



CONNECTICUT STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# **Demographic Trends of Connecticut's English Learners (SYs 2015-16 through 2019-20)**

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# Demographic Trends of Connecticut’s English Learners, SYs 2015-16 through 2019-20

## Introduction

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has provided this brief summarizing key English learner (EL) demographics to support EL administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders in decision making. Where applicable, commentary has been added. While this document may be read in its entirety, it is primarily intended to serve as a resource of statewide information regarding specific EL demographic characteristics. Additionally, it is important to note that ELs are a heterogeneous group of students, reflecting diverse languages, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, cultures, aptitudes, socio-economic statuses, and other characteristics. This resource seeks to elucidate demographic changes of the EL group over time, as well as to identify the diverse characteristics among this group of students.

It is the civil right of English learners to receive language supports as a part of their core programming. This includes a language instruction education program (e.g., bilingual, English as a Second Language) and accessibility supports embedded in their core grade-level academic content. It is also the civil right of families to receive communications in a language that they understand, which can be provided through translation and/or interpretation based on the needs of the family and district. The CSDE recognizes that COVID-19 school closures may make it more challenging than normal to ensure that ELs and their families are afforded these rights, yet it is imperative that we make every effort to adhere to these requirements.

**Table 1: A Quick Glance at Connecticut’s 43,568 Public School English Learners (SY 2019-20)**

Demographic Characteristic	Percentage of ELs	Rate of Change <sup>1</sup>
Spanish is Native Language	72%	23%
Percent of all ELs in High-Incidence Districts <sup>2</sup>	59%	19%
Districts With at Least One EL	187 districts	+16 districts
Grade Distribution of ELs	PK-5 (60%), 6-8 (19%), 9-12 (21%)	PK-5 (19%), 6-8 (35%), 9-12 (28%)
Immigrant	23%	30% <sup>3</sup>
Students with Disabilities	21%	39%
Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals	73%	19%
Qualified for an Alternate Assessment <sup>4</sup>	1%	22%
Section 504 <sup>5</sup>	2%	105%
Homeless	1%	26%
Gifted or Talented	<1%	61% <sup>6</sup>
In a Military Family	<1%	120% <sup>3</sup>
Male	55%	25%
In a Bilingual Program	27%	21%

<sup>1</sup>Rate of change refers to the rate of increase or decrease in the number of ELs from SY 2015-16 to 2019-20.

<sup>2</sup>High-incidence districts refers to districts with at least one thousand ELs.

<sup>3</sup>The CSDE began collecting student-level immigrant and military family status in SY 2017-18, so the rate of change is from that year to 2019-20.

<sup>4</sup>Percentage of ELs required to take the SY 2019-20 LAS Links who qualified for an alternate assessment due to a significant cognitive disability and who therefore, cannot access the standard assessment even when provided accommodations.

<sup>5</sup>Percentage of ELs required to take the SY 2019-20 LAS Links and were reported as Section 504 due to a physical or mental impairment that qualifies them for test accommodations.

<sup>6</sup>Number of ELs < 100.

## Connecticut’s English Learners: A Legal Overview

In the Connecticut General Statute (C.G.S.), ELs are defined as students who lack sufficient mastery of English to “assure equal educational opportunity in the regular school program” (C.G.S. 10-17e). This statutory definition highlights ELs’ lack of English proficiency but it is important to note that the CSDE takes an assets- and strengths–based approach to ELs and considers how to best support them in Connecticut’s schools. This means that the CSDE values the linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity that ELs bring to their communities and sees multilingualism as a great asset, which positively impacts students, schools and communities. The CSDE highly regards these students and the broad range of linguistic and cultural diversity that they bring to the state’s schools.

- The United States Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) that was reauthorized in 2015 as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), affirmed that ELs are entitled to receive English language services from Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), bilingual-certified teachers, or other personnel who have received training in English language acquisition. This right is protected by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights. English learners are entitled to these services to help them attain English proficiency and realize mastery of the same core academic grade-level content as other students. Therefore, their education is not just the responsibility of TESOL and bilingual teachers, but also that of the general education faculty.
- In addition to providing a definition of ELs, Connecticut General Statutes Sections 10-17a through 10-17n defines the method for identifying which local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to offer a bilingual program, describes English learners’ access to either bilingual education or English as a Second Language (ESL) services, and provides grant money for these programs.
- The 2010 Connecticut State Board of Education’s position statement on ELs reaffirmed that access to quality bilingual education and ESL programs are crucial for ELs to succeed academically.<sup>1</sup>
- Students remain ELs until they meet the CSDE’s English Mastery Standard. This exit criteria requires students to demonstrate Overall proficiency (average of the four subtests) and proficiency on the Reading and Writing subtests on the annual English Language Proficiency Assessment (LAS Links).
- Based on an ESSA mandate, in SY 2017-18, the CSDE implemented a standardized EL identification procedure that all Connecticut districts are required to follow (See Appendix A and CSDE EL Identification Letter for SY 2020-21 in EL Resources).

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut State Board of Education (2010). *Position Statement on the Education of Students Who Are English Language Learners*.

## Rapidly Increasing Number of Connecticut's English Learners (ELs)

While English learners are a smaller subgroup of students, they are a group that is experiencing a period of rapid growth. This growth is often fueled by global events with the result that Connecticut's student population continues to grow more diverse and culturally rich.

**Figure 1: Change in the Number of Students Over the Last Five Years by EL Status, SYs 2015-16 to 2019-20**

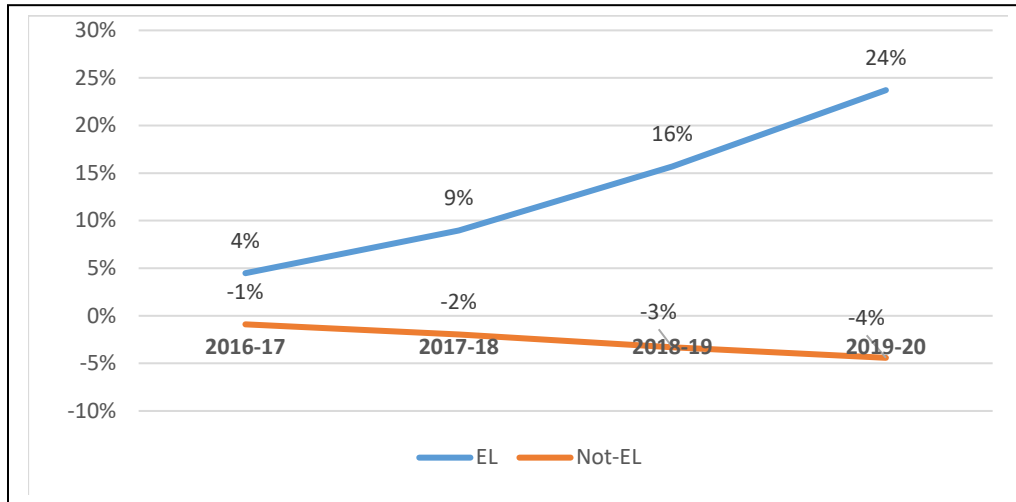


Figure 1 displays the percentage growth in the number of students by EL status, relative to the baseline of SY 2015-16.

- ELs experienced rapid sustained growth over the last five school years (24 percent) while the number of students who were not-ELs declined (-4 percent).
- As a result, the percentage of all Connecticut public school students who were ELs increased from 6.5 percent in school year 2015-16 to 8.3 percent in school year 2019-20.
- Factors contributing to the growth in the number of Connecticut's public school ELs include:
  - The standardization of the EL Identification process in SY 2017-18. Prior to this, districts had discretion regarding how they identified a student as an EL (See Appendix A).
  - Global events such as civil unrest, oppression, and natural disasters along with economically-motivated migration.
  - Improved tracking and reporting of EL status in CSDE and district student databases. The ELs have a higher level of mobility and therefore, these improvements contribute to students retaining their EL status if they transfer districts.
  - Currently, the CSDE does not have an alternate English Language Proficiency Assessment for ELs with the most severe cognitive disabilities and so, these students have no way to demonstrate their proficiency and exit EL status. This means that when these students are identified as ELs, they will remain ELs permanently.

## Ever-EL: A Broader Way to Consider Student Outcomes

“Ever-EL” refers to students who were an EL at some point during their public school education. This includes:

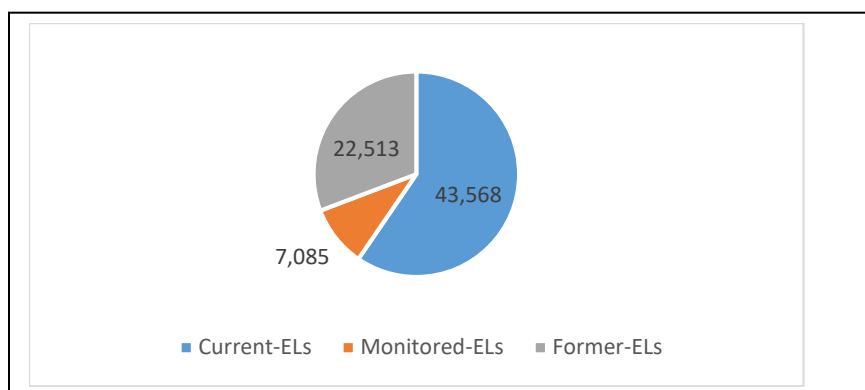
- *Current ELs*: Students who have been identified as an EL but have not yet met the CSDE’s English Mastery Standard and demonstrated English language proficiency.
- *Monitored-ELs*: Students who have met the CSDE’s English Mastery Standard in the prior two school years. Under federal law, districts are required to monitor the academic progress of these students and may provide English language support services as needed.
- *Former-ELs*: Students who have met the English Mastery Standard more than two school years ago. Districts are no longer required to monitor the academic progress of these students.

In this publication, never-ELs refers to students who have never been identified as an English learner while registered as a Connecticut public school student.

Ever-EL is an important concept because it:

- Draws attention to the fact that although monitored- and former-ELs met the English Mastery Standard by demonstrating adequate English language proficiency as determined by the assessment, they may still benefit from linguistic support, particularly with academic language. This may be more apparent in middle and high school, as there is more complex academic content and language present in core courses.
- Highlights the cultural diversity, multilingualism, and varied life experiences within the overall student population.
- Allows for a more robust and nuanced analysis of the trajectory of EL outcomes because it presents the performance of students who are not currently ELs but were so at some point during their public school education (i.e., monitored and former-ELs). This analytical approach may illuminate potential performance gaps that should be addressed while also highlighting the academic successes of monitored and former-ELs.

**Figure 2: Ever-ELs, SY 2019-20**



- In SY 2019-20, there were over 73,000 ever-ELs accounting for 14 percent of all students.
- The majority of monitored- and former-ELs in SY 2019-20 were in Grades 9-12 (52 percent) and one-third were in Grades 6-8.

## Demographics of English Learners

### Native Language Diversity among Connecticut’s Public School Students

The increase in ELs has deepened the linguistic diversity of Connecticut’s student population. Additionally, when considering the multilingualism and cultural diversity of Connecticut’s public school students, it is also important to note that there were over 50 thousand students who were **not an EL** but spoke a native language other than English. These students included former-ELs who attained English language proficiency and those who were never identified as ELs because they were already proficient in English. Native language is determined on the basis of the Home Language Survey and reported in the CSDE’s student database (PSIS: See Appendix B). English learners are those students with a non-English language who, on the basis of an assessment, are determined to not be proficient in English. Eighteen percent of **all students, regardless of current EL status**, spoke a non-English native language (96,818 students speaking 183 languages).

**Table 2: Top 15 Native Languages Spoken by English Learners, SY 2019-20**

Native Language	ELs	Percentage of All ELs	Rate of Change <sup>1</sup>
Spanish	31,303	72%	23%
Portuguese	2,410	6%	85%
Arabic	1,270	3%	21%
Creole-Haitian	831	2%	18%
Mandarin	728	2%	11%
Albanian	506	1%	24%
Polish	485	1%	-7%
Urdu	439	1%	10%
Bengali	333	<1%	56%
Vietnamese	326	<1%	-3%
French	305	<1%	23%
Pashto	270	<1%	382%
Russian	245	<1%	11%
Tamil	244	<1%	80%
Telugu	238	<1%	27%
All Others	3,635	8%	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,568</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Rate of change refers to the rate of increase or decrease in the number of ELs from SY 2015-16 to 2019-20.

- In SY 2019-20, Connecticut’s public school **current ELs** collectively spoke 145 different native languages. <sup>2</sup>
- Spanish is by far the most prevalent native language among ELs and its share of ELs over the past five school years has consistently remained around 72 percent.
- The top 15 native languages have also remained fairly consistent over the last five school years. The only exceptions being are the additions of Pashto and Tamil to the list (replacing Gujarati and Cantonese).
- Trends in native languages in Connecticut public schools often reflect global events:
  - Civil conflicts such as those in the Middle East (e.g., Arabic).

<sup>2</sup> The CSDE’s student database (PSIS) currently has 216 different language codes. Language codes are added to PSIS based upon district requests and are then processed through a CSDE review.



- Increased economic migration from Central and South America (e.g., Spanish, K'iche', Portuguese).
- Natural disasters such as Hurricane Maria in 2017 (Spanish) and hurricanes and earthquakes in Haiti (Creole-Haitian, French).
- Economic migration from India (e.g., Urdu, Bengali, Pashto, Tamil, and Telegu).

**Table 3: Average Number of Native Languages for ELs by District EL Population, SY 2019-20**

District Number of ELs	Number of Districts	Average Number of Native Languages Among ELs
1-19	76	3
20-99	54	11
100-499	41	24
500-999	7	29
1000+	9	42
<b>All Districts with ELs</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>13</b>

- Districts with ELs averaged 13 different native languages spoken by their ELs. However, there is great variation as the districts with a lower incidence of ELs averaged three native languages while those with at least 1,000 ELs averaged 42.
  - There were, however, districts with significant linguistic diversity despite the moderate (Shelton: 43 languages, Wethersfield: 39, Hamden: 36, and South Windsor: 36) or even smaller (Avon: 26, Darien: 21, and Orange: 18) size of their EL populations.
  - Conversely, there were districts with a large number of ELs who had a limited number of native languages as their ELs were more exclusively Spanish speakers (Windham: 12 and New London: 16).
- Hartford ELs had the most native languages (64), followed by New Haven (49), and Bridgeport and West Hartford (45).
- Districts with multiple languages represented have additional challenges to identify and deliver services needed. Some of these include:
  - Effective communication with families (Note: It is a civil right of parents or guardians with limited English proficiency to receive communications in a language that they understand).
  - Qualified staffing, especially in order to implement mandated bilingual programs in less common languages, as there is a pervasive shortage of bilingual teachers in Connecticut.
  - Program development in order to provide research-based effective models of bilingual programming and other language instruction.
  - Student mobility as ELs are more likely to be transient, and bilingual program mandates are based on lagging indicators from the previous school year.

## The Geography of ELs: Urban Concentration and Diffusion Across Most Districts

In SY 2019-20, 59 percent of ELs were concentrated in Connecticut’s largest urban districts. However, 187 districts also had at least one EL in that year, as the number of districts without one EL declined from 32 to 14 over the prior five years.

**Table 4: Districts by Number of ELs, SY 2019-20**

Number of ELs	Districts	ELs	Percentage of All ELs	Rate of Change in ELs <sup>1</sup>	EL Percentage of District Students	Percentage of ELs identified as SWD	Percentage of ELs who were Immigrants
0	14	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1-19	76	615	1%	38%	1%	23%	12%
20-99	54	2,828	7%	52%	3%	19%	14%
100-499	41	9,248	21%	31%	5%	20%	17%
500-999	7	5,386	12%	22%	13%	24%	23%
1000+	9	25,491	59%	19%	19%	21%	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>43,568</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>21.0%</b>	<b>23%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Rate of change in ELs refers to the rate of increase or decrease in the number of ELs from SY 2015-16 to 2019-20.

- Regardless of size, small-, moderate-, and high-incidence districts all experienced significant growth in their number of ELs from SY 2015-16 through 2019-20. The largest percentage increases occurred in the low- and moderate-incidence districts (38 percent and 52 percent respectively).
- In the largest urban districts, ELs accounted for 19 percent of all students. Twenty-six percent of ELs in these districts were immigrants and 21 percent were also SWD.
- Eligibility for free or reduced price meals, a proxy for Socio-economic status (SES), also varied with the size of districts’ EL population: Districts with 1-19 (62 percent), 20-99 ELs (57 percent), 100-499 (68 percent), 500-999 (78 percent) and 1000+ ELs (76 percent).
- The median per pupil expenditure was lower in districts with larger EL populations. Districts with 1000+ ELs had a median expenditure of \$15,859 and for those with 500-999 ELs it was \$17,245. In contrast, the median per pupil expenditure for districts with 1 to 19 ELs was \$19,336 and for those with 20 to 99 ELs it was \$17,361.

Differences in the population size of ELs pose unique challenges. The larger urban districts with the highest numbers of ELs may struggle to meet the varied needs and characteristics of this population at the magnitude represented within their district. The larger urban districts, where most ELs reside, are also tasked to address the additional challenges of more students that live in poverty, are identified as having disabilities, are immigrants, and are transient with limited resources. Many of these districts also struggle with chronic absenteeism and low academic performance, which are likely compounded by the aforementioned factors. Conversely, low-incidence districts may not have robust EL supports, resources, certified TESOL and/or bilingual teachers, and institutionalized experience.

**Table 5: Districts with at Least 500 ELs, SY 2019-20**

District	ELs	EL Percentage of District Students	Rate of Change in ELs	Percentage of ELs identified as SWD	Percentage of ELs who were Immigrants
Bridgeport	4,121	20%	38%	19%	34%
Hartford	4,011	21%	4%	27%	18%
New Haven	3,584	17%	13%	18%	13%
Danbury	3,331	28%	29%	13%	34%
Waterbury	2,919	16%	20%	28%	18%
Stamford	2,392	14%	19%	15%	52%
Norwalk	2,047	18%	29%	21%	41%
New Britain	1,714	17%	7%	27%	9%
Meriden	1,372	17%	17%	25%	15%
Windham	951	28%	19%	27%	12%
East Hartford	910	13%	43%	23%	23%
West Haven	868	15%	15%	21%	30%
New London	743	22%	-8%	23%	30%
CREC	646	8%	62%	31%	12%
Norwich	641	18%	23%	19%	22%
West Hartford	627	7%	27%	24%	37%
<b>All Others</b>	<b>12,691</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>CT</b>	<b>43,568</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>23%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Rate of change in ELs refers to the rate of increase or decrease in the number of ELs from SY 2015-16 to 2019-20.

The 16 districts with at least 500 ELs accounted for 71 percent of all ELs. English learners were 17 percent of all students in these districts and over the last five years their numbers increased by 24 percent.

### Alliance Districts

Fourteen of the 16 districts with 500 or more ELs are also Alliance Districts. The Alliance District program is a unique and targeted investment in Connecticut's 33 lowest-performing districts. Alliance Districts receive increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding to support district strategies to increase student outcomes and close achievement gaps by pursuing bold and innovative reforms. In SY 2019-20, 18 percent of all students in these 14 districts were ELs. Among ELs in Alliance Districts with 500 or more ELs:

- 21 percent were identified as students with disabilities
- 26 percent were immigrants
- 76 percent were eligible for free or reduced price meals

The two districts with 500 or more ELs who were not Alliance Districts were CREC and West Hartford. In these districts, 7 percent of all students were ELs. Among these ELs, 28 percent were identified as students with disabilities, 24 percent were immigrants, and 76 percent were eligible for free or reduced price meals.

### Opportunity Districts

Eight of these largest districts were also participants in the Opportunity Districts program<sup>3</sup>. Opportunity Districts, formerly known as Education Reform Districts, are a subset of Connecticut's Alliance Districts. They

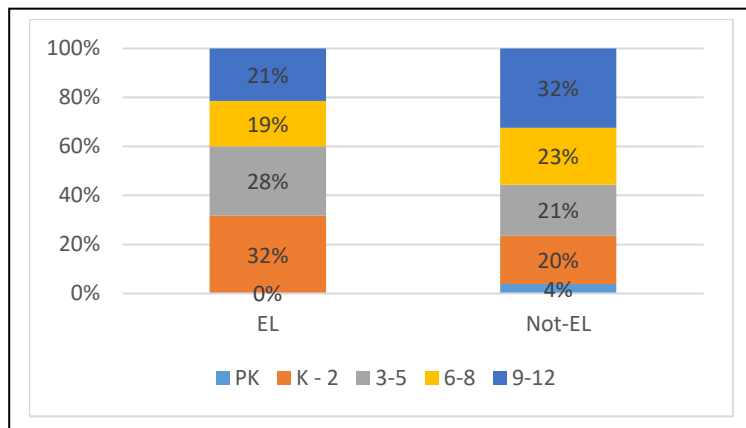
<sup>3</sup> Districts with at least 500 ELs that were also Opportunity Districts included Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury, New Britain, East Hartford, New London, and Norwich.

are the 10 lowest performing districts in the state based on the District Performance Index in the CSDE’s Next Generation Accountability System. They collectively accounted for 43 percent of all ELs and 18 percent of their students are English learners.

### Grade Distribution of ELs: Most ELs are in Primary School

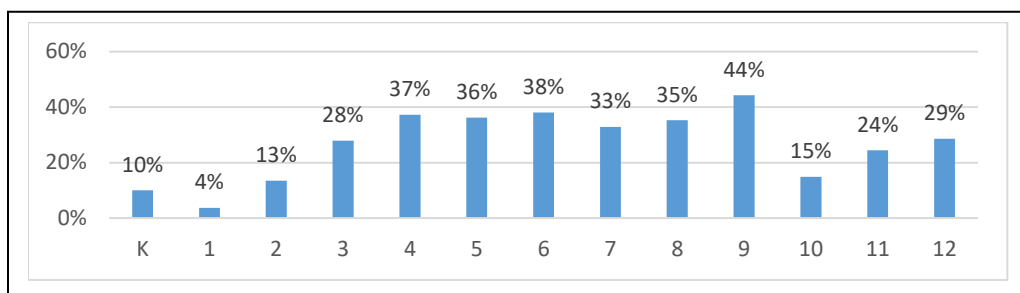
In SY 2019-20, 60 percent of ELs were in kindergarten through Grade 5, which is typical for ELs nationally. As a result, much of the English language acquisition literature focuses on serving ELs in those grades and far less focus on supporting at other levels such as high school. It is, therefore, important that English language administrators and staff remain vigilant regarding the unique needs of English learners at the different grade levels.

**Figure 3: Distribution of Students by EL Status, SY 2019-20**



- Less than 1 percent of ELs were in pre-kindergarten (PK). Districts are only required to ascertain the EL status of students in Grades K-12 and identification of PK students is at the discretion of the districts.
- A larger percentage of ELs are in kindergarten through Grade 5 than their not-EL peers (60 percent vs. 44 percent).
- Only 21 percent of ELs were in high school. English learners at this level face the unique challenge of accessing and mastering secondary-level academic content while concurrently trying to develop English language proficiency.

**Figure 4: Growth of in the Number of ELs by Grade, SYs 2015-16 to 2019-20**

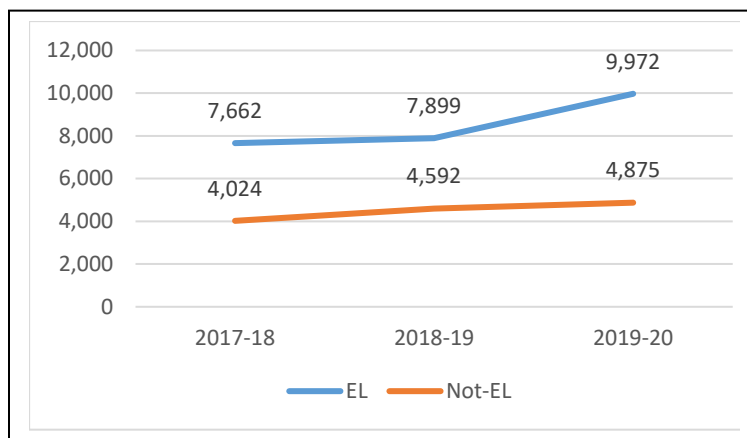


- Over the last five school years, the number of ELs increased across all grades.
- While most ELs were in Grade kindergarten through Grade 5, some of the highest percentage increases in the number of ELs were in middle and high school grades, in part driven by increases in the number of ELs identified as students with disabilities and long-term ELs.

## Growth in the Number of Immigrant Students

Immigrants are students who were not born in the U.S. and have attended a U.S. school for less than three years (See Appendix C). Since the CSDE began collecting immigrant status of individual students in SY 2017-18, the number of immigrant ELs increased by 30 percent compared with 21 percent among not-EL students. While not all ELs are immigrants nor are all immigrants ELs, about two-thirds of immigrants were ELs. Many immigrants are Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), which means that they need to develop foundational academic skills, as well as English language proficiency. High school ELs who are also immigrants face the additional challenge of acquiring English while simultaneously engaging in more complex secondary-level coursework. Some of these students are refugees and may be fleeing countries due to natural disasters, political turmoil, or civic disorder. As a result, they may have mental health and emotional needs related to these circumstances and trauma. It is also important to note some of these students arrive as unaccompanied minors and therefore, require additional supports.

**Figure 5: Number of Immigrants by EL Status, SYs 2017-18 through 2019-20**



In SY 2019-20, EL immigrant students:

- Numbered nearly 10,000, an increase of over 2300 since SY 2017-18.
- Spoke 113 different native languages but the most prevalent ones were Spanish (60 percent), Portuguese (11 percent), Arabic (4 percent) and Creole-Haitian (3 percent).
- Were evenly distributed across grades: K-2 (28 percent), 3-5 (23 percent), 6-8 (19 percent), and 9-12 (29 percent).
- Were in 126 different districts with the most enrolled in Bridgeport (14 percent), Stamford (12 percent), Danbury (11 percent), and Norwalk (8 percent) and Hartford (7 percent).
- Were less likely to be identified as students with disabilities (4 percent).

## English Learners Also Identified as Students with Disabilities (Dually-Identified Students)

Dually-identified students are those who have been identified as both English learners and students with a disability (SWD) and are, therefore, eligible to receive special education services.<sup>4</sup> These ELs may be students receiving support under the broader Federal regulations described in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 under Section 504. There is nothing precluding a student who has a disability from being identified as an EL, and to the contrary, there is guidance that if a student is dually identified, the student should receive support for their disability needs and EL needs. Therefore, any student with a Home Language Survey indicating a language

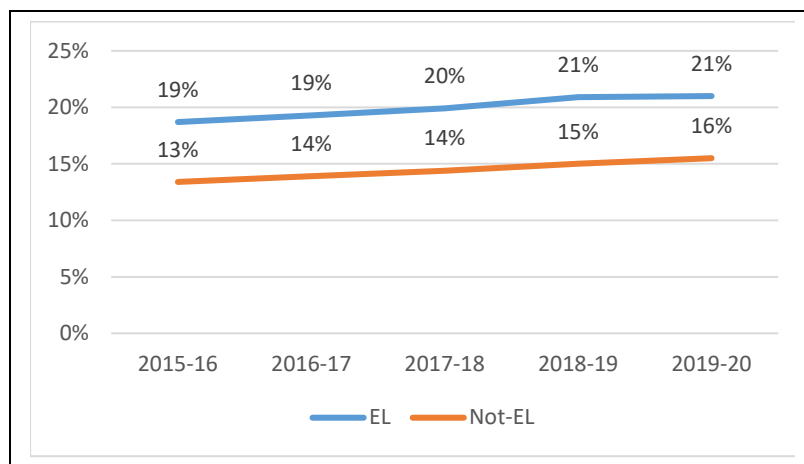
<sup>4</sup> CSDE letter regarding dually-identified students. [Dear Colleague letter of 7/7/15](#)

other than English should be screened to determine EL status, regardless of whether the student is also identified as having a disability. If identified as an EL, the student’s parent must be informed and provided with options about EL services and the right to refuse EL services.

As part of the Planning and Placement Team’s (PPT) process, the team must consider, among other special factors, the language needs of an EL. Therefore, it is essential that the PPT include participants who have the requisite knowledge of the child’s language needs. Actions must be taken by the school district to ensure that the parent understands the proceedings of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, including arranging for an interpreter for parents with deafness or whose native language is other than English. They must also be informed about how the language instruction program meets the objectives of the student’s IEP. It is also essential for the PPT to consider a dually identified student’s assessment needs, and this is especially imperative for ELs in grades K-2, as they are not yet in grades where annual, statewide academic assessment occurs, but *are* in grades where the annual English language proficiency assessment is administered (as it is in all grades).

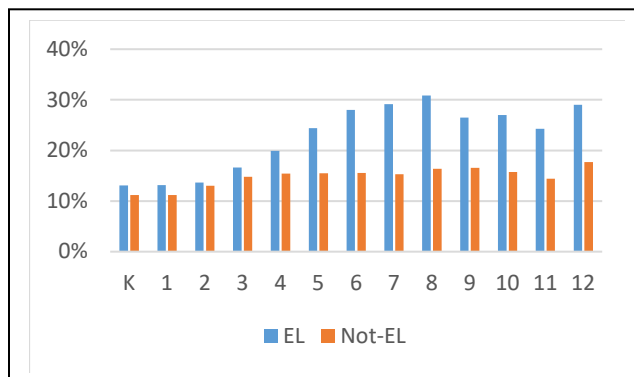
English learner students with disabilities must be provided with both the language assistance and disability-related services to which they are entitled under Federal law. Generally, this means that these student are provided direct support for both their disability and linguistic needs. Dually-identified students are entitled to receive language instruction, even if parents or guardians decline disability-related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504. Also, policies of no dual services, (i.e., a policy of allowing students to receive either EL services or special education services, but not both), or delaying disability evaluations of EL students for special education and related services for a specified period of time based on their EL status are not permissible. Purposeful planning for differentiation, balancing the student’s language and disability needs, must occur and should be developed by qualified individuals with appropriate expertise.

**Figure 6: Percentage Identified as Students with Disabilities by EL Status, SYs 2015-16 to 2019-20**



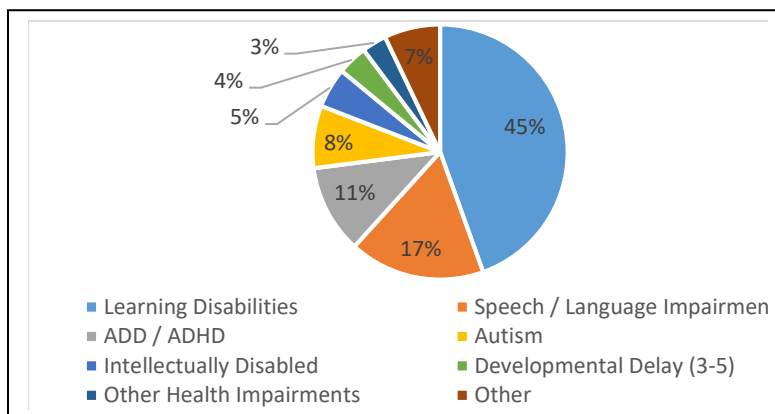
- In SY 2019-20, 21 percent of ELs were identified as SWD compared to 16 percent of students who were not-ELs.
- Over the last five school years, the number of ELs identified as students with disabilities increased by 39 percent. During this time, the number of students identified as SWD who were not currently ELs increased by 11 percent.

**Figure 7: Percentage Identified as Students with Disabilities by EL Status and Grade (K-12), SY 2019-20**



- A higher percentage of ELs were identified as SWDs across all grades (K-12) compared with not-ELs.
- In Grades K-3, only a slightly higher percentage of ELs were identified as SWDs (2 percent), but this gap significantly widens in Grades 4 and 5 (7 percent), middle school (14 percent), and high school (11 percent).
- ELs with significant cognitive disabilities that would take alternate academic assessments do not have a way to measure their English language proficiency, as Connecticut does not utilize an alternate English language proficiency assessment. This may contribute, in part, to the higher percentage of EL identified as SWD because they cannot test out of EL status.

**Figure 8: Primary Disability for ELs Identified as SWD, SY 2019-20**



- Nearly three quarters of dually-identified students have a primary disability of either Learning Disabilities, Speech/Language Impairments, or ADD/ADHD. Compared with not-EL students, English learners were more likely to have a primary disability of Learning Disabilities (45 percent vs. 29 percent) and Speech Language Impairments (17 percent vs. 12 percent), and less likely to have a primary disability of Autism (8 percent compared with 14 percent).
- Among primary disabilities with at least 100 ELs, the largest growth rates over the last five school years were Autism (117 percent), ADD/ADHD (46 percent), and Learning Disabilities (45 percent).
- Speech and Language Impairments and Autism were more prevalent primary disabilities for ELs in Grades K-2 (39 and 15 percent) and 3-5 (21 and 8 percent) than in Grades 6-8 (9 and 6 percent) and 9-12 (6 and 5 percent).
- Conversely, Learning Disabilities and Intellectual Disabilities were more prevalent among ELs in Grades 6-8 (56 and 6 percent) and 9-12 (56 and 9 percent) than in K-2 (14 and 2 percent) and 3-5 (45 and 3 percent).

## Dually-Identified Students with a Significant Cognitive Disability

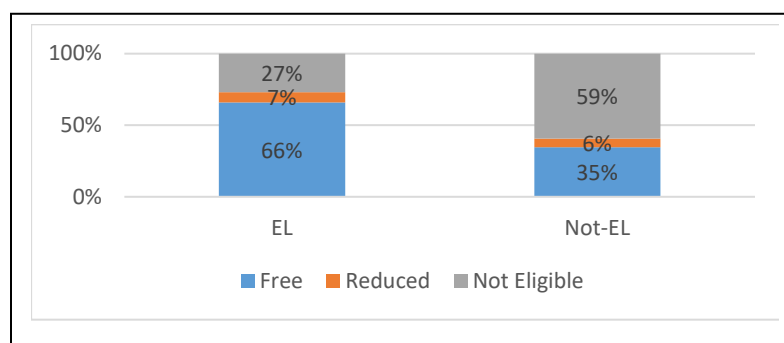
Students with a significant cognitive disability are a small subgroup of the dually identified.<sup>5</sup> Communication among teachers and administrators regarding these students is critical to ensure that they receive appropriate services to support their language and disability needs.

Students with a significant cognitive disability are eligible to participate in the Alternate Assessment System for the standardized academic assessments (e.g., Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA) for ELA and Math and the Connecticut Alternate Science (CTAS) Assessment for Science). However, dually-identified students with a significant cognitive disability do not participate in the summative ELP Assessment because the standard form of the assessment is the only version currently available, and it is not accessible nor appropriate for them. For the SY 2019-20 ELP Assessment, 1.4 percent of ELs were reported as dually-identified students who qualified for an alternate assessment and could not, therefore, participate on the ELP Assessment.<sup>6</sup> Over the last five years, the number of the dually identified who were reported as qualifying for an alternate English language proficiency assessment increased by 22 percent. The CSDE is currently working with other states to develop an appropriate alternate English language proficiency assessment for these students to allow them to demonstrate their English proficiency.

## Socio-Economic Status of English Learners

Eligibility for school free or reduced price meals can be used as a proxy for socio-economic status (SES). Most ELs are eligible for either free (66 percent) or reduced price (7 percent) meals. In contrast, most students who were not currently ELs were not eligible for either (59 percent). With most ELs eligible, this suggests that as a student subpopulation they are affected by poverty at a greater rate than other students. In addition to academic and linguistic supports, ELs that receive free or reduced price lunch may also benefit from deliberate and intentional social-emotional supports and wraparound services, which would extend beyond those linguistic and academic supports typically focused upon for ELs. A higher percentage of ELs were also reported as homeless than students who were not currently ELs (1 percent versus 0.4 percent).

**Figure 9: Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals by EL Status, SY 2019-20**



<sup>5</sup> Through the Alternate Eligibility Form, districts provide evidence for each student supporting: A) An intellectual impairment (results of cognitive testing (e.g., Full-Scale IQ score < 70, a developmental age); B) Adaptive behavior well below age-level expectations (results of adaptive behavior assessment(s) (e.g., scored more than 1.5 standard deviations below average); and C) The requirement of intensive instruction and significant supports.

<sup>6</sup> As Connecticut does not currently have an alternate ELP assessment, dually-identified students who qualified to take an alternate assessment were excluded from public reporting and accountability calculations.



## Race and Ethnicity of English Learners

In terms of race and ethnicity, 71 percent of Connecticut’s ELs identified as Hispanic/Latino. However, similar to their linguistic diversity, ELs were also racially and ethnically diverse. Since SY 2015-16, the number of ELs increased for each racial and ethnic student group.

**Table 6: Race and Ethnicity of ELs, SY 2019-20**

Race/Ethnicity	ELs	Percentage of All ELs	Rate of Change in ELs <sup>1</sup>
American Indian or Alaska Native	109	<1%	76%
Asian	4156	10%	8%
Black or African American	2068	5%	34%
Hispanic/Latino of any Race	31061	71%	26%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	61	<1%	39% <sup>2</sup>
Two or More Races	358	<1%	70%
White	5749	13%	24%
<b>All ELs<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>43568</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Rate of change refers to the rate of increase or decrease in the number of ELs from SY 2015-16 to 2019-20.

<sup>2</sup>Number of ELs<100.

<sup>3</sup>There were six ELs whose race and ethnicity were not reported to the CSDE.

**Table 7: Demographic Characteristics of ELs by Race and Ethnicity, SY 2019-20**

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage SWD	Percentage immigrants	Percentage Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals	Native Languages with Most Speakers
American Indian or Alaska Native	16%	38%	62%	Spanish (51%) and Portuguese (21%)
Asian	12%	27%	51%	Mandarin (17%) and Urdu (10%)
Black or African American	16%	38%	77%	Creole-Haitian (38%) and French (12%)
Hispanic/Latino of any race	24%	20%	78%	Spanish (96%) and Portuguese (3%)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	15%	36%	69%	Spanish (25%) and Arabic (12%)
Two or More Races	13%	31%	60%	Arabic (18%) and Spanish (13%)
White	15%	27%	60%	Portuguese (23%) and Spanish (20%)
<b>All ELs<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>Spanish (72%) and Portuguese (6%)</b>

<sup>1</sup>There were six ELs whose race and ethnicity were not reported to the CSDE.

- Hispanic/Latino ELs of any race had the highest percentage of SWD and eligible for free or reduced price meals (24 percent and 78 percent respectively).
- American Indian or Alaska Native and Black or African American ELs had the highest percentages of ELs who were immigrants (38 percent).

## Language Instruction Programs

Districts must report EL program codes for all ELs to the CSDE’s student database Public School Information System (PSIS). These program codes reflect the primary service the student receives. However, it is very important when looking at program data to be aware that in practice most ELs receive a mixture of English language services.

**Table 8: Language Instruction Programs, SY 2019-20**

Program	ELs	Percentage of All ELs	Rate of Change <sup>1</sup>
Transitional Bilingual	10,237	24%	24%
Dual Language Bilingual	1,492	3%	7%
ESL, Pull-out	12,013	28%	23%
ESL, Push-In/Co-teaching	4,435	10%	40%
ESL, Sheltered English	1,695	4%	40%
ESL, Some other model	5,688	13%	16%
Language Transition Support Services	6,578	15%	25%
Parental Refusal	1,430	3%	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,568</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Rate of change refers to the rate of increase or decrease in the number of ELs from SY 2015-16 to 2019-20.

### Mandated Bilingual Programs

Connecticut statute mandates that schools with 20 or more ELs who speak the same non-English native language at the beginning of each school year must offer a bilingual program in that language in the following school year (C.G.S. 10-17f).

- Based on data from the CSDE’s October 2019 PSIS Collection, 315 schools in 55 districts were mandated to offer bilingual programs in nine languages for SY 2020-21. Individual schools can be required to offer mandated bilingual programs in more than one language.
- Spanish accounted for 310 of the programs and the other ones include Albanian (1), Arabic (5), Creole-Haitian (5), K’iche’ (1), Mandarin (2), Pashto (3), Portuguese (19), and Tamil (1).
- Thirty-four districts were mandated to offer more bilingual programs at more than one school location. In addition, eight districts were mandated to provide bilingual programs in more than one native language.

Bilingual K-12 and TESOL K-12 are Connecticut Teacher Shortage Areas. Shortage areas are identified when significant vacancies exist, where educator preparation programs (EPPs) do not produce enough graduates to meet the needs of Connecticut’s Pre-K-12 student population, and/or where a disproportionate number of teachers who are not certified in the appropriate field are being hired to teach such courses. An additional challenge is that there are times when there are no certified bilingual teachers who speak the languages of particular mandated bilingual programs. This makes it impossible to appropriately staff such programs.

### Types of Bilingual Programs

Varied bilingual program models exist, with key differences being how native language is used and maintained.

#### A) Transitional Bilingual Programs

Transitional bilingual education programs are designed to promote English language proficiency and utilize declining amounts of native language over time. Students are limited to 30 months of eligibility to participate in a transitional bilingual program. Districts may apply to the CSDE for a 10 month extension for individual

students (up to three times) for a total maximum time in transitional bilingual programming of 60 months. Transitional bilingual programs are considered subtractive in language. The goal of these programs is to develop students' fluency in English through the initial utilization of the native language, but maintenance of the native language is not prioritized. Typically, most mandated bilingual programs in Connecticut are transitional and they accounted for 24 percent of all ELs.

## **B) Dual Language Bilingual Programs**

Dual language bilingual programs promote students' proficiency in both English and their native language while facilitating their concurrent learning of academic content. There is no statutory limitation on student participation in a dual language program, as these programs are considered additive in nature. There are few dual language programs in Connecticut public schools despite their additive nature and a strong research base that has demonstrated the long-term academic positive effects for participants (3 percent of ELs).<sup>7</sup>

## **English as a Second Language Program Models**

English as a second language programs refers to a range of English language support programs for ELs that vary greatly in method and the use of a student's native language in instruction. Variations of ESL include:

### **A) ESL, Pull-out**

The most common form of English language support and this refers to ELs receiving services outside of their mainstream classes (28 percent of ELs).

### **B) ESL, Push-in/Co-teaching**

Refers to ELs receiving services in their mainstream classes (10 percent of ELs).

### **C) ESL, Sheltered English**

Sheltered instruction is an approach to teaching English language learners that integrates language and content instruction with the objectives of providing access to mainstream, grade-level content and promoting the development of English language proficiency (4 percent of ELs). This method is often used in mainstream secondary classrooms where the students have a foundation of English education. Sheltered instruction does not focus entirely on language development; instead, through various other topics or actual content material in the curriculum, English proficiency is achieved.

### **D) ESL, Some other model**

This includes ESL services provided to students in school that were identified for a bilingual program who cannot participate because they have 30 or fewer months to graduation and other types or mixtures of services not defined by the CSDE's program codes (13 percent of ELs).

### **E) Language Transition Support Services (LTSS)**

These are language instructional services provided to bilingual students who have exhausted their 30 months of eligibility to participate in a transitional bilingual program (or up to 60 months, if the student received extensions) but have not met the English Mastery Standard (15 percent of ELs) to exit EL status.

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<sup>7</sup> District that offered dual language programs in SY 2019-20 included LEARN (Regional Multicultural Magnet School), New Haven (Clinton Avenue, Columbus, Fair Haven, Hill Central, J.C. Daniels, J.S. Martinez, Obama, and Truman Schools), New London (Jennings School), Norwalk (Silvermine School), Stratford (Vicki Soto School and Johnson Academy), and Windham (North and Middle Schools).

## Parental Refusal of English Language Services

Parents/guardians may refuse bilingual or ESL services for their children. However, these students remain ELs and must participate in the annual ELP Assessment (3 percent of ELs). Parents have the option of changing their minds regarding EL services at any time. However, EL status cannot be removed until an EL has met the exit criteria and been reclassified.

**Table 9: English Language Programs by Grade, SY 2019-20**

Program	PK-5	6 - 8	9 - 12
Bilingual	31%	23%	19%
ESL, Pull-out	32%	24%	19%
ESL, Push-In/Co-teaching	12%	11%	5%
ESL, Sheltered English	<1%	4%	13%
ESL, Some other model	11%	12%	19%
Language Transition Support Services	10%	23%	21%
Parental Refusal	3%	3%	4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The prevalence of English language programs varies by grade.

- Nearly one-third of ELs in Grades PK through 5 were in a bilingual program. An additional 10 percent received LTSS.
- The percentage of high school ELs in a bilingual program was lower because Connecticut statute prohibits participation in such programs for those students with fewer than 30 months to graduation (C.G.S. Section 10-17f). This may result in the larger percentage of high school ELs who received ESL.
- Push-In/Co-teaching models are also less common in high school because they require teachers to be certified in TESOL, as well as a secondary subject area. It also requires two teachers to be working with one group of students in the same content area context. This can be more challenging at the high school level due to scheduling.
- Sheltered English instruction was utilized more frequently at the high school level as this model scaffolds content area instruction with embedded English language.

## Long-Term English Learners

In SY 2019-20, there were nearly 14,000 “long-term ELs” and their numbers have grown by 28 percent over the preceding five years. The CSDE has defined long-term ELs as those who have not demonstrated English Mastery within five school years. In Connecticut, ELs attain English Mastery and exit EL status on the annual English Language Proficiency Assessment by demonstrating proficiency on the Reading and the Writing subtests, as well as Overall on the LAS Links Assessment.

**Table 10: Characteristics of Long-Term ELs, SY 2019-20**

Program	Percentage of Long-term ELs
SWD	37%
Immigrant	5%
Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals	84%
Most Common Native Languages	Spanish (81%), Portuguese & Arabic (3% each)
Alliance District Student	78%
<b>All ELs</b>	<b>32%</b>

Dually-identified students are a significant share of the long-term ELs, particularly compared to students who have been an EL for less than five years (37 percent compared with 13 percent respectively). Significantly, 57 percent of all dually-identified students are long-term ELs. The most common primary disabilities for dually-identified long-term ELs were Learning Disabilities (55 percent), ADD/ADHD (12 percent), Speech/Language Disabilities (11 percent), and Autism and Intellectual Disabilities (6 percent each). Dually-identified students are much less likely than other ELs to attain English Mastery indicating that many dually-identified students simply cannot test out of EL status (4 percent versus 12 percent respectively in SY 2019-20).

The percentage of ELs in each grade band who are long-term ELs were: K-2 (<1 percent), 3-5 (41 percent), 6-8 (56 percent), and 9-12 (47 percent).

### Conclusion

This summary of key English Learner demographics illustrates Connecticut’s changing student trends and the unique characteristics of ELs. The paper has highlighted that ELs are a heterogeneous group of students reflecting diverse languages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, cultures, aptitudes, socio-economic statuses, and other characteristics. The CSDE encourages readers to consider the information in this paper when engaging in decision making and planning.

**For further information, please contact the CSDE’s EL Team:**

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**Resources for ELs**

- English Learner Identification and Obtaining Materials for SY 2020-21 <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Student-Assessment/Special-Populations/202021-English-Learner-Identification-and-Obtaining-Identification-Materials-52920-FINAL.pdf>
- For more information on the PSIS EL Program Codes: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Performance/Data-Collection-Help-Sites/PSIS-Help-Site/Documentation>
- CSDE English Learner Resource webpage <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/English-Learners/English-Learners>
- CSDE English Language Proficiency webpage <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Student-Assessment/ELP-Assessment/English-Language-Proficiency-Assessment---LAS-Links>

## Appendices

### Appendix A: English Learner Identification (from Public School Information System (PSIS) 2020-21 PSIS Reference Guide)

The ESSA requires standardized identification procedures for English learner identification. Connecticut's standardized identification procedure for English learners include the following steps and is generally intended to be carried out one time, upon first entry into a Connecticut public school:

- **Step 1:** Determination if the student is a potential EL student through adherence to the Home Language Survey Guidance and completion of the Home Language Survey. (Please note both of these documents can be found on the CSDE Web site on the English Learners page.)
  - Administer the home language survey, which must include the following questions (additional questions may be added, but these should be considered for informational purposes only and should not factor into whether the student is screened):
    1. What is the primary language used in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student?
    2. What is the language most often spoken by the student?
    3. What is the language that the student first acquired?
- **Step 2:** Review the home language survey (HLS) results to determine if it indicates the student may have a primary or home language other than English (PHLOTE) and may be an English learner.
- **Step 3:** If the HLS indicates the student may have a PHLOTE, the approved English language proficiency (ELP) assessment is administered.
- **Step 4:** If the student's results on the ELP Assessment indicate the student is an English learner, the student is identified. The student's parents are informed of the service options for their child and select the service that the student will receive or waive services. They are also informed that they may modify their selection at any time.

If as a result, of the assessment it is determined that the student is an English learner, an appropriate program of English language instruction must be provided and the student must be entered as EL.

### Appendix B: Home Language Survey (From Public School Information System (PSIS) 2020-21 PSIS Reference Guide)

In accordance with Section 10-17e-j, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), a native language code must be assigned to all kindergarten through Grade 12 students (including exchange students).

The student's native language is determined by responses on the Home Language Survey, when at least one of the following questions indicate a language other than English. The questions are:

- 1) What is the primary language used in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student?
- 2) What is the language most often spoken by the student?
- 3) What is the language that the student first acquired?

Please Note: The Home Language Survey is generally intended to be carried out one time, upon first entry into a Connecticut public school.

## **Appendix C: Immigrant (From Public School Information System (PSIS) 2020-21 PSIS Reference Guide)**

Section 3201(5) of Title III of the ESEA defines immigrant children and youths as individuals who:

- a) are ages 3 through 21
- b) were not born in any state (defined as each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico); and
- c) have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more states for more than 3 full academic years.