



Research Report

**English Language Learners (ELL)
State Categorical Funding Review**

September 10, 2019

Prepared for

**THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND
THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**



BUREAU OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

One Capitol Mall, 5TH Floor | Little Rock, Ark., 72201 | (501) 682-1937

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Student Counts.....	1
Regional Patterns.....	2
Primary Languages.....	3
English as a Second Language Program Overview	3
Entering the ESL Program.....	4
ESL Instructional Programs and Staffing.....	5
Other Services for ELL Students.....	7
ESL Staffing.....	7
Assessing English-Language Proficiency.....	8
Exiting the ESL Program.....	8
Monitoring Exited Students.....	10
Measuring Student Success	11
ESSA School Index.....	12
Progress Toward English-Language Proficiency.....	12
ELP Student Growth.....	13
Percent on Track to English-Language Proficiency.....	13
Student Achievement on Academic Content Assessments.....	14
ACT Aspire.....	14
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).....	16
Graduation Rate.....	18
ESL Funding and Expenditures	19
ELL State Categorical Funding.....	19
ELL State Categorical Expenditures.....	20
Other States' Funding for ELL Students.....	22
Federal Funding.....	23
Analysis of District Spending and English Learner Gains	25
Appendix: On Track to English Language Proficiency	27

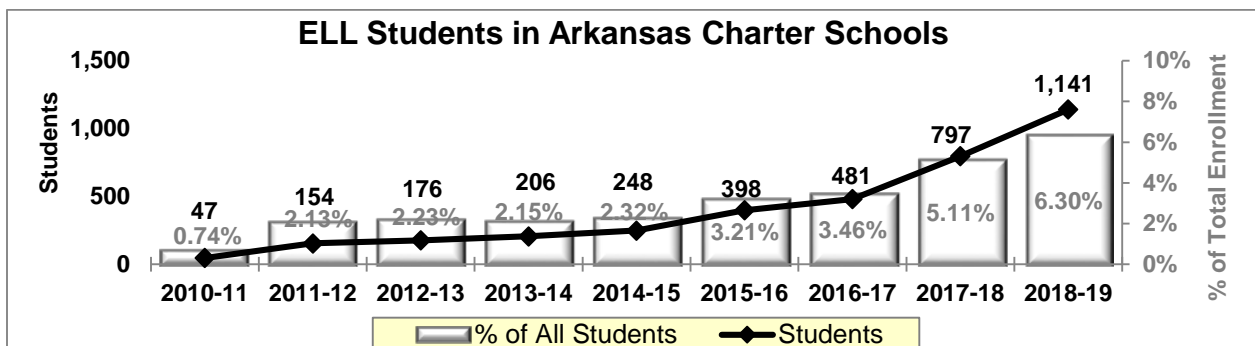
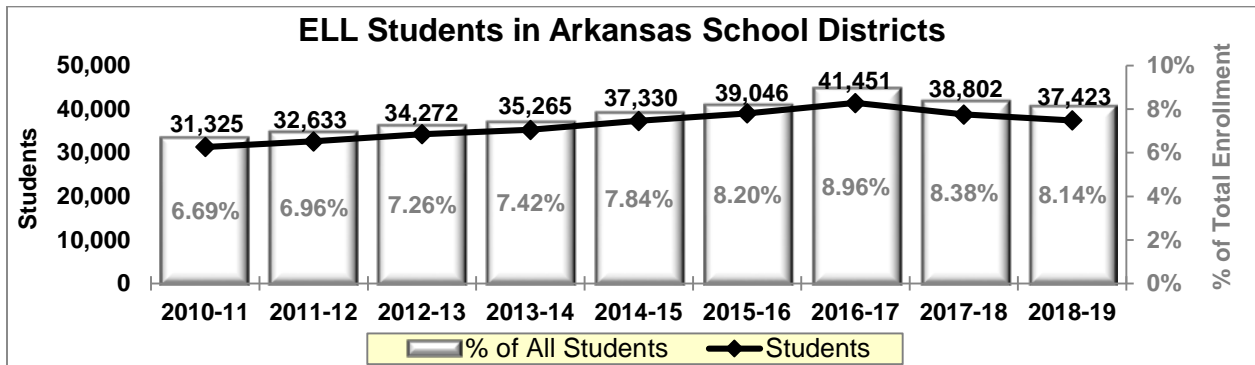
INTRODUCTION

Under Arkansas state law, “the basic language of instruction” in all public schools “shall be the English language only”.¹ However, more than 8% of Arkansas students do not speak English fluently. These English language learners face the challenge of learning a new language in addition to mastering academic subject matter being taught in that language. The state provides funding to school districts and charter schools to support these students. This state categorical funding program, known as English Language Learner (ELL) funding, is distributed to districts and charter schools based on the number of ELL students enrolled. This report examines the numbers of English language learners in Arkansas schools, the instruction supporting their acquisition of the English language and the funding provided to districts for this purpose.

There are several different terms used to refer to ELL students in Arkansas. English Learners (ELs), limited English proficient (LEP), and English Language Learners are interchangeable terms used for both federal and state funding and student placement purposes. Instructional programs for ELL students are also known as English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Generally, this report refers to English learners as ELL students and the instructional programs as ESL programs and services.

STUDENT COUNTS

In 2018-19, there were 37,423 ELL students in the state’s public school districts and another 1,141 ELL students in open-enrollment public charter schools. Total ELL enrollment in districts and charter schools increased by nearly 34% between 2011 and 2017, an annual average increase of 5%. However, the number of the state’s students who are ELLs has declined since then, decreasing by more than 3,300 students between 2017 and 2019. The decline may be related to an increase in the number of students exiting ELL programs, which is discussed further on page 9.



Source: ELL student counts come from State Aid Notices (2010-11 through 2018-19), Arkansas Department of Education. Total student enrollment numbers used in the calculations come from ADE’s Data Center.

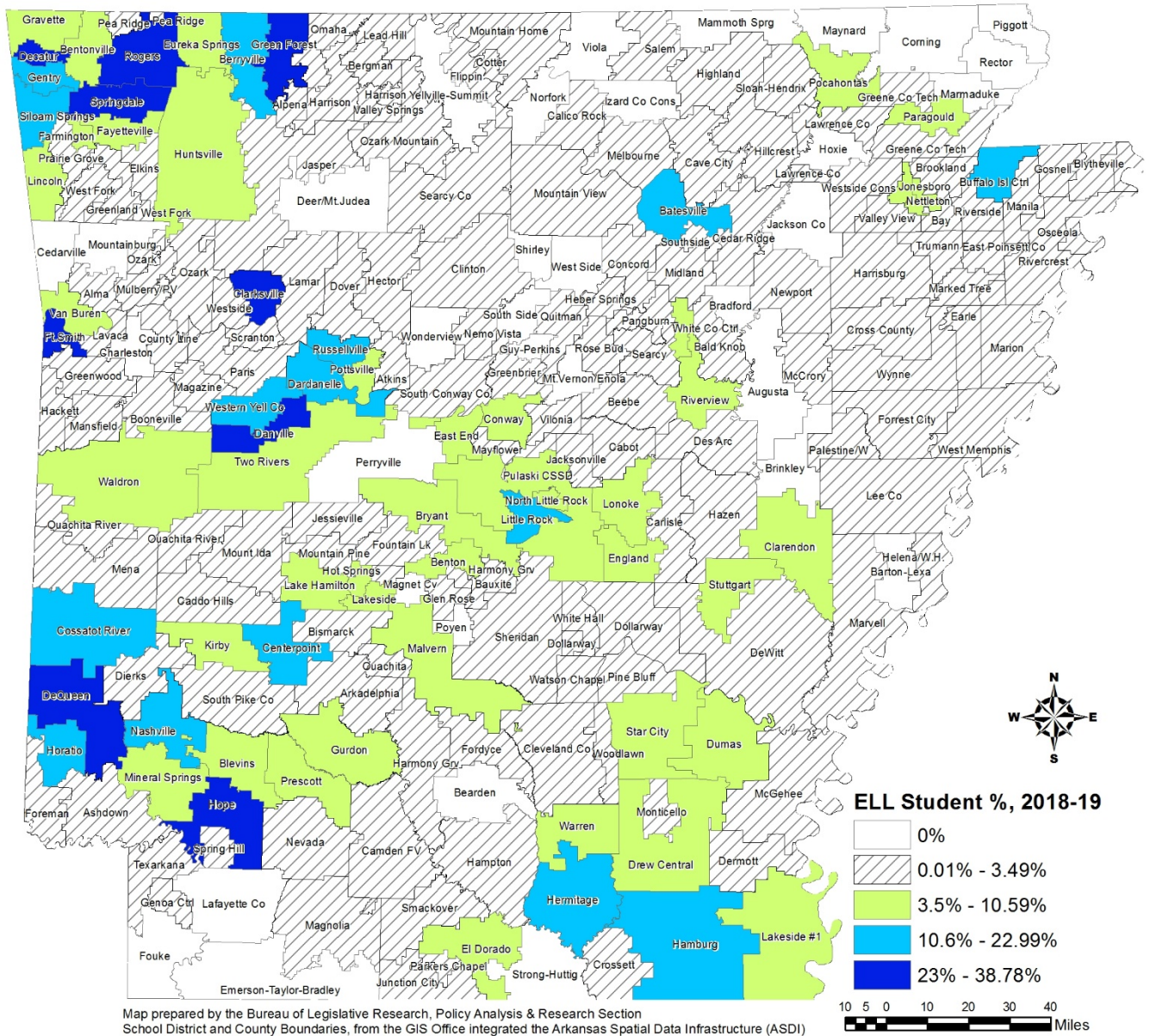
¹ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-104(a)(1)

English Language Learners (ELL)

The percentage of ELL students in Arkansas remains below the percentage of ELLs nationally. The national percentage has increased slightly in recent years from 9.2% in 2005 to 9.6% in 2016, the most recent year of data available.²

REGIONAL PATTERNS

In 2018-19, 201 of the 235 school districts and 22 of the 25 charter schools had ELL students enrolled. The following map shows the percentage of each district's student population who are ELL students.



More than half (19,879) of the 38,564 ELL students statewide (in districts and charter schools) were served by just five school districts during 2018-19 school year:

² National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, Table 204.20, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_204.20.asp?current=yes and The Condition of Education, English Language Learners in Public Schools, March 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp.

English Language Learners (ELL)

Districts	ELL Students	% of Each District's Total Student Enrollment	% of State's Total ELL Students
1. Springdale	8,241	37.5%	21.4%
2. Rogers	4,400	28.2%	11.4%
3. Fort Smith	3,265	23.1%	8.5%
4. Little Rock	3,038	14.1%	7.9%
5. DeQueen	935 ³	38.8%	2.4%

In many districts, ELL students made up only a fraction of the student body. More than 80% of all districts and charter schools either have no ELL students at all or the number is in the single digits. Notably, while the number of ELLs statewide dropped significantly in recent years, an increasing number of districts are reporting small numbers of ELL students. For example, in 2016-17, 57 districts reported having no ELL students. In 2018-19, that number declined to 34. In 2016-17, 132 districts reported having between 1 and 100 ELL students, but in 2018-19, that number increased to 155 districts.

Number of ELL Students 2018-19		
# of ELL Students	# of Districts	# of Charter Schools
1,001 or more	4	0
501 – 1,000	12	0
101 – 500	30	3
1 - 100	155	19
0	34	3
TOTAL	235	25

PRIMARY LANGUAGES

In 2017-18, English language learners collectively spoke a total of 94 languages as their primary language. The home language of the vast majority of these students was Spanish.

Top 5 Languages Spoken in 2017-18			
	Language	Student Count	% of English Language Learners
1	Spanish	32,861	83.2%
2	Marshallese	3,104	7.9%
3	Vietnamese	445	1.1%
4	Arabic	384	1.0%
5	Lao	286	0.7%

Data Source: Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN), primary home language other than English for any student flagged as Limited English Proficient

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

English as a Second Language (ESL) program requirements largely come from the federal level. Federal law (20 USC § 1703(f)) provides that, "[n]o state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by ... the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs". Additionally, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires school districts to provide an equal educational opportunity to language minority students.

In evaluating what a school district must provide to language minority students, the United States Supreme Court determined that an equal educational opportunity for these students does

³ State Aid Notice (2018-19), Arkansas Department of Education.

not mean simply providing the same instruction and materials other students receive.⁴ Instead, school districts must “take steps to help ELL students overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in the districts' educational programs.”⁵ Further, the Supreme Court emphasized that “[w]here inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin-minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students.”⁶

Additionally, the Civil Rights Act requires school districts to:

- Identify and assess all potential ELL students in a timely, valid and reliable manner.
- Provide an educationally sound and effective language assistance program.
- Provide staff who are sufficiently prepared to support districts' selected program.
- Avoid unnecessary segregation of ELL students.
- Monitor and assess ELL students to ensure their progress toward English-language proficiency.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of districts' selected language assistance program.⁷

ENTERING THE ESL PROGRAM

Under federal law, school districts are required to identify and assess students who may be limited English proficient. As defined in Arkansas statute § 6-20-2303, “English-language learners” are students identified by the State Board of Education as not proficient in the English language based on approved English-language proficiency assessments. To identify ELLs, school districts first administer a home language usage survey (HLUS) when a new student registers with the district at any grade. The survey that the state requires districts to use asks questions such as:

- What language(s) are spoken in your home?
- What language did your child learn first?
- What language does your family speak most often at home?

The state require parents or guardians of students enrolling in a district for the first time to complete the survey, typically as part of the initial registration process.

Once the home language usage surveys have been submitted, a district's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coordinator will review the responses to identify students who speak a language other than English at home. These students then take a placement test, known as a proficiency screener, to determine if they are not fully fluent in English. Language proficiency assessments measure listening, speaking, reading, and writing proficiency. In 2017-18, Arkansas adopted a language proficiency screener, the ELPA21, for statewide use, but districts were not *required* to use that particular screener until 2018-19.

If the screener indicates a student is not fully English proficient, he or she is automatically placed in the ESL program. A student who tests proficient still may be placed in the ESL program if other evidence suggests the student is not proficient; a student's English language proficiency must be confirmed using two additional pieces of standardized evidence, such as

⁴ *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563, 94 S. Ct. 786 (1974).

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Programs for English Language Learners, p. 3, http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/Curriculum%20and%20Instruction/Frameworks/ELP%202015/OCR_ELL_Guide.pdf

⁶ *Nichols*, 414 U.S. at 568 (quoting the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare clarifying guidelines, 35 Fed. Reg. 11595 (1970)).

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), September 23, 2016, p. 6, <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiiienglishlearners92016.pdf> (citing 42 U.S.C. § 2000d).

ACT Aspire scores or district interim assessments. Students' parents or guardians may choose to opt out of ESL services for their student, or they may choose to opt out of specific types of services. According to data districts recorded in the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN), about 859 ELL students in 2017-18—about 2% of all ELL students—opted out of receiving some or all services.

Each student identified as an English language learner is then assigned a group of school faculty who monitor the student's progress toward English-language proficiency. This group of educators is referred to as the student's Language Placement and Assessment Committee (LPAC). The LPAC works closely with students to evaluate classroom performance, language proficiency assessment results and academic content testing results. Each student's LPAC must review and document the student's progress annually or more frequently as needed.

ESL INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AND STAFFING

Neither state nor federal law specifies particular ESL curriculum or programs districts must use, but federal law does require districts to follow three principles when designing programs:

1. The educational approach selected must be “based on a sound educational theory”.
2. Districts must provide adequate staffing and resources to support the selected program.
3. The district must periodically evaluate and revise its program.⁸

Districts often use a combination of instructional methods to serve their ELL population at varying levels of English proficiency. Some examples of ESL programs Arkansas districts use include:

Sheltered English instruction or content-based ESL: Academic instruction that integrates that simultaneously builds on English language development. Lessons pair academic content objectives with objectives for English language development, and instruction is delivered using communication techniques helpful for English learners, such as pausing between sentences and the use of pictures and demonstrations.⁹

Structured English immersion: Intensive English language instruction provided for most of the school day. This type of instruction is intended for students before transitioning to general education classes.

Pull-out ESL: ELL students are pulled out of their general education class to work in a small group with an ESL teacher or instructional aide.

Co-teaching: An ESL teacher and a general education teacher plan and deliver instruction together for classes of ELL students only or for classes with both ELL students and non-ELL students.

Newcomer programs: Programs intended to help students new to the United States transition to the school. Newcomer programs are typically short-term placements for students before placement in traditional programs. Newcomer programs can provide connections to community services as well as individualized intensive instruction and serve as a bridge to a districts' regular ESL instruction.¹⁰

The types of programs each district use is not currently known for all school districts, but those that receive federal Title III funding (see page 23) are required to report the programs they use

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Programs for English Language Learners, p. 4, http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/Curriculum%20and%20Instruction/Frameworks/ELP%202015/OCR_ELL_Guide.pdf

⁹ IRIS Center, Vanderbilt Peabody College, <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ell/cresource/q1/p04/>

¹⁰ National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, Programs for Newcomer Students, https://ncela.ed.gov/files/feature_topics/newcomers/ElevatingELs_ProgramsForNewcomerStudents.pdf

when applying for funding. ADE is requiring all districts to identify the instructional program used for each individual ELL student beginning in 2019-20.

None of the programs Arkansas schools use are dual language or bilingual programs—those offered both in English and in another language. **All of the ELL programs offered in Arkansas schools are English-only.** According to ADE, that’s due to the state law requiring that the language of instruction in public and private schools “shall be the English language only.” The department considers this law a prohibition against dual language and bilingual programs.¹¹

This section of the law was amended through Act 989 of 2017, which specified that “It shall not be a violation” for “an educator to communicate with a student in the student’s native language in order to facilitate the student’s ability to become proficient and learn in the English language.” ADE interprets this language to mean that school officials may use a student’s native language periodically to clarify or facilitate learning, but the added statutory language does not alter the interpretation that bilingual and dual language programs are not allowed in Arkansas schools.

There is no consensus as to which ELL instructional programs or approaches are the most effective, and the research suggests that no instructional program is appropriate for all ELL students.^{12, 13} However, several studies and research reviews published in recent years have found that bilingual instruction can be as effective as or more effective than English-only programs. A 2012 review of research on language instruction educational programs published by the U.S. Department of Education notes that “findings from recent meta-analyses and systematic syntheses indicate the bilingual approach produces more positive outcomes for [English learners] than the ESL approach.” The review also noted, “individual descriptive studies and expert opinions based on research provide examples from both approaches that produce strong outcomes for ELs on various academic measures.”¹⁴

A 2015 study followed the academic content development of ELL students in a large school district for eight years. The researchers found that the English language arts (ELA) scores of students in bilingual programs grew as fast as or faster than students in English immersion programs. The same was true for math scores with the exception of students receiving instruction through one type of bilingual program (developmental bilingual).¹⁵ A 2014 study examined progress made toward English language proficiency and in academic content among groups of Latino students’ in a large California school district.¹⁶ The study found that students enrolled in dual-language programs exit ESL programs more slowly in elementary school than students in English immersion programs, but these students have higher overall rates of exiting ESL programs and academic achievement in ELA.

¹¹ Freno, Lori, Arkansas Department of Education, August 14, 2019 email.

¹² Goldenberg, Claude. “Unlocking the Research on English Learners: What We Know—and Don’t Know Yet—about Effective Instruction.” *American Educator* (Summer 2013).

¹³ U.S. Department of Education, Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs): A Review of the Foundational Literature, May 2012

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs): A Review of the Foundational Literature, May 2012

¹⁵ Valentino, Rachel and Reardon, Sean, Effectiveness of Four Instructional Programs Designed to Serve English Learners Variation by Ethnicity and Initial English Proficiency,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* December 2015 vol. 37 no. 4 612-637 <https://www.edpolicyinca.org/blog/effectiveness-four-instructional-programs-designed-serve-english-learners-variation-ethnicity-and-initial-english-proficiency>

¹⁶ Umansky, Ilana M. and Reardon, Sean F., Reclassification Patterns Among Latino English Learner Students in Bilingual, Dual Immersion, and English Immersion Classrooms, *American Educational Research Journal*, 2014

OTHER SERVICES FOR ELL STUDENTS

In addition to the official ESL instruction during school hours, Arkansas school districts support ELL students in many other ways, including:

- Family literacy programs where parents can learn English with their students
- Intensive English summer programs for students who have newly arrived in the United States
- Parent outreach centers and parent resource centers to help with school-centered challenges (completing school forms or connecting parents with community resources, such as medical or dental care)
- After-school tutoring programs
- Community outreach, e.g., Hispanic Heritage Club
- Making interpreters available for parent teacher conferences¹⁷

ESL STAFFING

Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) rules do not require specialized licensure for teachers teaching ESL. However, federal policies require districts to meet the staffing requirements of the ESL program they have selected. If the research on which a particular program is based calls for ESL-licensed staff, districts selecting that program must employ ESL-licensed faculty.

ADE offers an ESL endorsement that can be added to the standard teaching license. The endorsement requires 12 hours of coursework and passage of the ESL Praxis. Using a combination of state funding provided by ADE and reduced tuition paid by participants, the University of Arkansas, Arkansas Tech University and Henderson University offer an intensive six-day summer workshop, with additional online modules and four weekend follow-up sessions to help interested educators obtain ESL endorsement. There are also three National Professional Development Grants at the University of Arkansas offering various pathways to obtaining ESL endorsement at a reduced cost to participants.

As of June 2019, 4,712 licensed Arkansas teachers held ESL endorsements, including teachers who are not currently teaching ELL classes.¹⁸ However, district expenditure data obtained from APSCN indicate districts collectively employed about 365 individual certified staff (about 223 full-time equivalents) to teach ESL in 2017-18, with an average salary of \$53,628 (not including employer payments for retirement, taxes and health insurance). That's nearly \$4,000 higher than the statewide average classroom teacher salary for all non-federal teachers.¹⁹

The number of people teaching ESL, according to the district expenditure data, is likely lower than the actual number of people teaching ESL. For some districts, the only instructional salaries recorded as English as a Second Language were for classified staff, not certified teachers. For example, one district with 200 ELL students reported that the only ESL instructional salaries the district paid were for classified staff; they reported no ESL instructional salaries for certified staff. Other districts appear to code the majority of their ESL certified salaries as support services for instructional staff, rather than ESL instructional salaries. Coding expenditures in this way is not incorrect, but the coding inconsistencies across districts presents challenges for calculating a precise estimate of the state's ESL teaching staff. Districts that receive federal Title III funding (see page 23 for more information about Title III funding) are required to report the number of certified teachers working in the Title III funding, but these numbers appear to have consistency issues as well, with two districts reporting more certified teachers working in Title III programs than they report having in their entire teaching staff.

¹⁷ Tales of Three Schools: Succeeding with English Learners, ADE Summit, June 19, 2019

¹⁸ Kerr, T., Arkansas Department of Education, August 6, 2019 email.

¹⁹ Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Annual Statistical Report, Average Classroom Salary, \$49,840.

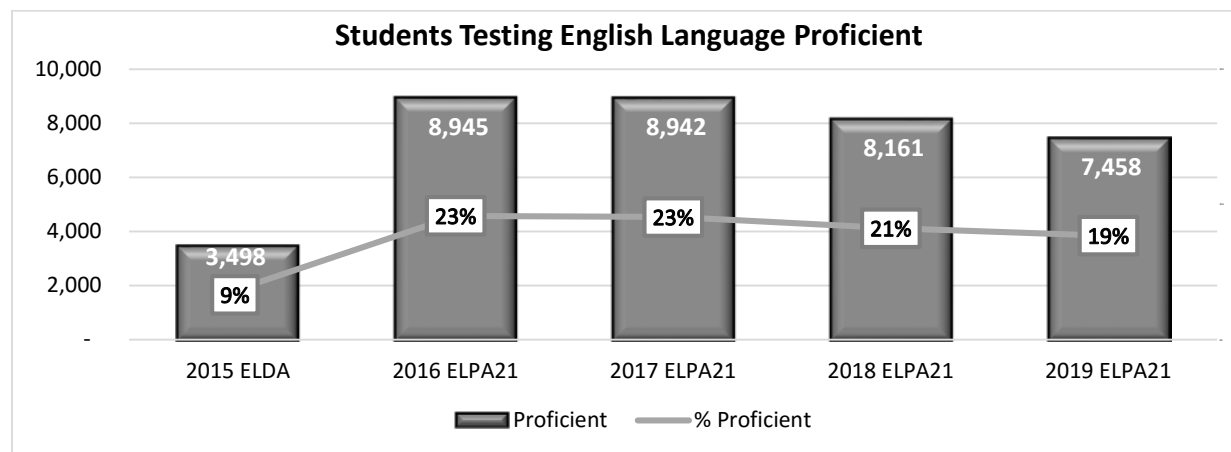
ASSESSING ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Every spring, schools are required to assess their ELL students to determine whether they have progressed to English language proficiency or need continued services. The assessment is known as the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) summative assessment. The summative assessment is different from the ELPA21 screener used to determine initial ELL placement.

The ELPA21 was developed by a consortium of states, including Arkansas, using new English-language proficiency standards developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The ELPA21 assesses English language proficiency across four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The ELPA21 assigns each student a proficiency level based on his or her proficiency scores in each domain.

While the ELPA21 does not assess prior academic knowledge, it does assess students' proficiency in the grade-appropriate language of each academic subject. Because of that, the ELPA21 proficiency standards are aligned with Arkansas's Academic Standards for English language arts, mathematics, and science.

The ELPA21 replaced the state's previous English language proficiency assessment, the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA), in 2015-16. **This change in assessment resulted in more students testing proficient.** Under ELDA, ELL students had to obtain a score of 5 in all domains to exit the ESL program. Under ELPA21, however, students can achieve proficiency with a score of 4 or 5 in the four domains. ADE believes the ELPA21 proficiency scores provide a more accurate measure of a student's true English-language proficiency than the ELDA.²⁰ In 2015, just under 3,500 students scored "Fully English Proficient" under ELDA, compared with nearly 9,000 students scoring "Proficient" on the ELPA21 in 2016. In 2015, only about 9% of ELPA21 test takers scored proficient, compared with about 22% in 2016.



EXITING THE ESL PROGRAM

Following a review of the spring ELPA21 test results, a determination is made about whether each ELL student continues with ESL services or exits the program. In order for a student to exit the program, he or she must:

- Score at the proficient level on the ELPA21
AND
- Demonstrate academic content proficiency using two pieces of supporting evidence.

²⁰ Kerr, T., Arkansas Department of Education, Aug. 6, 2019, phone conversation.

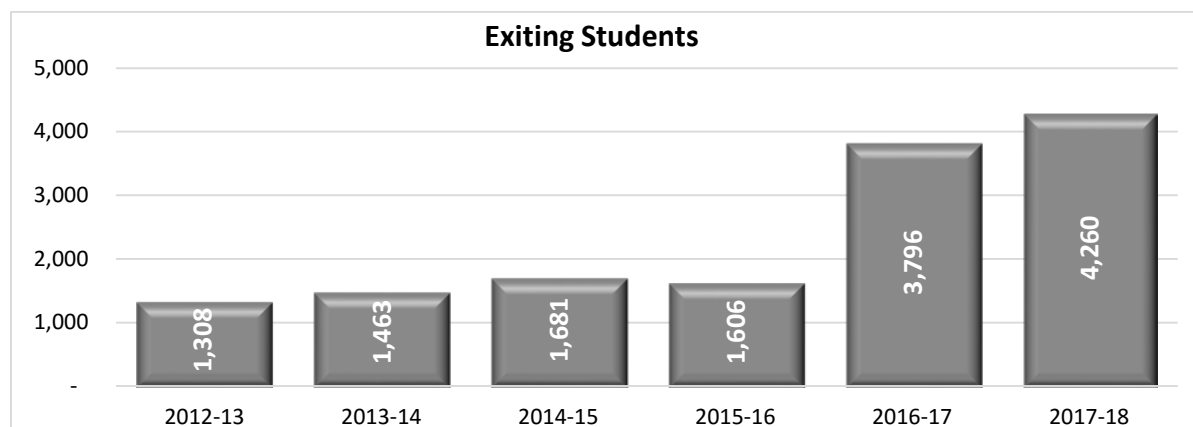
English Language Learners (ELL)

Acceptable supporting evidence includes scoring “ready” or “exceeding” on individual components of the ACT Aspire assessment, scoring a 19 on the ACT or scoring within acceptable levels on a variety of other standardized assessment results used at the district level. While districts have some flexibility in selecting measures for each student, those ADE considers subjective (academic grades or teacher recommendations) are not acceptable.

This is a significant change in policy from previous years. Prior to the 2018-19 school year, a student who tested proficient on the ELPA21 was allowed to exit the ELL program only if he/she also met all of the following criteria:

- Maintained a “C” average or higher in each core subject area,
- Scored “ready” or “exceeding” on state standardized achievement scores,²¹ and
- Received a recommendation to exit by two current teachers.

The exit criteria were changed due to a new requirement under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) calling for states to use standardized criteria for students to enter and exit ESL programs.²² With more students testing proficient on the ELPA21 and greater flexibility in acceptable supporting evidence, more students have exited the ELL program in recent years. According to data districts reported through APSCN, just over 1,600 students (4% of ELL students) exited the ELL program in the 2015-16 school year, compared with 4,260 (11%) in the 2017-18 school year—a 165% increase in the number of students exiting the ELL program over those two years. **This increase in the number of students exiting the ELL program may be part or all of the reason the number of ELL students statewide has decreased, with a related decrease in total ELL state categorical funding distributed to school districts and charter schools.**

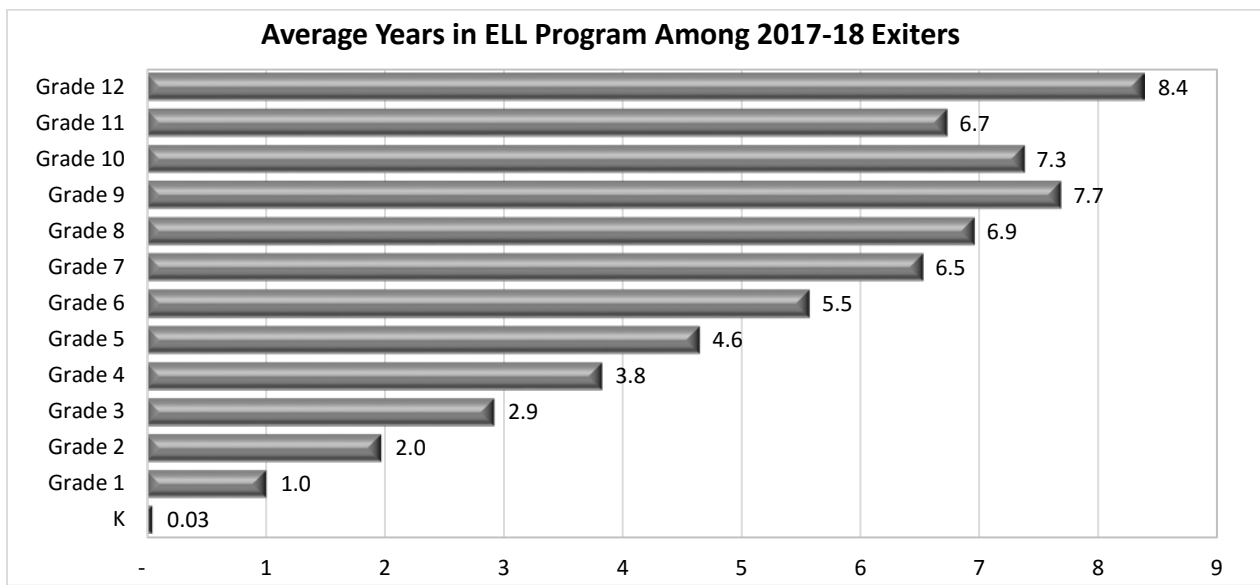


Students who exited the ELL program in 2017-18 spent, on average, nearly four and a half years as an ELL student. However, the amount of time spent in the program varied significantly by students’ grade level. Nationally, research indicates that it can take between four and 10 years to become English proficient and exit ELL services.²³

²¹ A student must score proficient or advanced on the literacy and mathematics criterion-referenced test or score at or above the 40th percentile on the norm-referenced test.

²² ESSA § 3113(b)(2)

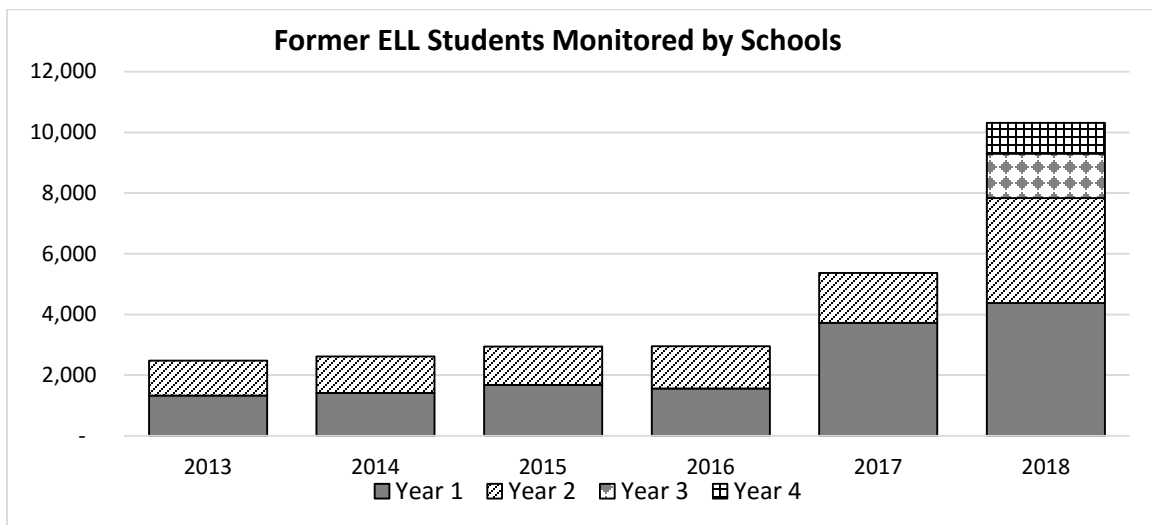
²³ Umansky, Ilana M. and Reardon, Sean F., Reclassification Patterns Among Latino English Learner Students in Bilingual, Dual Immersion, and English Immersion Classrooms, American Educational Research Journal, September 2014



MONITORING EXITED STUDENTS

ESSA also requires districts and charters to monitor former ELL students for at least four years.²⁴ This expanded the previous monitoring requirement by two years. According to ADE, monitoring former ELL students requires LPACs to review students’ academic progress and standardized assessment scores at least once per year to ensure students’ continued success. There is no funding specifically provided to school districts and charters for monitoring exited students.²⁵

The new requirement and the increase in students exiting from ELL services has resulted in districts and charter schools being required to monitor far more students than they have in the past. In 2018, districts and charter schools were monitoring more than four times the number of former ELL students than they were monitoring in 2013, according to student data districts and charter schools reported through APSCN.



Data source: APSCN, individual students by former ELL/LEP status

²⁴ ESSA § 3121(a)(5)

²⁵ Kerr, T., Arkansas Department of Education, Aug. 6, 2019, phone conversation

ADE officials believe the change in the ELP assessment (from ELDA to ELPA21) and the more flexible exit criteria—the combination of which have resulted in more students exiting ESL services—are more appropriate criteria for exiting students than the previous criteria. However, ADE has heard school districts express concern that students may be released too soon. Of particular concern is the impact on school and district test scores. Currently some students designated as English learners are allowed testing accommodations, such as receiving more test taking time or having the test instructions read aloud in the student's preferred language. Students who have exited the ESL program and are no longer considered ELL students will not be allowed accommodations on their ACT Aspire assessment.

ADE notes they are assessing the changes and will know soon if they resulted in former ELL students being exited from ESL services prematurely. Districts' LPACs will make placement decisions about students by the end of September 2019 based on ACT Aspire scores and other available assessment data, and ADE will be monitoring for any significant increases in the number of former ELL students who must be reenter ESL services because they are unable to keep up with the grade-level academic content.

MEASURING STUDENT SUCCESS

Arkansas uses a variety of methods of measuring and monitoring ELL students' success. This report provides information on three main types.

- 1. Progress toward English language proficiency:** Indicators of students' progress in English language development
 - **ELP student growth:** measures an individual student's performance on ELPA21, compared with student's previous performance on ELPA21
 - **Percent on track to ELP:** measures the percentage of students who are considered on track to ELP based on benchmarks set by the state. Students are on track each year if they meet the ELP benchmark that corresponds with their grade level and their proficiency level when they entered school
- 2. Student achievement on academic content:** Indicators of ELL students' performance on academic content
 - **Student achievement:** measures the percentage of students scoring ready or exceeding on the ACT Aspire (math, English language arts, and science)
 - **Academic content student growth:** measures an individual student's performance on the ACT Aspire, compared with student's previous performance on the ACT Aspire
 - **National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP):** measures what students know and can do in reading, math and other subjects; a sample of students across the country are assessed, allowing for comparisons of performance by state. NAEP scores are not used in Arkansas's school accountability indicators.
- 3. Graduation rate:** Indicator of the ELL students' high school completion; measures the percentage of ELL students who graduate high school within 4 years and the percentage who graduate within 5 years.

ESSA SCHOOL INDEX

ESSA introduced several changes in the way ELL students are included in the state's accountability system that includes the three student success measures above. The federal government approved ADE's original ESSA state plan in January 2018 and then granted the state's plan amendment requests in March 2019. The School Index is a composite measure of the performance of each school that takes into account a variety of ESSA-required measures. The School Index measures a school's total performance on standardized academic content assessments (ACT Aspire), individual students' growth on academic content assessments, ELL students' progress toward English-language proficiency, graduation rates and a variety of other variables.

School Index Component	What's measured?	Weight in Overall Index
Weighted Student Achievement	A school's students' performance on the ACT Aspire assessment; indicates the proportion of students scoring "needs support," "close," "ready" and "exceeding."	35%
Growth Indicator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Growth Progress in English-language proficiency 	Students' actual performance compared with expected performance based on their individual past test scores. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic growth measures all students' performance on the ACT Aspire Progress in ELP measures ELL students' performance on the ELPA21 	50% for grades K-8 35% for high schools
Graduation Rate Indicator	The percentage of students who graduate from high school within four and five years	15% for high schools
School Quality and Student Success Indicator	This indicator measures a variety of items, including chronic absenteeism, performance on the ACT Aspire assessment in science, ACT score, grade point average, and computer science course credits earned.	15%

ESSA also requires states to identify schools with any "consistently underperforming" student subgroups, including English language learners. These schools are designated as needing "Targeted Support and Improvement." Identified schools are those with significant achievement gaps between student subgroups for at least two years.

The state uses the ESSA School Index to identify schools with consistently underperforming subgroups. According to ADE's ESSA State Plan, the state calculates the ESSA School Index for each student subgroup for each school to identify gaps. A School Index is not calculated for subgroups with fewer than 15 students in a school. In 2018, no schools were designated as needing Targeted Support and Improvement based on the performance of English language learners.

PROGRESS TOWARD ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

In Arkansas's ESSA plan, ADE included a weighted English-language proficiency growth indicator as part of its ESSA School Index. Previously, ELL students' progress toward English-language proficiency was included in the state's reporting system for federal Title III funding, separate from the publicly reported student achievement ratings for schools. ESSA, however, shifted some of these requirements to Title I, with the rest of the school accountability system. ESSA now requires ELL students' progress toward English-language proficiency to be included in 1.) the annual achievement indicators calculated for each school and 2.) the long-term achievement goals ADE will set for the state. To align with the ESSA accountability provisions, the Arkansas General Assembly passed Act 744 of 2017, which calls for ELL students' progress toward proficiency to be included as part of the state's school rating system.²⁶

²⁶ Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2108(a)(4).

ELP STUDENT GROWTH

For the English-language proficiency component of the School Index, **ADE calculates an individual growth score for each ELL student, using the student’s prior performance on the ELDA/ELPA21.** The student’s actual score is compared against the student’s expected score (based on prior assessment performance) to determine whether the student met, exceeded or failed to meet his or her expected performance. ADE combines the English-learner progress indicator with each school’s academic growth indicator (as measured by math and English language arts scores of all students on the ACT Aspire) to create a single growth indicator in the total School Index calculation. The school-level growth score will be calculated with the English learner proficiency progress indicator weighted relative to each school’s ELL population.

Across the state, students’ average ELP growth score was 84.47, where a score of 80 is right on track with a student’s expected score based on his or her previous test scores. A score higher than 80 indicates a higher level of ELP growth than would be expected for that student, and a score less than 80 indicates a score lower than would be expected for that student.

PERCENT ON TRACK TO ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

ESSA also requires states to develop long-term goals and interim measurements for increasing the percentage of ELL students making progress toward achieving English-language proficiency.²⁷ For this measure, Arkansas has chosen to set established benchmarks to English-language proficiency against which individual students’ progress can be compared. The benchmarks are based on the student’s grade level (e.g., 1st grade) and English language proficiency score when the student is initially placed in the ELL program. For example, a student entering in kindergarten, 1st or 2nd grade at the lowest level of proficiency would be expected to be English proficient after six years, while a 6th grader entering at the same proficiency level would be expected to be proficient within eight years.

Grade at Initial ELL Placement	Initial Proficiency Level	Years to Proficiency Goal
Grades K-2	Level 1	6 years
	Level 2	5 years
	Level 3	3 years
Grades 3-5	Level 1	7 years
	Level 2	5 years
	Level 3	3 years
Grades 6-12	Level 1	8 years
	Level 2	6 years
	Level 3	4 years

²⁷ ESSA §1111(c)(4)(A)(ii)

The ESSA goals also include interim steps for students to meet between initial placement and proficiency. To meet the final on track to proficiency goal, a student must score a level 4 or 5 in at least three of the four ELPA21 domains (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) or have exited the ELL program.²⁸ (See the Appendix for tables showing the incremental benchmarks establish for each grade level.)

While the ELP growth indicator in the ESSA School Index measures students' performance against their individual expected growth based on their own past scores, the long-term goals will measure students' progress toward proficiency against a set standard based on historical progress of all ELL students.

According to the state's ESSA plan, ADE indicated that its long-term goal is to raise the performance of the schools currently performing in the 25th percentile to match the current performance of the schools at the 75th percentile, that is, **moving from 34% of students who tested on track to proficiency in 2018 to 52% who are on track to proficiency by 2030.**²⁹

This long-term goal was one of the amendments ADE requested in 2019 for its ESSA plan. The change did not alter the end goal, but did move the baseline year from 2017 to 2018 and delayed the end goal year from 2029 to 2030. ADE indicated that the data used to set the long-term targets continued to be affected by the switch from the ELDA assessment to ELPA21 in 2016. "It is evident from analyses of three years of ELPA21 scores that the effect of the ELDA assessment is diminishing, yet still evident, in the 2017 baseline originally proposed," ADE wrote to the federal government with its January 2019 amendment request. The U.S. Department of Education approved this change in March 2019.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONTENT ASSESSMENTS

In addition to assessing ELL students' progress toward English-language proficiency, ELL students' success in mastering academic content is also monitored. At the state level, that's measured using the ACT Aspire, and at the national level, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) can be used.

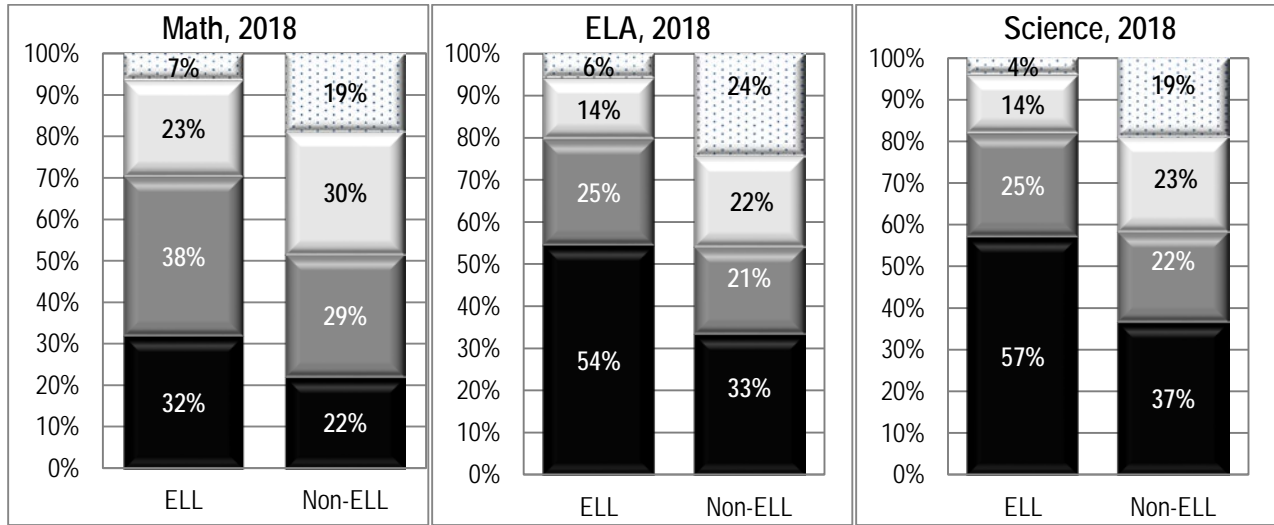
ACT ASPIRE

During the 2017-18 school year, all students in grades 3-10, including ELL students, participated in the ACT Aspire assessment. The ACT Aspire tests students' content knowledge acquisition only and is not a test of English-language proficiency. ACT Aspire results report four levels of proficiency: (1) "in need of support", the lowest level, (2) "close", (3) "ready", and (4) "exceeding." In Arkansas, the assessment is administered only in English, but ELL students are allowed accommodations as needed. As the graphs show, the percentages of ELL students scoring "ready" or "exceeding" were lower than those for non-ELL students in math (30%, compared with 49%), English language arts (20%, compared with 46%), and science (18%, compared with 42%).

²⁸ Although a score of 4 or 5 in three of the four domains is sufficient for a student to be considered on track to proficiency for the purpose of the state's long-term ESSA goal, it is not sufficient for the individual student to actually exit the ELL program. A student must score a 4 or 5 in all four domains to be eligible to exit the ELL program. For more information about Arkansas's long term English language proficiency goals, see page 13.

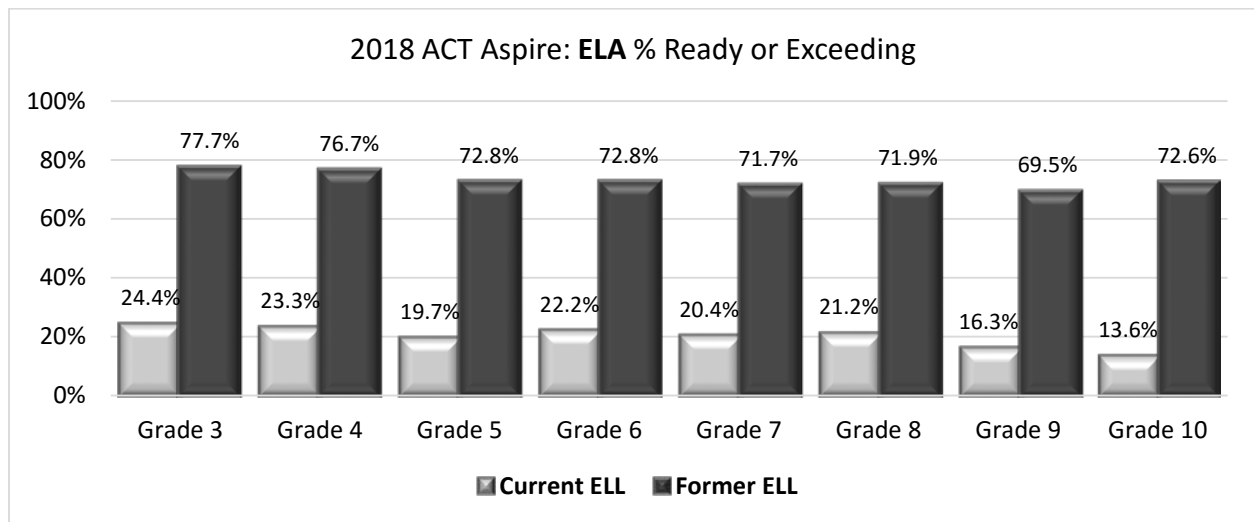
²⁹ Arkansas ESSA State Plan, as amended March 11, 2019, p. 150

■ Needs Support ■ Close ■ Ready ■ Exceeding



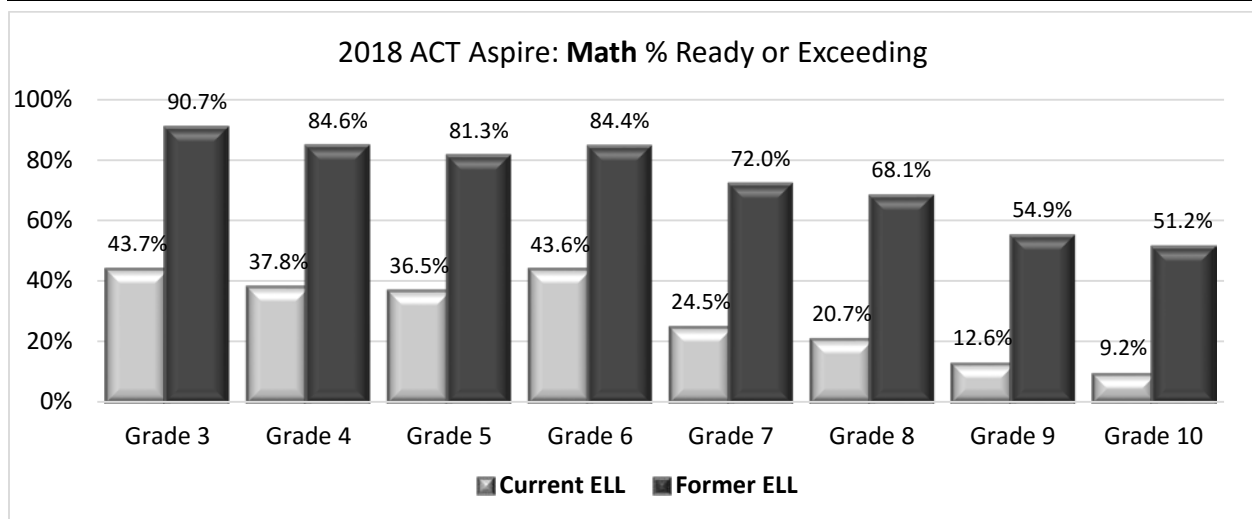
Data source: Student-level data provided by the Office of Innovation for Education, University of Arkansas

ESSA allows states to include the scores of *former* ELL students in the academic content assessment scores when measuring the student achievement of schools' English learner subgroup. Schools' test scores among student subgroups (e.g., economically disadvantaged, English learners, etc.) are used to identify schools with large student achievement gaps—those identified as needing "Targeted Support and Improvement" (see page 12). Former ELL students can be included in the English learner subgroup for up to four years after exiting the program. Arkansas has opted to include those students in its English learner subgroup.³⁰ (The data in the charts above include only ELL students, not former ELL students.) Data included in Arkansas's ESSA State Plan show the inclusion of former ELL students in the ELL subgroup raises the percentage of ELL students who score "ready" or "exceeding" on the ACT Aspire by three percentage points in math and by five percentage points in English language arts.³¹



³⁰ Arkansas Department of Education, Every Student Succeeds Act Arkansas State Plan, p. 18.

³¹ Arkansas Department of Education, Every Student Succeeds Act Arkansas State Plan, p. 19.



Data source: Data for current ELL student achievement provided by the Office of Innovation in Education; data for former ELL student achievement come from the state's 2018 School Report Card. (<https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/State/Detail>)

Additionally, ESSA allows states to exclude from a school's ESSA School Index calculation the test scores of ELL students who are new to the United States. States can exclude these students' scores on academic content assessments (ACT Aspire in Arkansas) for the first year they are enrolled in a U.S. school. In 2017, the General Assembly passed legislation that excludes the scores of students enrolled in a U.S. school less than a year from the calculation of a school's or district's overall accountability ratings in growth or achievement.³² The Arkansas ESSA State Plan calls for newcomer ELLs to be tested on ACT Aspire for baseline purposes only, but their scores are not counted in a school's overall growth or achievement score during the students' first year. In their second year, these students' content assessment scores from their first year are used in conjunction with their scores for the second year to measure individual growth for school accountability purposes.³³

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)

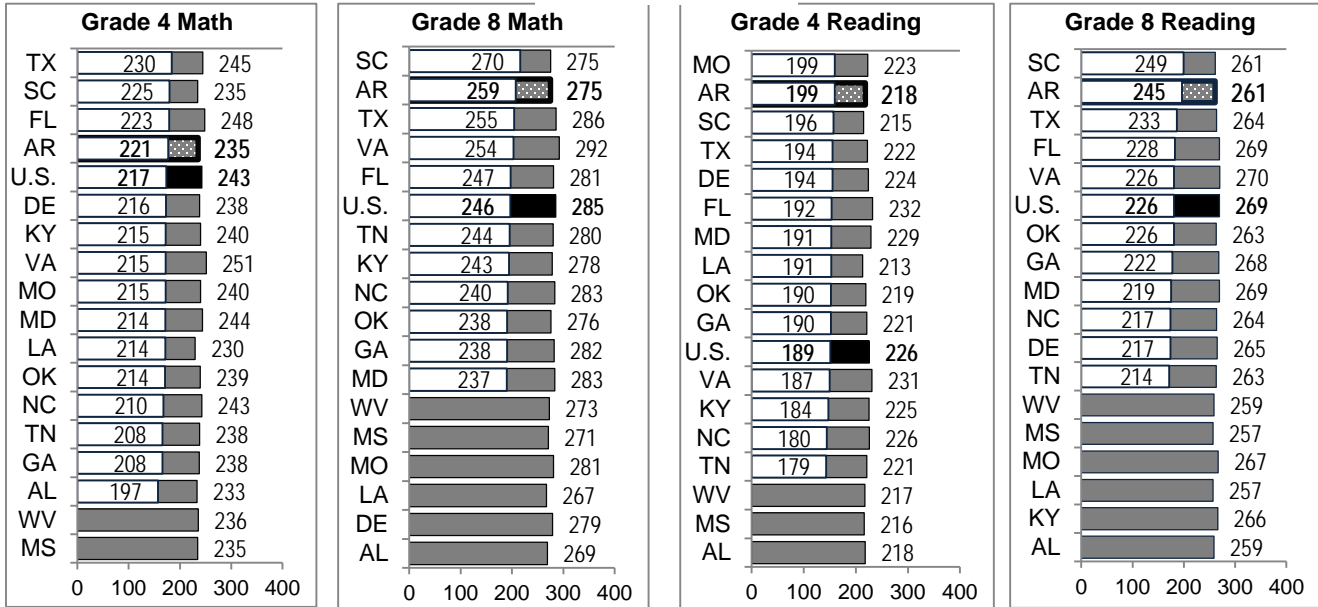
NAEP scores are also important to consider when looking at the progress of Arkansas's ELL students. These tests are given to students in grades 4 and 8 and score students on proficiency in both math and reading on a scale of 0 (the lowest score) to 500 (the highest score). The NAEP test is given to a sample of students in every state, so it allows for comparison across states on a common assessment. The following tables provide information on the average scale score of ELL versus non-ELL students on the NAEP in 2017 (the most recent scores available) in states surrounding Arkansas and the 16 Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states. For some states, the data for ELL students' scores do not meet NAEP's reporting standards (likely due to such small numbers of ELL students) and are therefore unavailable. Compared to the scores of other SREB states and surrounding states, Arkansas ELLs ranked 2nd on the 2017 NAEP for 8th grade math and reading and for 4th grade reading and 4th in 4th grade math.

³² ACA §6-10-130(a)(1-2).

³³ Airola, D., University of Arkansas, Office of Innovation for Education, Aug. 21, 2017 email.

2017 NAEP

■ Non ELL □ ELL



Source: nces.ed.gov/datatools/

Arkansas's Rank: Average Scale Score		
	ELL Students	Not ELL Students
4 th Grade Math	9 th of 45 states and D.C.	45 th of 50 states and D.C.
8 th Grade Math	4 th of 36 states and D.C.	44 th of 50 states and D.C.
4 th Grade Reading	6 th of 44 states and D.C.	43 rd of 50 states and D.C.
8 th Grade Reading	4 th of 35 states and D.C.	44 th of 50 states and D.C.

One reason Arkansas's ELL student performance outpaces the performance of ELL students in most other states may be due to the use of accommodations, such as allowing extended time to take the test or having the test directions read aloud in the student's native language. For example, 72% of the Arkansas ELL students identified for 4th grade NAEP reading assessment took the test with accommodations, compared with the 38% nationally. The percentage of Arkansas's 8th grade ELL test takers using accommodations—both in math and reading—was much closer to the national average (39% compared with 36% nationally in reading and 43% compared with 40% nationally in math).

The state's NAEP scores can also be viewed in terms of the percentage of students testing proficient or advanced. In Arkansas, the percentage of 4th grade ELL students who tested proficient or advanced was roughly half the percentage of proficient 4th grade students who were not ELL students. Among 8th graders, the percentage of ELL students testing proficient was about a third of the percentage of students testing proficient who were not ELL students.

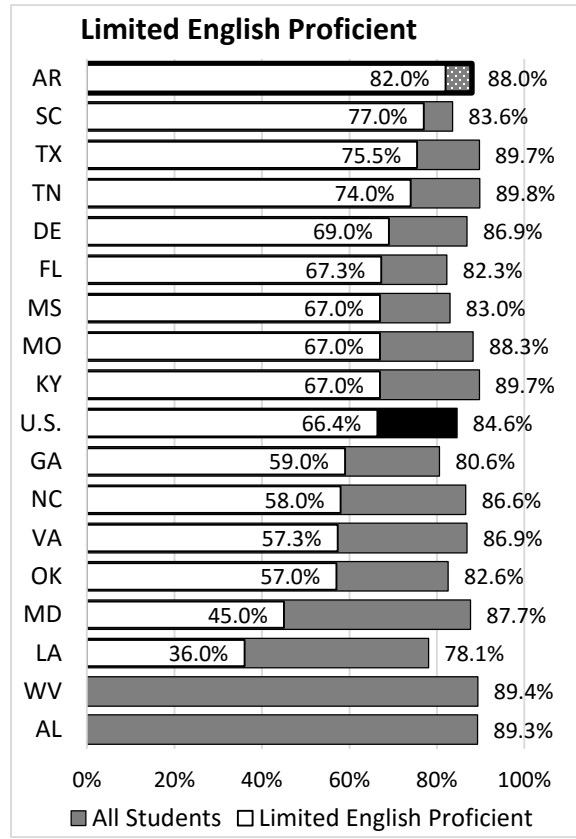
	2017 % Proficient or Advanced	
	ELL Students	Not ELL Students
Arkansas		
4 th Grade Math	17.7%	34.4%
8 th Grade Math	9.4%	26.9%
4 th Grade Reading	14.2%	33.1%
8 th Grade Reading	11.8%	30.2%

GRADUATION RATE

Arkansas’s ELL students outperform other states in terms of high school graduation rates. In 2016-17, **Arkansas’s graduation rate for limited English proficient (LEP) students was higher than the LEP graduation rate of every other state.** The graph to the right shows how Arkansas compares with SREB states and surrounding states. In Arkansas, 82% of limited English proficient students graduated from high school within four years, compared with the rate of 66.4% of limited English proficient students nationally.

The gap between the graduation rate for limited English proficient students in Arkansas and the graduation rate for all students is relatively narrow—about six percentage points—compared with the gap in other states. Nationally, the gap between the graduation rate of limited English proficient students and the graduation rate of all students is more than 18 percentage points.

	Arkansas’s Rank
Limited English Proficient	1 st of 48 states and Washington D.C.
All Students	14 th of 50 states and Washington D.C.



ESL FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES

ELL STATE CATEGORICAL FUNDING

Arkansas provides additional funding to school districts and charter schools to support students who are not proficient in the English language. This state categorical funding, known as English Language Learner (ELL) funding, is distributed to districts and charter schools based on the number of ELL students they have enrolled.

In 2003, the General Assembly hired education consultants Picus and Associates to help revise the state's education finance system in the wake of the *Lake View* lawsuit. The consultants recommended that the state provide additional funding to school districts to support the equivalent of 40% of a full-time teacher (.4 FTE) for every 100 students who are both English language learners and eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, or about \$195 per qualifying student.³⁴ The General Assembly adopted this recommendation (with the funding provided for all ELL students, regardless of whether they were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or not). School districts received the new funding for the first time in 2004-05. This funding was designed to supplement a separate state funding program that provided additional money to school districts based on the number of low-income students (National School Lunch state categorical funding).

In 2006, still under pressure by the courts, the General Assembly rehired Picus and Associates to again review the state's education finance system and recommend further adjustments. The consultants recommended increasing ELL funding to support one full FTE teacher, rather than the equivalent of .4 FTE funded by the state at the time. The Adequacy Study Oversight Subcommittee opted to instead adopt a 50% increase for the ELL per-student funding rate. The decision to increase the funding was based on the fact that districts were spending more money on ELL programs than they were provided in ELL funding. However, the increase was limited to 50% because financial data showed districts had significant balances of NSL funding, money that was meant to supplement ELL funding.

Since then, the per-student ELL funding rate has increased 2% per year in most years, although in some years there's been no rate increase for these categorical funds. Generally, the ELL per student funding rate has been set at about 5% of each year's foundation funding rate.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Per-student ELL funding	\$293	\$293	\$293	\$299	\$305	\$311	\$317	\$324	\$331	\$338	\$338	\$345	\$352
% change from previous year	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	0%	2%	2%

While other types of state categorical funding (NSL, Professional Development, and Alternative Learning Environment) are provided based on previous year student enrollment numbers, ELL funding is based on the number of ELL students in the current school year.

In 2019, 201 districts and 22 open enrollment charter schools received \$338 per ELL student, or about \$13 million total. Additionally, districts can transfer funding into ELL funds from the three other state categorical programs if they need more funding for ELL programs than they received. These transferred funds essentially become ELL funding. In 2017-18, districts and charters transferred about \$5.5 million from other categorical funds to be used as ELL funds. The majority of that funding—more than \$5.3 million—was transferred from NSL funds.

³⁴ For reference, in 2017-18, about 84% of ELL students were also eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

English Language Learners (ELL)

FY	Per-Student ELL Funding	Total ELL Categorical Funding Provided by \$338 Per Student Formula	Funding Transferred to ELL From Other Categorical Funds	Total
2012-13	\$305	\$10,506,640	\$4,093,403	\$14,600,043
2013-14	\$311	\$11,031,481	\$3,994,300	\$15,025,781
2014-15	\$317	\$11,912,226	\$3,877,532	\$15,789,758
2015-16	\$324	\$12,779,856	\$4,083,284	\$16,863,140
2016-17	\$331	\$13,879,492	\$4,376,452	\$18,255,944
2017-18	\$338	\$13,384,462	\$5,523,433	\$18,907,895
2018-19	\$338	\$13,034,632	Final Data Not Available	Final Data Not Available

ELL STATE CATEGORICAL EXPENDITURES

ELL funding, like other categorical funding programs, is considered restricted, meaning districts can spend the money only for specific purposes. ADE rules list the following activities as eligible uses of ELL funding:

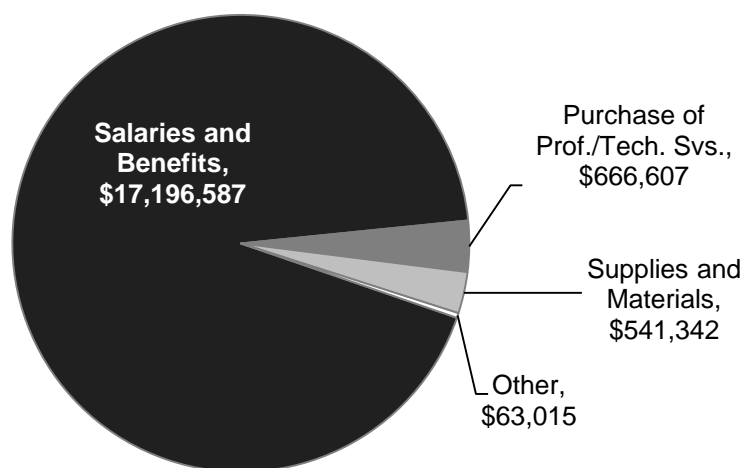
- Salaries for ELL instruction
- Professional development activities, including released time for ELL curriculum development
- Instructional and supplemental materials including computer-assisted technology and library materials
- Language and cultural skills training for school-based health providers, counseling service providers, community liaison staff
- Assessment of ELL students and evaluation of program effectiveness
- Implementation of supplemental instructional services³⁵

The vast majority of districts' and charters' expenditures of ELL categorical funds are spent on salaries and benefits—93%—as the following graph shows.

District and open-enrollment charter school expenditures of ELL categorical funds for FY2017-18, including expenditures of other categorical funds transferred to ELL, totaled about \$18.5 million or \$476 per student. Thus, on average, districts spent about 41% percent more ELL categorical funding than they originally received for that purpose. The transfers to ELL from other types of categorical funds allow districts to spend more than the ELL funding they receive in a given year.

Additionally, districts spent other types of non-federal funding—beyond state categorical funds—on ESL staff, materials and other services. The table below shows the total ELL categorical funds spent and the additional ESL expenditures districts made from other non-federal funding sources. (Federal funding is described in the next section.)

Expenditures of ELL Categorical Funds, 2017-18



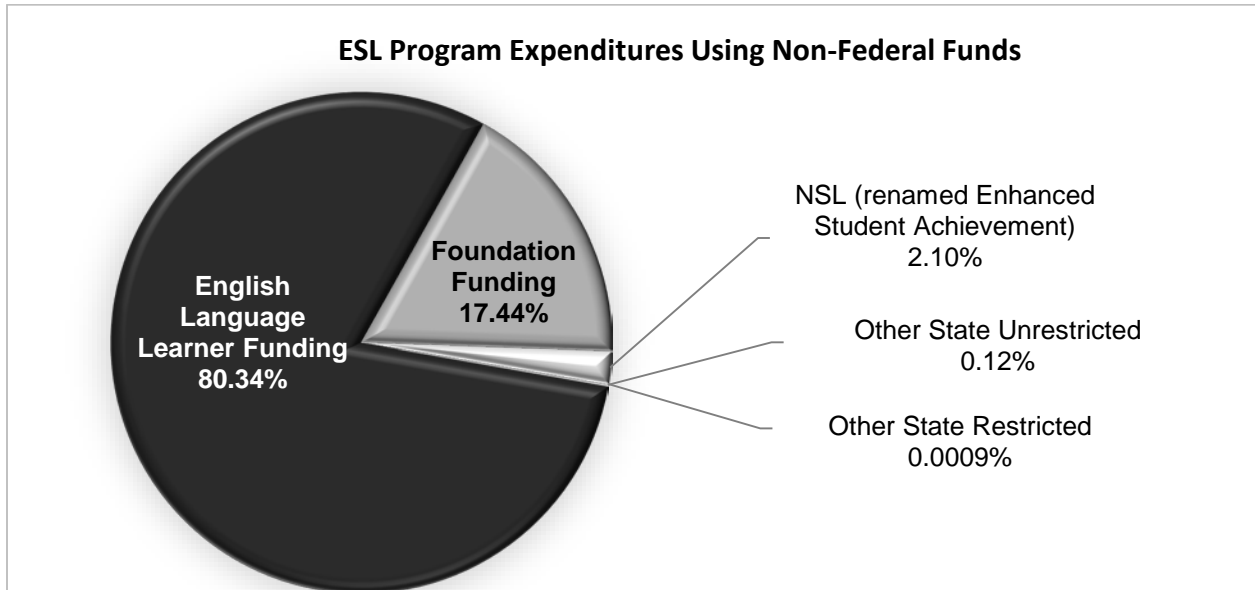
Note: Expenditures exclude transfers of ELL funds to other categorical

³⁵ Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Distribution of Student Special Needs Funding and the Determination of Allowable Expenditures of Those Funds, 5.04, http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/public/userfiles/rules/Current/2016/Student_Special_Needs_Funding_Permanent_Rules_Final.pdf

English Language Learners (ELL)

FY	Total ELL Expenditures from ELL Categorical Funds	Total ESL Expenditures From Other Non Federal Sources	Total Non-Federal ESL Program Expenditures
2012-13	\$14,714,206	\$3,279,727	\$17,993,933
2013-14	\$14,619,816	\$3,364,179	\$17,983,995
2014-15	\$15,734,196	\$3,374,591	\$19,108,787
2015-16	\$16,647,569	\$4,744,389	\$21,391,957
2016-17	\$17,498,026	\$4,337,881	\$21,835,908
2017-18	\$18,467,550	\$4,518,567	\$22,986,117

Note: ELL Categorical expenditures do not include transfers of ELL funding to other categorical funds or funding transferred from Pulaski County Special School District to Jacksonville North Pulaski when the districts split. Total ELL expenditures from other non-federal sources include all expenditures with a function code of 1930 that were made using funding other than ESL state categorical funds or any federal funds.



Note: Expenditures categorized as having been made using foundation funding include expenditures from Salary Matrix Fund or Operating Matrix Fund, which can include a small amount of local funds.

The table below compares the per-student ELL state funding levels each year, compared with districts' and open enrollment charter schools' per-student expenditures for ESL services.

FY	Per Student ELL Funding	Total Per-Student ELL Expenditures (Non-Federal)
2012-13	\$305	\$522
2013-14	\$311	\$507
2014-15	\$317	\$509
2015-16	\$324	\$542
2016-17	\$331	\$521
2017-18	\$338	\$580

OTHER STATES' FUNDING FOR ELL STUDENTS

Like Arkansas, most states provide additional funding to school districts to help them provide language assistance programs for ELL students. Forty-six states, including Arkansas, provide additional funding for this purpose, according to EdBuild, a nonprofit with a stated mission to “bring common sense and fairness to the way states fund public schools.”³⁶ A total of 25 states provide the funding as a weight on the regular per-student foundation funding provided to districts for ELL students. For example, a weight of .25 would result in districts receiving an additional 25% of the base per-student funding for each ELL student. If a state’s funding formula provides \$7,000 for each student and a .25 weight for ELL students, districts in that state would receive \$8,750 for each ELL student (\$7,000, plus an additional 25% of \$7,000). **Arkansas’s ELL funding of \$338 per ELL student is equivalent to a weight of about .05.** As of 2018, the weights used by states ranged from .096 (Kentucky) to 1.5558 (Georgia). (North Dakota has a lower weight than Kentucky—.07—but only for its highest-proficiency English learners. Students with lower proficiency in North Dakota generate weights of .28 or .4.)

Other states, including Arkansas, provide funding through flat per-student allocations, ranging from \$250 per ELL student (Indiana) to \$1,515 per student (Ohio). (Indiana provides increasing levels of per-student funding with the districts with the highest concentrations of ELL students receiving as much as \$415.16. Ohio provides lower rates of funding for students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools longer.)

For some of the states that provide additional ELL funding, this funding is intended to address the needs of all at-risk students or all special needs students, not just ELL students. For example, California provides a weight of .2 for any student who is either a low-income student or an English learner. Districts receive the weight just once for any student who is both low income and an English learner. In Arkansas in 2018, districts receive funding equal to a weight of .13, .21, or .29 for each student who is both an English learner and low income. The weight would depend on the concentration of low income students in the district. (Arkansas’s funding program supporting high poverty districts will be discussed in more detail in an upcoming report.)

While Arkansas pays the same amount for each ELL student, some states pay higher rates for students with lower English proficiency, students who have been in the U.S. for less time, or for students in districts whose ELL students comprise larger percentages of their total student population.

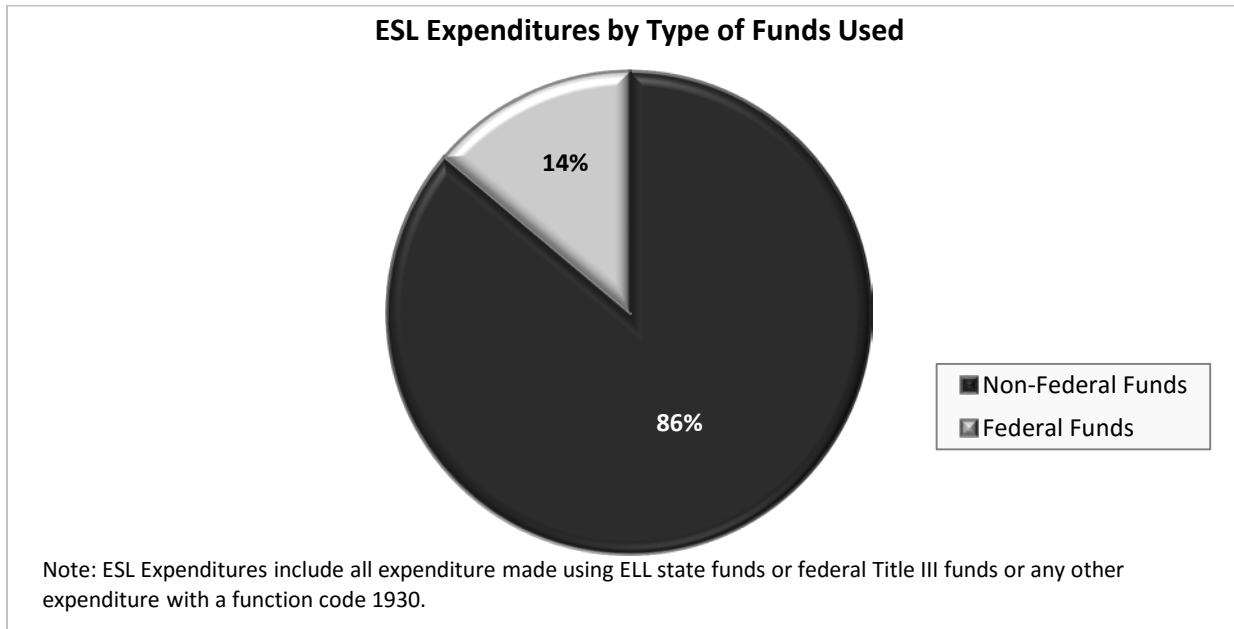
Still other states provide funding in terms of the cost of a teacher or other staff for districts with ELL students. For example, Tennessee provides funding to cover one additional teacher for every 20 ELL students and one additional translator for every 200 ELL students. In comparison, Arkansas’s ELL funding of \$338 in 2018 and 2019 covers 1 FTE teacher for every 192 ELL students in 2018 and 195 ELL students in 2019 (using the cost of a teacher salary and benefits in the state’s foundation funding formula, known as the matrix).

Other states provide ELL funding to districts either as a budget line outside the regular school district funding formula or as a reimbursement program for which districts must submit ELL costs. For example, West Virginia provided a total of \$96,000 in FY2018, and Utah provided about \$28 million, according to EdBuild.

³⁶ EdBuild, <http://funded.edbuild.org/>. EdBuild’s donors include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation.

FEDERAL FUNDING

While the state provides the majority of funding for ESL programs, federal funding also serves as an important resource for school districts. Federal funding provides 14% of the funding districts and charter schools use for ESL programs.



Federal funding for ESL programs is known as Title III funding. There are two components of Title III funding: Part A—English Language Acquisition and Recent Immigrant funding.

	2017-18		2018-19	
	Districts/Charters Allocated Funding	Allocation	Districts/Charters Allocated Funding	2018-19 Allocation
Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition	44	\$3,397,493	48	\$3,412,393
Title III, Recent Immigrant	7	\$101,928	6	\$103,395

Title III, Part A funding provides funds to ELL programs in qualifying districts. The funding is intended to help all English learners with language acquisition so they can meet the same academic standards all students are expected to meet. Districts must use the funding to

- 1.) provide language instruction educational programs,
- 2.) professional development for ESL staff and administrators and
- 3.) parent, family and community engagement.

Title III funding can be used only to supplement the ELL services districts are legally required to provide.³⁷

Each year, the federal government provides Title III, Part A grants to the state, which then provides funding to eligible school districts. A per-student amount for each school district is calculated based on the total funding available, divided by each district’s prior year ELL student count. Only school districts whose subgrant would equal \$10,000 or more are eligible to receive Title III funding. In 2018-19, ADE allocated about \$3.4 million in Title III money to 45 school

³⁷ Arkansas Department of Education, Programmatic and Financial Monitoring Guide for Arkansas Federal Programs, 2018-19, www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/Public_School_Accountability/Federal_Programs/Federal_Programs_Monitoring_Tool.pdf

English Language Learners (ELL)

districts and 3 charter schools in Arkansas, or about 22% of the districts that had any ELL students that year. About 11% of the state's ELL student population attended districts that received no federal Title III funding. Districts collectively spent \$3.5 million in Title III funding, or about \$98 per ELL student in districts that spent Title III funding in 2017-18, the most recent year for which complete expenditures are available.

The other type of Title III funding is Recent Immigrant Grant funding. This funding is designed to help pay for instructional opportunities for immigrant students, including language instruction. An immigrant student is defined as a student who was not born in any state and has not attended a school in any state for more than three academic years. In 2017-18, districts counted collectively more than 3,400 immigrant students, according to data pulled from APSCN. Although not all immigrant students are English learners, this federal funding is included in this report because districts spent virtually all of their Recent Immigrant funding on ESL instruction.

The state is required to distribute the funds to districts that have experienced a significant increase in either the number or percentage of immigrant students, compared with the previous two years.³⁸ States are allowed to define what that means for their state. Arkansas has defined the qualifying criteria to be districts that:

- Have at least 15 recent immigrants enrolled and
- Have had at least a 35% increase in the number of recent immigrants over the prior two years.³⁹

In 2018-19, six districts were allocated a total of \$103,395: Batesville, Benton, Bryant, Conway, Green Forest and North Little Rock. In 2017-18, the most recent year for which finalized expenditure data are available, districts spent nearly \$71,000, or about \$10 per ELL student.

The following table provides the total expenditures of all of the Title III funds from 2013 through 2018. The table includes expenditures on ESL services using other types of federal funds, such as Title I Migrant Education and Title I School Improvement Grants.

Expenditures of Federal Funds for ESL and Related Programs

FY	Title III Recent Immigrant	Title III English Language Acquisition	Other Federal	Total Federal
2012-13		\$2,912,441	\$29,005	\$2,941,446
2013-14		\$3,022,150	\$30,624	\$3,052,773
2014-15		\$3,313,352	\$37,075	\$3,350,427
2015-16	\$29,458	\$3,063,142	\$124,386	\$3,216,985
2016-17	\$101,246	\$3,103,552	\$105,354	\$3,310,152
2017-18	\$70,916	\$3,459,258	\$157,460	\$3,687,635

³⁸ U.S. Department of Education, Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), September 23, 2016.

³⁹ Lytle, Alan, Arkansas Department of Education, July 29, 2019 email

ANALYSIS OF DISTRICT SPENDING AND ENGLISH LEARNER GAINS

It is important to determine the impact of districts' spending patterns and district characteristics on the academic achievement gains made by English language learners. To do this, a variety of district-level data were compiled and analyzed. Districts with fewer than 15 ELL students were eliminated from the analysis due to the erratic nature of spending patterns and achievement with very small student counts.

Both ELP student growth and districts' percentage of students on track to ELP correlated with district size, although the correlations is weak to moderate. (See page 11 for more information about the ELP growth measure and the percentage of students on track to ELP.) **Larger district size is associated with greater student growth and greater proportions of students on track to ELP.** Districts' percentage of students on track to ELP is negatively correlated with their percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRL), meaning districts with higher concentrations of poverty have lower percentages of students on track to ELP—though the association is weak. ELP student growth is not associated with a district's FRL percentage. Neither student success measure correlates with the number of ELL students in a district or a district's proportion of total enrollment who are ELL students.

ELP student growth does appear to correlate—though weakly—with per-student ESL program expenditures.⁴⁰ **Districts that spent more on ESL programs per ELL student were more likely to make greater than predicted student gains in English language proficiency than districts that spent less.** This correlation remains even when controlling for a district's size and differences in teacher salary schedules (minimum teacher salary).

Average ELP Student Growth	Average District Enrollment	Average Free and Reduced Price Lunch	Average ESL Program Spending Per ELL Student
Quartile 1: 73.16-81.88	1,371	66.55%	\$442.16
Quartile 2: 81.90-83.60	2,306	62.31%	\$591.93
Quartile 3: 83.68-85.66	4,688	66.07%	\$738.16
Quartile 4: 85.66-92.40	3,476	57.87%	\$804.89

However, **the percentage of ELL students considered to be on track to attaining English language proficiency in each district and the amount districts spent on ESL programs per student are not correlated.**

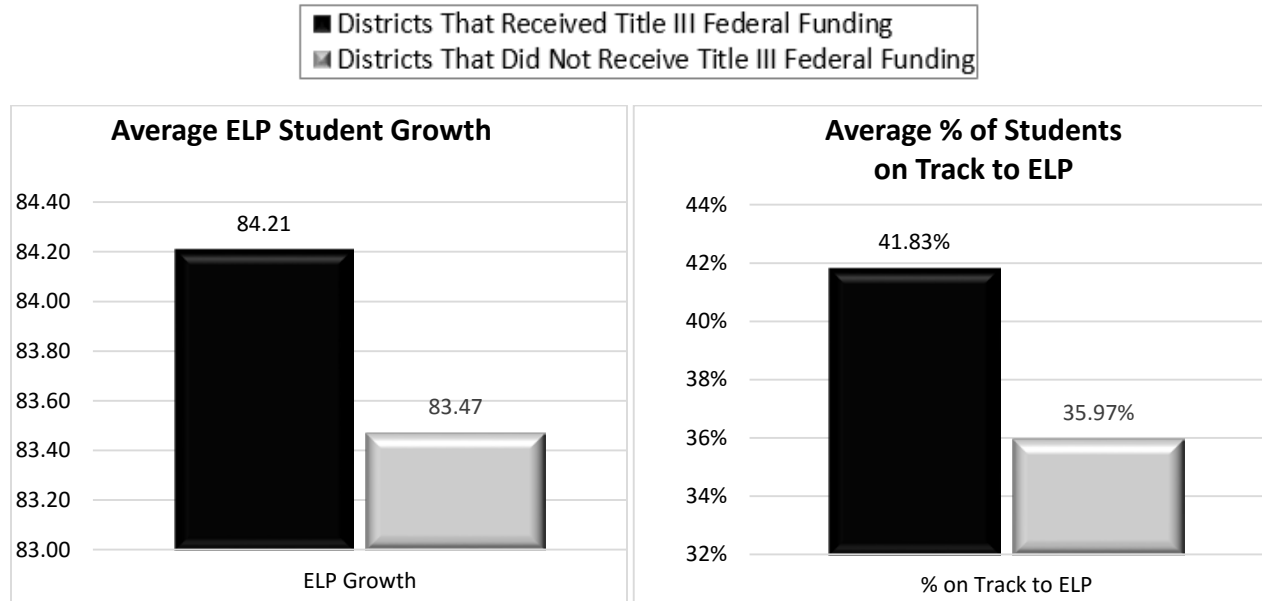
% of ELL Students On Track to ELP	Average District Enrollment	Average Free and Reduced Price Lunch	Total ESL Program Spending Per ELL Student
Quartile 1: 0%-30.77%	1,224	67.99%	\$546.24
Quartile 2: 31.03%-38.18%	1,942	66.35%	\$679.72
Quartile 3: 38.27%-45.10%	4,216	59.42%	\$585.98
Quartile 4: 45.95%-72.73%	4,447	59.20%	\$767.93

ELL students' performance on the ACT Aspire (percentage of ELL students scoring "ready" or "exceeding" on the ACT Aspire) is not correlated with districts' per-student ESL program spending levels. But notably, the ACT Aspire student growth measures (math and ELA) do correlate with the ELP measures. **Districts with higher ELP student growth and higher percentages of students on track to ELP tend to have higher than predicted student growth scores on the ACT Aspire.**

⁴⁰ Total ESL program spending includes all expenditures of all ELL state categorical funds, all Title III and recent immigrant funding and any other expenditure coded with a 1930 function code.

English Language Learners (ELL)

Comparing districts' spending of Title III funding is a bit more challenging due to the fact that so many districts that have ELL students—even those with more than 15—receive no Title III funds. The first chart below shows the average ELP student growth among districts that received Title III funding in 2017-18 and among those that did not receive Title III funding. The second chart shows the average percentage of ELL students on track to attaining English proficiency grouped by districts receiving or not receiving Title III funding. Districts that received Title III funds were more likely to have greater student growth and greater percentages of students on track to ELP than districts that did not receive federal funding.



Note: Data excludes districts with fewer than 15 ELL students.

APPENDIX: ON TRACK TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

The following tables show the established benchmarks Arkansas has set for students to achieve English language proficiency, based on their grade level and proficiency level when they enter school. The state uses these benchmarks to measure the long-term, statewide progress with ELL students. These benchmarks are not used in school grades or the ESSA school index to measure progress being made in individual schools or school districts.

K-2 Timeline to English Language Proficiency

Initial Level: Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Level 1	Level 2	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient
Level 2	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient	
Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient			

Grades 3-5 Timeline to English Proficiency

Initial Level: Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient
Level 2	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient		
Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient				

Grades 6-12 Timeline to English Language Proficiency

Initial Level: Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient
Level 2	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient		
Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 4 or 5 Proficient				

Source: Arkansas's ESSA Plan, page 37 and 38:

http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/public/userfiles/Public_School_Accountability/ESSA/Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_approved_01_16_2018_amended_03112019.pdf