

2014 MN LEARNING FOR ENGLISH ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY AND SUCCESS (LEAPS) ACT

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Who are Minnesota's English language learners?

English language learners (often abbreviated to ELL or EL) are Minnesotans of all ages and academic proficiencies whose native language is not English. Over 65,000 ELL students are currently enrolled in Minnesota schools. The largest populations include Latino, Somali and Hmong students.

In the past 20 years, the number of ELL students increased by 300 percent, making them the fastest growing population among students. These individuals face unique challenges to academic success. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, nearly half of ELL students do not graduate from high school.

Problems facing our current system:

- ELL students are not generating positive academic outcomes, exacerbating the Opportunity Gap.
- Schools are not being held accountable for poor academic outcomes among ELL students.
- Teachers are not well prepared to teach ELL students.
- Schools districts lack clear and consistent guidance from the state on ELL education.
- Lawmakers enacted arbitrary funding cuts and restrictions to ELL programs in 2003, hindering teachers' ability to make progress towards improving academic outcomes.

Why we must act now:

English language learners are an untapped economic asset. In our increasingly global economy, Minnesota stands to benefit from growing our pool of multilingual workers. Preparing English language learners to succeed and reach their full potential goes hand-in-hand with our goal of building the talented, highly-skilled workforce Minnesota needs to compete in a global economy.

Comprehensive Reform Goals

- Academic English proficiency,
- Grade-level content knowledge and
- Multi-lingual skills development,

At the core of the reform lies a clear expectation from the state that schools are to support EL students in achieving both academic English proficiency and grade-level content knowledge of state standards.

Additionally, the law expects that a student's home, native language be viewed as an asset and nurtured as a skill for achieving the two goals of academic English proficiency and grade level content knowledge.

The law also recognizes the state's primary interest in expanding the multi-lingual skills of all Minnesota's students, not just of EL's, and provides for a high quality multi-lingual accreditation process.

To accomplish these goals the MN LEAPS Act;

1. Comprehensively modifies current laws ranging from early learning to adult learners statutes,
2. Sets new expectations in teacher and administrator licensing and development and,
3. Establishes new directives for the state's school accountability framework.

By encouraging and supporting EL students' native language skills, the MN LEAPS Act require instructors and schools to develop the capacity to effectively work with those skills in order for EL students to achieve academic English proficiency and grade-level content knowledge.

Additionally, in statutorily recognizing EL Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), the MN LEAPS Act recognizes the diversity existing within the EL student population. These immigrant students, who often come to our schools as older learners with no experience in a structured school system, often run out of time in which to acquire the academic skills needed to succeed in U.S. society. While the Act does not extend the eligibility age for SLIFE learners, it directs schools to differentiate instruction accordingly so that the remarkable life skills these students possess that can be leveraged for meeting state academic standards.

MN LEAPS Act Highlights: Overall

- Mandates that an English Language Learner is defined via use of a valid assessment measuring English language proficiency.
- All districts must have staff development plans that enable teachers to provide instruction that maximize the oral language and linguistic strengths of English learners in their native language and build academic literacy.
- EL student achievement in English and, where applicable, in native language, are incorporated into the state's accountability system - *Minnesota's World's Best Workforce (WBWF)* – through the plans that school districts must file for improving EL student achievement in meeting the state's student outcome goals.
- Adds acquisition of English, native language academic literacy and academic progress of ELs to the reporting of performance measures required of all schools.
- Defines an English learner with interrupted and formal education (SLIFE) and requires the Commissioner of Education to specifically report on their academic progress as a part of the state's reporting requirements.
- Cultural responsiveness is defined statutorily for the purpose of statewide accountability as the ability and will to interact effectively with people of different cultures, native languages and social economic backgrounds.

MN LEAPS Act Highlights: Requirements of Educators

- All educators are required to possess skills to effectively teach all EL students
- All teacher and administrator licensure candidates, including those renewing licenses, are required to be prepared in, and demonstrate knowledge and skills of, English language development and content instruction for EL students.

MN LEAPS Act Highlights: Requirements of Schools and School Districts

- All school district instruction and assessments must be aligned to support EL students.
- All districts must provide the appropriate tools, resources and professional development to enable EL students to become career and college-ready.
- All districts must have staff development plans that enable teachers to provide instruction that maximize the oral language and linguistic strengths of English learners in their native language and build academic literacy.
- All school district teacher residency program must include differentiated instructional strategies, use of achievement data and support for native English Language development
- Districts hiring bilingual and second language teachers are required to give preference to native speakers who share native language with the majority of their students.
- All teacher annual evaluations are required to include data on academic literacy and content achievement of EL students.
- Districts are encouraged to adopt parental involvement policies that supports oral and written communications in a family's native language
- Early childhood programs are directed to use culturally relevant literacy instruction and inform parents of progress in English and native language proficiency.
- All Adult Basic Education programs must offer English language instruction.

MN LEAPS Act Highlights: Requirements of Colleges

- All teacher and administrator preparation and continuing education programs must include instruction on meeting the needs of all EL students, including the use of the student's home language in creating effective differentiated instructional strategies.
- Preparation programs for Bilingual and Second Language teachers must include research-based and culturally relevant instruction designed for developing academic English proficiency of EL students.

MN LEAPS Act Highlights: Requirements of education Systems

- Experts in cultural responsive teaching are added to MDE commissioner's assessment and evaluation stakeholder groups.
- The MDE Commissioner and school districts must report English acquisition and language academic literacy in school performance measures under *World's Best Workforce* accountability system.
- The state's *Regional Centers of Excellence* must assist schools with supporting culturally responsive teaching and learning aligned to EL students.
- State's education data system (SLEDS) must report education outcomes for diverse student populations, including English Language Learners.

MN LEAPS Act Highlights: State Funding

- Current 5-year student eligibility cap is raised to 6 years.
- Classroom teacher discretion is created allowing for a student to remain in EL instruction for an additional year (up to cap) regardless of scoring proficient on the standardized assessment.
- The state's total EL funding is increased by **\$4.9 million** to reach \$50 million per year.