

ENGLISH LEARNERS

Information for Parents, Families,
and Community Members

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that high-quality, comprehensive and effective English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education programs are essential to acquire English language proficiency and academic proficiency for students who are English Learners (ELs). The Board believes that research-based instructional practices that support ELs in general education classrooms are essential while they are acquiring English and well after they have exited intensive programs. Our state, districts, and schools are mandated by the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the Connecticut Bilingual Statute to ensure that ELs receive specialized services to meet their language and academic needs. The Board affirms the importance of all students becoming socially and academically prepared to be successful. Read the [CSDE Position Statement on the Education of Students who are English Language Learners](#) for more information.



Frequently Asked Questions

Who is an English Learner?

An English Learner is a student whose native language is not English and who needs support learning English.

How is an English Learner (EL) identified in Connecticut?

To be identified as an EL, a home language survey must be given when you register your child for school or shortly after. It is usually three to five questions.

If the home language survey shows your child is eligible, he or she will be tested to see how well he or she uses English.

Some school districts also conduct a parent interview to ask questions about your child's previous education. Ask for a translator to help with this interview if needed.

What are the program options for English Learners?

Programs differ by district. Some common options in Connecticut include:

- English as a Second Language (ESL) support: Students receive ESL services in their classroom (push-in) or out of their classroom (pull-out) by a trained ESL teacher or tutor.
- Dual Language: There are two groups of students, one native-English group and one group of another language. Content is taught for about half the time in each language.
- Transitional Bilingual: ELs are taught in a separate classroom in the native language and English by a certified bilingual teacher or tutor. All students speak the same native language. The amount of native language instruction decreases over time. This program has a limit of three years with an option to request an extension for up to three additional years.
- Sheltered Instruction: Content and language development occur in the same mainstream, English classroom. All students in the class are English Learners.

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Frequently Asked Questions, continued

What are the Connecticut Core Standards?

The CT Core Standards identify what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. The standards are designed to prepare students for college and careers.

What state standardized assessments do English Learners take?

Students, including ELs, are administered the following state assessments:

- the Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics in grades 3-8;
- the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) in science in grades 5 and 8;
- the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in science in grade 10; and
- the Connecticut SAT in reading, writing and language, and mathematics in grade 11.

Each year, English Learners take a standardized language assessment to determine their language proficiency in English.

What supports are available for English Learners on state assessments?

All English Learners are eligible with educator recommendation to receive supports during assessments. See your child's teacher for more information.

When will my child no longer be identified as an English Learner?

Technically, your child will no longer be identified as an EL when he or she passes the standardized language proficiency assessment. Research shows it takes several years to be proficient in a language. Full bilingualism is a lifelong process.

How to Get Involved

As educators, we recognize and value how family life and experiences build strong foundations of learning. Below are suggestions to support your child as he or she learns English.

Join the school's parent organization.

Serve as a parent volunteer.

Attend school events, such as field trips, assemblies, plays and concerts.

Attend parent-teacher conferences to review report cards and progress of your child.

Send e-mails/letters and have phone conversations with your child's teachers. Express concerns or ask questions.

Help your child obtain a public library card and visit the library frequently. Public libraries have books and other media to borrow, as well as programs to promote literacy.

Advocate for services or supports you would like to see in the school system and offer to share your expertise.

In your interactions with the school system, ask for translation services, if needed.

Read with your child in your native language every day and encourage him or her to read daily.

For additional information:

Speak with your child's teacher or principal.

Visit the Connecticut State Department of Education Web site (www.ct.gov/sde/EnglishLearners).

