



THE LIFE OF ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS IN DELAWARE

It's a new school year, and three new students arrive ready to enroll.



1) Identifying English Learners

1. All public school parents complete the Home Language Survey.
2. Students identified as learning English are **assessed to determine how much English they know.**

- **Maria**, a 9th grader from Venezuela, speaks fluent Spanish but no English.
- **Wei**, a kindergartener, is simultaneously learning English and Chinese. His parents only speak Chinese at home.
- **Tatiana**, a 3rd grader who moved from New Jersey, understands spoken English and speaks Haitian Creole at home.

What rights do ELs have?

Major requirements in federal law[^] for Maria, Wei, and Tatiana include:

- (1) Schools must accept and **educate all students**, immigrants and native-born.
- (2) EL students must be taught **English and also grade-level academic content.**
- (3) EL students with disabilities must be provided both the language assistance and disability-related services.

2) Teaching English Learners

In Delaware, all districts and charters are required to select a **program for ELs**, then implement with resources and personnel, and evaluate and revise the program regularly to **ensure students are making progress.**

EL programs must include daily or weekly language instruction.

- ➔ Yet even **EL students who comprehend no English will only receive 2-3 hours a week of English language instruction time** if districts and charters follow the minimum state recommendation.
- ➔ And there are **no requirements for how to support ELs in academic content areas**, where they spend most of their time.

Taking into consideration language background and proficiency, districts and charters chose the right instructional program for **Maria, Wei, and Tatiana.** **Common EL program models in Delaware** include*:

English as a second language (60% of EL students)

- Additional support for ELs provided within the traditional classroom, or a separate class period that can include several language groups
- Teacher does not need to be proficient in the students' native language(s)
- Instruction for ELs aimed at English language development skills. Amount of focus on academic content varies

Bilingual instruction (10% of EL students)

- Class comprised of all ELs (typically with the same language background)
- Teacher is bilingual
- All academic subjects taught in native language with a focus on English proficiency

Dual-language (5% of EL students)

- Class comprised of native English speakers and ELs (typically with the same language background)
- Teacher is bilingual, or pair of teachers where one is bilingual
- Academic instruction is split, with one part of the school day or week in English, the other in a different language

No program (20% of EL students)

- No English language instruction beyond what is provided to native English speakers



Maria may enroll in an intensive program to help her acclimate to the American school system. "We have a "newcomer program" for high-school age ELs, especially immigrants, to help them catch up and learn English and academics. Many have had interrupted education and need support adjusting to going to school in a new country. But not all districts have this program, and even we have very limited space available."
- Delaware English learner teacher



Tatiana's level of support depends on where she enrolls. "I have spoken with students who sit in the back of the classroom and receive no English language instruction at all. I know others who get help learning English, but fail to have support in math and science."
- Delaware English learner teacher

3) Assessing English Learners



Maria, Wei, and Tatiana, like all EL students, take an annual additional assessment called the ACCESS test to measure their English language proficiency growth. The results impact the type and level of services they receive the following school year, including the creation of new goals for obtaining English language proficiency.

Research indicates that students typically develop oral proficiency in English in 3-5 years, and academic proficiency in 4-7 years.

In Delaware, EL students spend an average of 3 years in an EL program. 10% of Delaware ELs were in an EL program for more than 6 years.

However, measures of English language proficiency growth will be publically reported by school and district for the first time starting with the 2017-2018 school year as **part of the school accountability system.**

"I have always wondered what goes into the decision for what type of program and instruction to provide ELs. Are we offering the services best suited for the diverse needs of our ELs, or is this simply the best we are able to do given limited resources and personnel?"

- Delaware English language learner teacher

4) Acquiring English Proficiency



A student exits out of EL status once they have met specific criteria on the ACCESS test to demonstrate English proficiency.

Once exited, the student must be monitored, and some students like **Tatiana** can be reclassified as an EL if additional supports are needed. **Under the new ESSA law, Delaware will begin to monitor and report on former EL students for 4 years after exiting EL status.**

Every year, the number of English Learners in Delaware rises, implying that **the number of students entering the program is outpacing the number of students exiting.**

"An EL student can test out of the EL program and stop receiving services but still not be able to write and read at grade level."

- Delaware English language learner teacher

With these supports, ELs are expected, like their native English-speaking peers, to achieve high school graduation, gain proficiency in all academic subject areas, and have access to SAT and college and career preparation courses.



^Sources: Title III of ESEA; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974; and several Supreme Court Cases. Note: Enforced by the Delaware Department of Education.

***Sources:** Delaware Department of Education. Title III/ English Language Learner Guidebook; 2013-2014 Delaware Department of Education ELL Annual Report.

Notes on EL program enrollment: Percentages do not equal 100% because there is also a "not specified" option in reporting so program type is unknown for some EL students. Dual-language programs have gradually grown since this most recent data. A small amount of students not receiving services may be due to parents withdrawing.

Visit <http://bit.ly/ELsInDE> for more information on ELs in Delaware including previous fact sheets and sources for this fact sheet.

