



## Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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# AMSD Position on English Learner Funding

**The Association of Metropolitan School Districts supports increased funding for the English learner program to ensure that English learners have the opportunities and resources necessary to achieve State and Federal standards.**

## AMSD BELIEVES

- The state English learner funding formula should reflect the resources needed to prepare students to achieve state and federal standards and create the World's Best Workforce.
- Additional funding for staff training and student supports is needed to meet the goals and accountability requirements established in the state's Every Student Succeeds Act state plan.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota's English learner population has increased almost 200 percent in the last 20 years. The MDE's latest special population report showed that 76,361 students were eligible for English learner services in the 2019-20 school year.<sup>1</sup> More than 70 percent of these students attended school in an AMSD member school district with several districts having more than 15 percent of their students eligible for English learner services. For example, more than 20 percent of Richfield, Columbia Heights, St. Cloud and Saint Paul Public Schools respective student populations were comprised of English learners.

Data from the [Minnesota State Demographic Center indicates that in the 2018-19 school year](#), more than 16 percent of students came from a home where the primary language spoken was other than English.

## BACKGROUND

An English learner is defined in Minnesota under 2017 Minnesota Statutes, section 124D. 59, subdivision 2 as "a pupil in kindergarten through grade 12 or a PreK student who meets the following requirements:

1. the pupil, as declared by a parent or guardian uses a language other than English; and
2. the pupil is determined by a valid assessment measuring the pupil's English language proficiency and by developmentally appropriate measures, which might include observations, teacher judgment, parent recommendations, or developmentally appropriate assessments, to lack the necessary English skills to participate fully in academic classes taught in English."

English learners (EL) continue to be the fastest-growing student group in Minnesota and, as the chart on page 2 shows, has shown steady, consistent growth upward the last 20 years, to now accounting for more than 8 percent of the student population.

Nearly 250 estimated languages are spoken in AMSD districts, including 90 different languages in Minneapolis Public Schools, and more than 125 languages and dialects in Saint Paul Public Schools.<sup>2</sup> In some schools and districts, English learners may comprise a majority of the student population. The top five languages other than English are: Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Karen and Vietnamese.

Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, English language proficiency is now included in federal accountability for schools and districts through the Minnesota Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. Minnesota law requires that all teachers are prepared and developed throughout their career to support the language development of their students.

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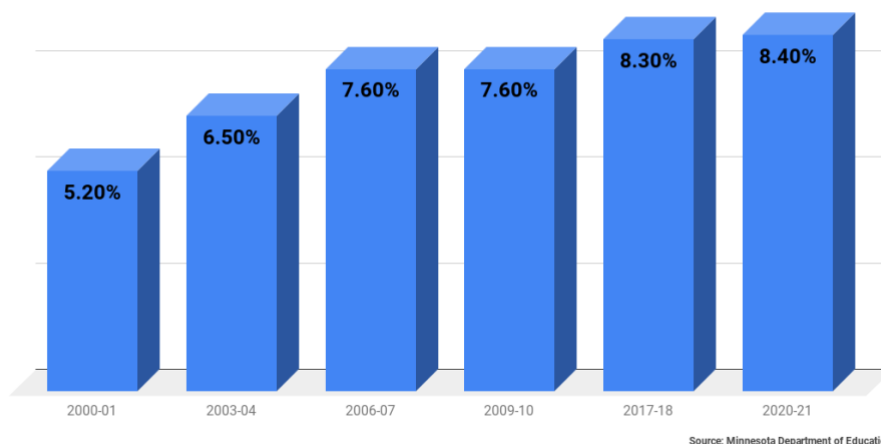
The state plan includes a goal of having 85 percent of English learners making progress toward English language proficiency by the year 2025. In 2018, more than 50 percent of the schools identified for support for English language proficiency were in AMSD districts.<sup>3</sup>

Research shows that high quality instruction within effective structures supported by comprehensive professional development is critical in educating English language learners.<sup>4</sup> Research also shows that students who have formal home language support, such as bilingual education, are able to sustain the gains in English, and to achieve even higher academic achievement than typical native-English-speakers.<sup>5</sup>

During the 2014 legislative session, lawmakers adopted English learner policy reforms in areas related to the World's Best Workforce, reading proficiency and teacher licensing and development. In addition, eligibility for English learner services was extended from five to six years.

During the 2015 legislative session, eligibility for English learner services was extended from 6 to 7 years beginning in FY 2017. While the change in eligibility was a positive move, the program continues to be significantly underfunded. In 2020-21, AMSD school districts spent more than \$134 million on services for English learners but received just \$35 million in English learner funding. In other words, AMSD school districts redirected more than \$99 million in general education revenue to provide important services to English learners. Fully funding the English learner program will help provide the support our students need to succeed.

## Percent of English Learner Students in Minnesota Schools



<sup>1</sup> "English Learners in Minnesota: 2020-21 Report" Minnesota Department of Education, Available at:

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/el/>

<sup>2</sup> 2017-2018 Primary Home Language Totals." Data Reports and Analytics. Minnesota Department of Education, Available at: <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp>; Minneapolis:

<http://multilingual.mpls.k12.mn.us/demographics> and St. Paul: <https://www.spps.org/aboutus>

<sup>3</sup> North Star Files: 2018." Data Reports and Analytics. Minnesota Department of Education, Available at: <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp>

<sup>4</sup> Margarita Calderón, Robert Slavin and Marta Sánchez, "Effective Instruction for English Learners," *The Future of Children* 21.1 (2011): 107, 118-119.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas, Wayne P., and Virginia Collier. "School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students. NCBE Resource Collection Series, No. 9." (1997)