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



COALITION OF
ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERS



Minnesota
Education Equity
Partnership

Advancing Race Equity & Excellence

For More Information, visit: <http://mneep.org/minnesota-multilingual-equity-network/>



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, the 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 EL students plateaued compared their white, non-EL peers. Although EL students 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 policies.

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 provides specific recommendations for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) as they develop their plan to meet the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a federal law established in December 2015. 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.

ESSA requires states to include improving English language proficiency as an indicator in their school accountability systems. This requirement creates an increased need to develop 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 a quality education that prepares all children for academic and career success.

The federal requirement for the implementation of 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 LEAPS Act, expand the engagement of EL stakeholders, and clarify policies and practices that support EL students 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 education 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 ESSA:

- Measurement of EL progress and proficiency toward 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 EL students.

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.