



English Language Learners (ELL)

English Language Learner (ELL) funding is one of four state categorical funding programs available to school districts in Arkansas. (The other categorical funds are National School Lunch, Alternative Learning Environment, and Professional Development funding.) ELL funding supports students who are not proficient in the English language.

According to the Arkansas Department of Education, there were 34,272 ELL students in 2012-13, making up 7.5% of all students in public school districts. Fifty-six percent (19,211) of all ELL students in the state were served by four school districts—Springdale (8,636), Rogers (4,837), Fort Smith (3,455) and Little Rock (2,283).

The five most widely spoken languages, and the number of students that speak them, are:

1. Spanish (24,823)
2. Marshallese (1,865)
3. Vietnamese (425)
4. Laotian (363)
5. Hmong (261)

Eligibility

To be designated as an ELL, a student must meet the two following criteria:

- The student is identified as a Language Minority Student (LMS) at the time of enrollment by a Home Language Survey, which is filled out by parents or guardians;
- The student is then assessed for English proficiency using a screener or placement test. If the test indicates that the student is not fully fluent in English, the student is then classified as ELL and placed in English as a second language, or ESL, program.

Testing for Proficiency

The Arkansas Department of Education identifies five proficiency levels for

English Language Learners:

1. Pre-functional
2. Beginning
3. Intermediate
4. Advanced
5. Fully English Proficient

Arkansas uses the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) test to determine an English Language Learner's level of proficiency. The ELDA tests only students' proficiency with the English language and does not assess prior academic knowledge. Students in kindergarten through 12th grade are tested in five domains: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and comprehension.

The results of the assessment help schools determine what type of English language instruction is appropriate for each ELL student.

Based on his or her composite score (the average of the scores of the five domain tests), each student is assigned a proficiency level. Students at level 5 are considered to have English language skills comparable to those of a native English speaker.

ELL Funding

For the 2012-2013 school year, each Arkansas school district received \$305 per ELL student. Districts received a total of \$10.5 million in ELL funding.

Arkansas ELL Funding Per Student	
2011	\$293
2012	\$299
2013	\$305

Only districts that have ELL students receive ELL funding. In 2012-13, 151 Of 239 school districts that year (63%) received funding.

The remaining 88 (36.8%) received no funding due to 0% enrollment of qualifying ELL students.

ELL Expenditures

ELL categorical funding expenditures among these districts totaled \$14.7 million in 2012-13, or \$428 per ELL student.

Like other categorical funds, ELL funding is restricted, meaning the money can be used only for ELL program costs.

Eligible ELL funding uses are:

- Salaries for ELL instruction;
- Professional development activities;
- Instructional materials including technology;
- Counseling services, community liaison staff with language and cultural skills appropriate to the ELL population; and
- Assessment activities.

ELL programs are designed by, and provided at, the district level. The state does not mandate one way in which to provide these services. Instead there is often a combination of instructional services used to serve the ELL population. Some districts may use pull-out instruction, while others provide students with "sheltered instruction." This is a method by which students are aided during content area classes by an ESL trained instructor within a particular classroom. In schools with a critical-mass enrollment, a stand-alone, self-contained ELL class may be provided, if resources justify.

A student exits the ELL program once his or her ELL committee, which is assigned once the student is designated as ELL, deems the student eligible. This is done through a combination of examining the student's ELDA test scores, grades in core content classes, classroom performance, and through the subjective review of the teachers sitting on each committee.