. First, assessments often change topics of focus from year to year, and this can complicate the process of accurately measuring academic content proficiency over time. Second, older RAELs only take high school assessments once and this makes it difficult to measure growth

ILLUSTRATION 7: Options for Assessing Recently Arrived ELs.

	Option	1			Option	2	
	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year +		1 st Year	2 nd year	3 rd Year +
Included in Proficiency Calculation	No	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes
Included in Growth Calculation	No	Baseline Year	Yes		Baseline Year	Yes	Yes
Included in ELD Progress Toward Proficiency	Baseline Year	Yes	Yes		Baseline Year	Yes	Yes

Source: MDE, 2016



or receive support in their remaining years. Third, MDE data sets show erratic or no academic growth from year one to year two for RAELs. One possible explanation for this is that state academic assessments were not designed to capture the sensitivities and nuances of EL progress. Or, data only captured the few students who had a valid score the first year. Regardless of the cause, it is possible that properly designed instruction can prevent erratic growth by consistently utilizing baseline data of all students tested in program planning.

While advocates of the first ESSA assessment exclusion option suggest it is a more student-friendly approach that allows a student to acclimate to the school and testing system slowly, it is the status quo. More rapidly exposing RAELs to the US system sets the expectation that they can fully participate and takes advantage of the fact that many of these students arrive in the US with prior academic experience and knowledge. This first option is over-accommodating and assumes that RAELs do not have an established knowledge base, thus potentially creating unnecessary stigma and stress for these students.

Schools and EL teachers should be advocates in helping EL families

understand the importance of assessments for developing effective instruction and, ideally, lessening any negative feelings about the experience. This can also help shift the emphasis away from test scores toward a positive relationship between the teacher, student, and the student's family. If a strong relationship is created, it is likely that the student will feel more comfortable in their learning environment and more confident in their performance. To this end, schools should see education as a lifelong journey that RAELs are beginning in a unique way. These students deserve the support that helps to put them on an equal footing as their peers.

- Include reclassified ELs for four years in EL student group in accountability systems, but disaggregate their data in reporting.

Additionally, it is important to continue monitoring reclassified ELs and the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends that they are included in the EL student group for four years after their reclassification in the accountability system. By doing so, districts and schools can review the effectiveness of their EL programs and mainstream teachers.



It is recommended that accountability data on reclassified ELs be disaggregated in reporting to best determine their unique needs as mainstream students. The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network found that including the MCA proficiency results of these students does not dramatically improve the results of the EL student group. The Network found in some data sources that reclassified ELs actually did worse. Access to this specific data can help develop interventions for supporting the continued linguistic and academic needs of these students. Furthermore, this data will hold schools accountable if a significant number of their reclassified ELs are not proficient on the MCA.

6. Early Childhood Education (ECE):

Prioritize support and acquisition of federal funding for early development of dual language learner (DLL) students.

Dual language learners (DLL) are ELs from birth to age eight. DLLs are a critically important population that require the support of highly trained teachers and providers, and should be considered similarly in federal and state accountability systems.

In 2016, a voluntary pre-kindergarten (pre-K) program was established by the State of Minnesota to prepare

children for success as they entered kindergarten as called for in the WBWF Act. This program provides funding for district and charter schools with recognized early learning programs to incorporate a voluntary pre-K program into their K-12 system. This voluntary pre-K program and the associated funding comes with a set of high-quality program standards, such as providing instruction through play-based learning, coordinating appropriate transition to kindergarten, and involving parents and families in program planning. To improve school readiness for all young children, early learning scholarships are available for three- and four-year-old children with the highest needs to increase their access to high-quality early childhood programs. These scholarships are awarded up to \$7,500, and the priority of need is based on family income, child poverty, and geographic region.

The ESSA provides opportunities to strengthen the quality of pre-K programs and improve alignment across early childhood and elementary school programming. Doing so could be especially important in preparing DLLs for success in kindergarten and beyond.⁴⁷ To support high-quality early childhood education, the ESSA permanently funds the Preschool Development Grant program, which



had previously been subject to discretionary funding.⁴⁸ Through a competitive grant process, this program provides states funding to promote coordination and collaboration between existing early childhood programs

education programs can serve the needs of immigrant populations and linguistic minorities in Minnesota.⁵⁰ Through its increased emphasis and funding for ECE, the ESSA provides an opportunity to strengthen and expand

a voluntary pre-kindergarten (pre-K) program was established by the State of Minnesota to prepare children for success as they entered kindergarten

to improve program quality and increase access for low-income and disadvantaged children.

The ESSA allows the use of Title I funds for early education programs and supports planning for the pre-K program to elementary school transition programs.⁴⁹ The law also allows the use of Title II dollars (i.e. funds to prepare, train, and recruit high-quality teachers) for early childhood education teachers. These provisions are particularly important for DLLs. Head Start has been a model for how early childhood

this program's goals. Much like the state's new voluntary pre-K program, Head Start strengthens the college and career readiness of all Minnesota students.

Much like K-12 programs, DLLs would benefit from the incorporation of academic native language instruction. Also, whenever a formal committee within a state agency is called to address EL education, it is imperative that a DLL perspective is included. There are opportunities to encourage such incorporation and sustain it within



both traditional and immersion ECE programs:

- Include pre-K teachers in professional development: prepare ECE workforce to work effectively with DLLs and explore strategies to increase their collaboration between schools.

Teachers in ECE are critical for developing stronger programs. However, they tend to receive less professional training and development than K-12 teachers. Most of the ECE workforce is white and English-speaking, particularly in well-paid and qualified ECE providers.⁵¹ As a result, many ECE programs do not have staff with the training or experience to serve DLLs advantageously.

However, the number of immigrants entering the ECE teaching field has increased dramatically in recent years, rising from 9% in 1990 to 18% in 2013.⁵² ECE providers who have language skills other than English and who look like their students are a critically important resource as they are better able to respond to the unique linguistic and cultural needs of DLLs.⁵³ Unfortunately, ECE teachers of color are likely to have lower levels of education and English proficiency. Compounding this, strict certification and licensure

requirements can be barriers to entry for these individuals, preventing them from accessing important training and credentialing opportunities.⁵⁴

Depending on the program and per-credit costs at various Minnesota colleges and universities, ECE teachers may be required to complete 8-15 or more credits at \$500 to over \$1,000 per credit and pay the required student fees.⁵⁵ In addition to monetary costs, teachers must dedicate at least three to four months to complete a program, and this takes them away from work. Allowing flexible professional development opportunities to count toward certification and licensure requirements would help ECE teachers gain the relevant education while continuing to provide care and early learning. This education and the skills it provides are critical assets for maximizing the language abilities of ECE teachers of color in organizing and delivering the best development and learning opportunities for DLLs.

It should be noted that the differences in the standards and curriculum requirements for a pre-K license and a K-12 EL license in Minnesota are opportunities for MDE to build a collaborative and innovative relationship with the higher education sector and Board of Teaching.



many ECE programs do not have staff with the training or experience to serve DLL students advantageously

Minnesota should take advantage of the opportunity to secure Title II and Title V funds through the ESSA to provide professional development to its entire teaching workforce, including ECE teachers. Providing pre-K teachers and K-12 teachers with the same training in EL education best practices will strengthen current efforts to build the college and career readiness of all Minnesota students. Beginning this process at the ECE level is crucial for effective EL instruction in later years, as a focus on literacy education in early years creates a strong foundation for successfully integrating both academic English language and native language proficiency over time.

Many DLL communities rely on community-based early childcare and learning. These programs tend to grow organically, beginning in a neighbor's living room and becoming more formal and organized over time. If professional development funding is reserved for traditional district-based ECE programs, many high-quality programs that are critical to DLL communities would be unable to participate. Research

has shown that student achievement is not linked to traditional teacher certification, but rather to teacher experience.⁵⁶ Teachers who understand their students from years of experience, not from certification, have shown to increase student achievement. Opening professional development workshops and sessions focused on ECE and DLLs to community-based programs would further support standardization with DLL education. Such training can be made more accessible if they are offered in languages other than English.

It is important to provide DLL students with proper instruction in both their native language and English. Like the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network's recommendations on academic native language literacy, students learn best when they can concurrently develop their native language. Minnesota already has various dual immersion programs, and DLLs should be ensured access to these programs.⁵⁷ It is also essential that community-based providers, which play a critical role in DLL communities, have access to funding and information on



starting dual immersion programs. All dual immersion programs must comply with the MN LEAPS Act by reporting progress on the development of both languages for all students.

- Improve DLL identification and reclassification: follow standardized identification procedure for K-12 ELs and expand the use of flexible reclassification tools, such as mid-year assessments, to ensure that ECE programs accurately classify and reclassify DLLs.

For ECE programs to be successful and meaningful, DLLs must be properly classified and reclassified. Assessment of DLLs must be aligned with curriculum and meet requirements for reliability and validity. For an ECE program to be held accountable, a target goal should be three to seven years toward proficiency depending on the child's initial language level. DLLs must be made visible in program data to ensure that their needs are recognized and addressed.

The identification assessment for DLLs should be in line with the ESSA requirements, but distinct from K-12 standards. This assessment should include a home language survey in conjunction with a student measure of language proficiency. Assessments utilized to reclassify DLLs should include both a language assessment and an academic performance assessment. Assessing a DLL should take place annually, but teacher judgment should be continuously considered. If a teacher sees exceptional progress, the DLL should be assessed mid-year and reclassified if appropriate.

- Strengthen accountability through the Parent Aware quality rating and improvement system and expedite the process: include dual language instruction as an indicator and involve more ECE programs to broaden accountability.

Quality rating and improvement systems in ECE settings should be aligned to support the needs of DLLs,

the identification assessment for DLL students should be in line with the ESSA requirements, but distinct from K-12 standards



who have been historically overlooked in these processes.⁵⁸ Currently, some ECE programs are part of Parent Aware, a quality rating and improvement system for Minnesota ECE programs housed at the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). The Minnesota Parent Aware 2016 standards and indicators have progressed over time to include more awareness and recognition of DLL needs in early childhood education. Recently, the program updated its standards and indicators, both of which will be implemented beginning in summer 2017.⁵⁹ This commitment reinforces the goal of Parent Aware, which not only informs how programs are run but also how their staffs are supported over time. For DLLs, one important aspect of this update is the commitment of the Parent Aware program:

“Helping care and education programs adopt best practices and serve children of all cultures, races, ethnicities, languages, beliefs, and abilities.”

The update to the Parent Aware program also includes an indicator that encourages its programs to use a self-assessment related to cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Two different assessments will be accepted as evidence of meeting this indicator. They

measure the use of key words in the child’s home language and whether the ECE program demonstrates respect for the child’s home language as they learn standard English.⁶⁰

Finally, DHS included two new indicators related to serving children and families who speak languages other than English. These indicators are:

- Asks and listens to families: the program has conversations to learn about each child’s family’s routines, ways they prefer to communicate with the program, backgrounds and interests, languages spoken in the home, and cultures they consider most important to their identity.
- Shares information with families: the program shares information in a way that meets the needs of all families, including those who speak languages other than English.⁶¹

It is important that the process to roll-out the new Parent Aware program provides streamlined and expedited training on the new standards and indicators to reach as many ECE programs as possible. Relevant outreach methods should be used to ensure that trainers provide the opportunity to access information



and training to a diverse range of providers. It is particularly important to reach informal and home-based care providers, which represent the greatest diversity in ECE providers. These individuals are far less likely to participate in quality rating systems due, in part, to language barriers could also impede many providers from information.

Parents will often make their choices regarding ECE providers based on cost, convenience, and trust parameters. However, parents should be encouraged also to consider development and learning opportunities that exist in individual ECE settings before making their final choice. Communications should be provided in the family's home language and be culturally responsive. Like the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommendations on family engagement, parents of DLLs could struggle to access DLL program information and resources due to limited English proficiency and lower levels of literacy.⁶² This is particularly true for DLL families that are new to a district or school.

Home visits should be conducted at the beginning of the year, as this establishes a stronger relationship

between the ECE provider and the family. Additionally, engaging with community-based programs is necessary to ensure future students and families are included in the school community as soon as possible. Early learning scholarships should be used to ensure the equitable distribution of resources and to avoid creating an education debt that will compound as DLLs move toward higher levels of education. With the DLL community, specific priority should be placed on communities of color receiving available ECE grants. By involving DLL families as early as possible, they can better understand how the US school system operates and advocate for their children.

7. Comprehensive Improvement

Plans: Use Comprehensive Improvement and federal funding sources to strategically strengthen professional development and programs to support ELs and their families, particularly in low-performing schools.

Schools that receive funding under Title I of the ESSA and are in the bottom 25% of academic performance are designated as "Continuous Improvement Schools." To address this under-performance, these schools



to best address the low performance of ELs, it is important to distinguish between a failure of the education system and student performance

must: conduct a needs assessment; complete a comprehensive school improvement plan; and collaborate with parents regarding the school's Continuous Improvement designation.⁶³

Additionally, the bottom 5% of Title I schools must: develop plans which include parents and community stakeholders input; undertake additional research-based activities if the school has failed to exit from the category after three years; and consider options for teacher distribution, per-pupil funding, and exclusionary discipline. Because the ESSA elevates ELs in the accountability system, school improvement plans must also address the shortcomings of EL support programs.

To best address the low performance of ELs, it is important to distinguish between a failure of the education system and student performance. Schools should develop individualized education plans that take the heterogeneous needs of ELs into consideration.

These students enter EL programs at different language levels and tend to plateau at level three, making it difficult to attain the standardized composite score.⁶⁴ Like students with disabilities, creating individualized education plans for ELs should involve the EL teacher, family members, and student themselves to address weaknesses in ELP development accurately.

Creative and targeted support, such as after-school tutoring programs, has the potential to address the consistent underperformance of ELs. Because some ELs are dual-identified as special education or are in early childhood education, resources for additional support can come from combining operating budgets from special education and early childhood education sources. By taking advantage of school improvement funds and other federal dollars, districts and schools in Minnesota can strengthen professional development for all teachers to support ELs.

III. CONCLUSION

“We want to know about our student’s assessment and proficiency levels and what they need to do to advance.”

- ST. PAUL PARENT



Adopting the Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network’s equity-focused policy recommendations provides the State of Minnesota with a solid foundation for implementing the ESSA in a way that truly supports all students. Reflecting on the state’s implementation of the MN LEAPS Act, many EL stakeholders commented on the lack of MDE capacity to establish guidance on implementation. The process to develop a sound state education plan for the ESSA is an opportunity to meaningfully engage EL stakeholders, clarify policies for schools and districts, and provide guidance on implementation.

Fully supporting multilingualism and ELs creates benefit for not only Minnesota’s education system but the state’s future workforce. Educational policies that are meaningful, relevant, and inclusive to ELs are critical to their achievement, integration, and future leadership alongside their peers.

The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network recommends the following for inclusion in Minnesota’s ESSA implementation plan as it relates to ELs:

1. Family Engagement:

Provide resources and support for family engagement staff to work with EL families in meeting the evolving and diverse educational needs of their children.

2. Academic Native Language Literacy:

Strengthen academic native language curriculum and courses to support rigorous literacy development, increased educational content access, and global citizenship for ELs.

3. English Language Proficiency (ELP) Goals:

Provide a more robust and multidimensional calculation of growth toward academic ELP.

4. Standardized Entry/Exit Criteria:

Create consistent and objective criteria and school practices, including family discussions, for EL program placement and reclassification.

5. Options for Inclusion in Assessment and Accountability:

Establish and maintain high standards for all ELs using baseline data from assessments of recently arrived students to properly measure growth.

6. Early Childhood Education (ECE):

Prioritize support and acquisition of federal funding for early development of dual language learner (DLL) students.

7. Comprehensive Improvement Plans:

Use school improvement and other federal funding sources to strategically strengthen professional development and programs to support ELs and their families, particularly in low-performing schools.



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APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND ON MINNESOTA'S WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE (WBWF) ACT AND THE LEARNING ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY AND SUCCESS (MN LEAPS) ACT

The WBWF Act was passed in 2013 and requires all districts and schools to make strides to increase the performance of all students. It is important to note that WBW is a statewide education plan and therefore does not have specific provisions for ELs. Minnesota uses this framework to develop skilled students who will lead the state's future workforce. Districts and schools are expected to align their curriculum and instruction for career and college readiness. Five goals propel the law:

1. All Students Ready for Kindergarten
2. All Students Reading by Third Grade
3. All Achievement Gaps Between Student Groups Closed
4. All Students Graduate High School
5. All Students Ready for Career and College

The MN LEAPS Act is embedded into multiple existing statutes addressing early childhood education, curriculum and instruction, higher education, adult education, and teacher licensing. The major provisions of the law are:

1. Improving school, district, and state data on ELs' languages, skills, and knowledge;
2. Improving teachers' and administrators' abilities to build on ELs' strengths to support long-term academic success; and
3. Improving schools' communication and engagement with ELs' families.



APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF TERMS ADAPTED FROM THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE EDUCATION FUND

Academic Standards A set of benchmarks for what all students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level in order to advance to (and be ready for) the next grade level. States are required to have standards in reading/language arts, math and science. They may also have standards in other subjects including social studies or physical education.

Assessing Comprehension and Communication In English State to State (ACCESS) A secure large-scale English language proficiency assessment administered to Kindergarten through 12th grade students who have been identified as English language learners (ELLs). It is given annually to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English. ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is only available to Consortium member states. It is aligned with the WIDA English Language Development Standards and assesses each of the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

Accommodations Changes made to classroom instruction or assessment as required by law for students with disabilities or English learners. These changes allow a student to participate in class and demonstrate their knowledge on assessments just as their peers do who are not English learners or who do not have a disability. Some examples are extended time to take a test, larger print on a classroom assignment, or a seat closer to the teacher. Generally, students with disabilities who have an IEP under the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) or those who have a 504 plan under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 may be eligible to receive accommodations.

Accountability The policies and procedures states use to set goals for how well all students (and groups of students) should be doing academically, measure and identify how well schools do in meeting those goals, and support and improve schools and districts that are failing to meet the state goals.

Assessment Another word for "test." In the federal education policy context, the term "assessment" refers to the one standardized annual test required under federal law in every grade between 3-8 and at least once in high school (grade 9-12). These measure student achievement, what a student knows and can do, and do not measure intelligence, a student's underlying ability and potential.

Common Core A set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live.



Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools Schools in which a large share of students are not meeting state goals. These include schools in the bottom 5 percent of all schools in the state, schools with graduation rates below 67 percent, and additional targeted support and improvement schools that have not improved. These schools must design and implement a support and improvement plan which is comprehensive and designed to raise achievement for all students in the school.

Comprehensive School Improvement Plan The plan a school designs and implements to raise student achievement on either a comprehensive (meaning for all the students in the school) or targeted basis (meaning for a subgroup of students in a school) once the school has been identified through the ratings system. The plan must be informed by an assessment of the needs of the particular school, be developed with stakeholder input (e.g. parents, teachers and principals) and implement research-based strategies.

Disaggregated Data In the education policy context, disaggregated data refers to data that can be broken down to see information about different groups of students. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, data must be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, family income, disability status, English learner status, gender, migrant status, status as a child in foster care, homelessness status or military connected status.

Dual language learners (DLLs) English Learners from birth to age eight.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) Programs such as childcare and preschool

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Passed by US Congress in 2015 as reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act of 1965 Passed as a part of United States President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" and has been the most far-reaching federal legislation affecting education ever passed by the United States Congress..

English Language Proficiency (or Fluency) The ability to speak, listen to, read and write English accurately and quickly. Students who are learning English as a second language are typically called "English learners" until they master the language. This is different from proficiency in English/language arts, which is mastering the state's academic content standards for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and using language.

English Learner (EL) A student between the ages of 3-21 in elementary or secondary school who was not born in the US or whose native language is a language other than English. These students can also be a migrant, Native American or Alaska Native student or a student who has difficulty in speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language.

Home Language Survey (HLS) Completed for all students who enroll in a district by their parent. Districts and charter schools must determine the primary home language of ALL students. The HLS is the first step in determining whether a student is eligible for English Learner programs and services. How the student looks or sounds in English should not determine whether or not an HLS is completed.

Indicators In the education policy context, indicators are measurements of different aspects of the education system that – taken together – create a picture of a school’s effectiveness at educating all students (e.g. graduation rates, expulsion rates, assessment scores).

Individualized Educational Program (IEP) A plan or program developed by a team, including teachers, specialists and a student’s parent, that is designed to meet the educational needs of a student with a disability who qualifies for specialized instruction. Schools are required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to create IEPs for students with disabilities who qualify for specialized instruction

Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act Passed in Minnesota in 2014. The law revises many state statutes to add an increased emphasis to support English learners. The law is embedded into many existing statutes, including early childhood, curriculum and instruction, higher education, adult education, and teacher licensing.

Long-Term English Learner (LTEL) A student who has not attained English proficiency within five years of identification as an English learner.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) Statewide tests that are annual, summative measurements of student achievement that are used, along with many other school and classroom assessments, to evaluate student learning and skills. Specifically, the Minnesota statewide tests assess achievement of the Minnesota Academic Standards in mathematics, reading and science.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act a US Act of Congress in 2001 that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; it included Title I provisions applying to disadvantaged students.

N-Size The minimum number of students in a subgroup (e.g. Black students, English learners) that must be present in a school to trigger specific reporting and accountability requirements under federal law. N-size is necessary to ensure data are not reported on so few students as to make identifiable personal information (e.g. reporting that all Latino students are advanced in math when there is only one Latino student means knowing the proficiency of a specific student, which is a violation of that child’s privacy).

Recently Arrived EL (RAEL) An English Learner arriving from a different country who has enrolled in a US school district for the first time. According to No Child Left Behind, within the first twelve months before a testing period, a recently arrived EL is not required to take the English Language Arts state assessment.

Parent Aware A voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System for Early Childcare and Education programs in Minnesota. It uses a four-star rating based on Volunteering for extra, in-depth training; devoted themselves to strong, caring relationships with each child; adopted the latest approaches to keeping children’s learning on track; and committed to daily activities and routines that help children learn.

School Rating System An indication of how well schools and districts are educating all students and groups of students. These ratings are based on a standard set of criteria identified by the state. The system must also identify schools that are in the bottom 5 percent of schools, schools that have graduation rates of less than 67 percent, schools that have a subgroup of students who are consistently underperforming, and schools that have a subgroup of students whose performance is so low that it is comparable to the performance of schools in the bottom 5 percent of schools.

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) An English learner who: comes from a home where the language usually spoken is other than English, or who usually speaks a language other than English; enters school in the United States after grade 6; has at least two years less schooling than the English learner’s peers; functions at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics; and may be preliterate in the English learner’s native language. Districts and schools identify SLIFE and report the academic and linguistic growth on an annual basis. Yet, SLIFE policies have been reactive instead of proactive.

Student Group A group of students identified by their race, ethnicity, family income, English proficiency, or disability status (e.g. Black students, students who qualify for free or reduced lunch). Under federal law, states are required to set performance goals for all subgroups of students as part of their accountability systems.

United States Department of Education (USDE) A Cabinet-level department of the United States government.

World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Advances academic language development and academic achievement for children and youth who are culturally and linguistically diverse through high quality standards, assessments, research, and professional learning for teachers.

World’s Best Workforce (WBWF) Act Passed in 2013 in Minnesota to ensure every school district in the state is making strides to increase student performance. Each district must develop a plan that addresses the following five goals: All children are ready for school. All third-graders can read at grade level.

WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) An English language proficiency “screener” test given to incoming students who may be designated as English language learners. It assists teachers with programmatic placement decisions such as identification and placement of ELLs. The W-APT is one component of WIDA’s comprehensive assessment system.

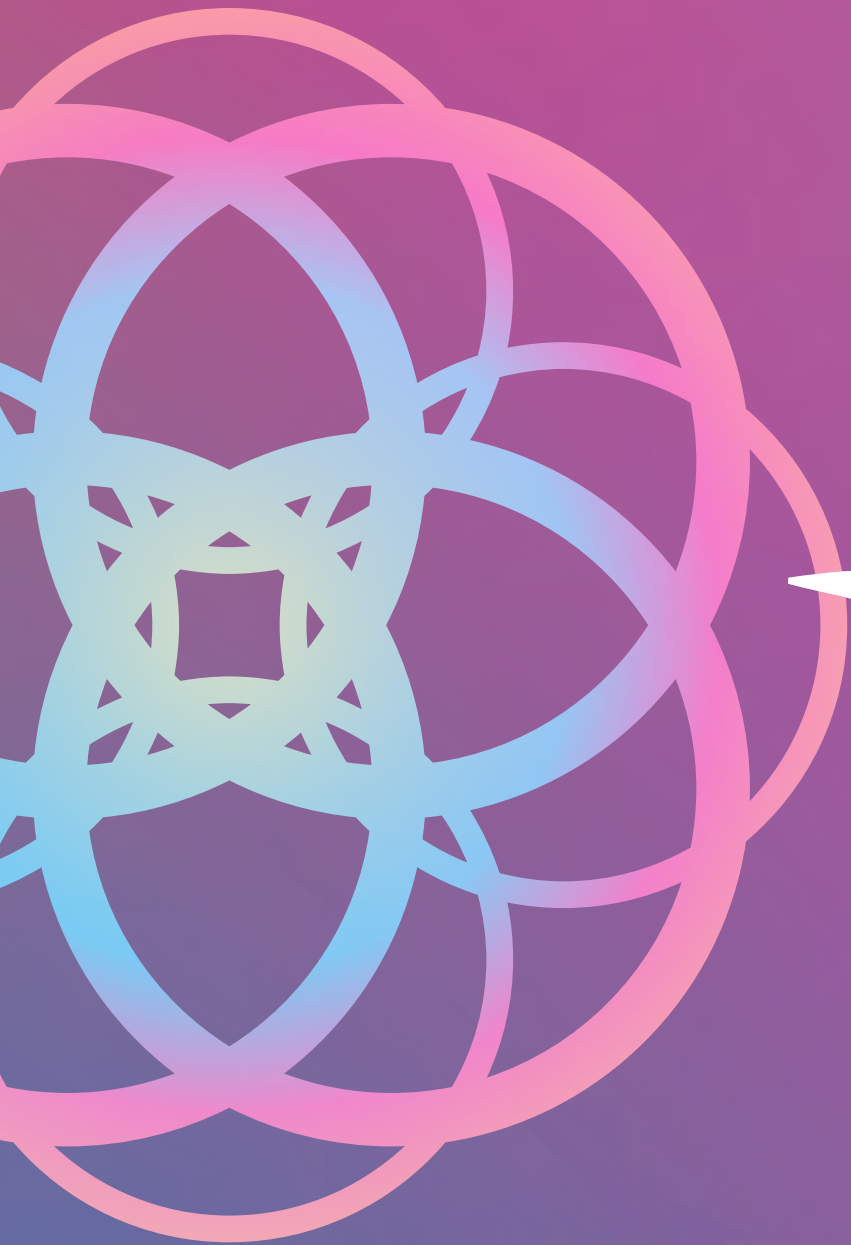
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