



English Learners in Kansas

Demographics, Outcomes, and State Accountability Policies

By Julie Sugarman and Courtney Geary

This fact sheet provides an overview of key characteristics of the foreign-born and English Learner (EL) populations in Kansas. It aims to build understanding of the state demographic context, how ELs are performing in K-12 schools, and the basics of state policies for EL education under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), enacted in December 2015. The transition to ESSA is ongoing, with states slated to update their data reporting systems by December 2018. As a result, the data this fact sheet uses to describe student outcomes primarily reflect systems and accountability policies developed under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, in effect from 2002 through 2015). Many of the changes expected as ESSA is implemented will improve the accuracy and availability of these data.

The first section examines the demographics of Kansas using U.S. Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) data, and EL students as reported by the Kansas State Department of Education. A discussion of EL student outcomes as measured by standardized tests follows, and the fact sheet concludes with a brief overview of Kansas accountability mechanisms that affect ELs under ESSA.

I. Demographic Overview of Foreign-Born and EL Populations in Kansas

In 2016, approximately 206,000 foreign-born individuals resided in Kansas, accounting for 7 percent of the state population—a smaller share compared to immigrants in the United States overall (14 percent), as seen in Table 1. The growth rate of the foreign-born population in Kansas slowed considerably from 114 percent in the period between 1990 and 2000 to 53 percent between 2000 and 2016. Nevertheless, this growth rate is still higher than that of the U.S. immigrant population more generally, and it far outpaces the growth rate of the native-born population. Age group trends in Kansas mirror broader national trends, with disproportionately smaller shares of foreign-born individuals in the birth-to-age-17 brackets compared to the native born.

With a relatively small population of immigrants, it follows that the share of school-age children with one or more foreign-born parents is smaller in Kansas (16 percent) than in the United States overall (26 percent), as shown in Table 2. Additionally, about 87 percent of children of immigrants in Kansas were native born, comparable to the 86 percent nationwide. In Kansas, 22 percent of children in low-income families had one or more foreign-born parents, compared to 32 percent of low-income children nationally.

Table 1. Foreign- and U.S.-Born Populations of Kansas and the United States, 2016

| | Kansas | | United States | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|-------------|
| | Foreign Born | U.S. Born | Foreign Born | U.S. Born |
| Number | 205,522 | 2,701,767 | 43,739,345 | 279,388,170 |
| Share of total population | 7.1% | 92.9% | 13.5% | 86.5% |
| Population Change over Time | | | | |
| % change: 2000-16 | 52.5% | 5.8% | 40.6% | 11.6% |
| % change: 1990-2000 | 114.4% | 5.8% | 57.4% | 9.3% |
| Age Group | | | | |
| Share under age 5 | 0.6% | 7.3% | 0.7% | 7.0% |
| Share ages 5-17 | 6.6% | 18.7% | 5.1% | 18.5% |
| Share ages 18+ | 92.9% | 74.1% | 94.2% | 74.5% |

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, “State Immigration Data Profiles: Demographics & Social,” accessed May 16, 2018, www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/KS/US/.

Number of ELs. ACS data on the Limited English Proficient (LEP) population rely on self-reporting of English proficiency, with LEP individuals counted as those who speak English less than “very well.” At the national level, ACS data indicate that 5 percent of U.S. children ages 5 to 17 are LEP,¹ while data the states submitted to the federal government put the EL share of the total K-12 population at 10 percent in Fall 2015.²

At the state level, ACS data indicate that 2 percent of Kansas children ages 5 to 17 are LEP.³ In contrast, the EL share of the state K-12 population was 11 percent in Fall 2015—52,751 students—according to data Kansas submitted to the federal government.⁴

Although ACS data seem to undercount EL children, they can be used to examine (with due caution) the nativity of ELs, a variable

Table 2. Nativity and Low-Income Status of Children in Kansas and the United States, 2016

| | Kansas | | United States | |
|--|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| | Number | Share of Population (%) | Number | Share of Population (%) |
| Children between ages 6 and 17 with | 457,889 | 100.0 | 47,090,847 | 100.0 |
| Only native-born parents | 383,656 | 83.8 | 34,838,528 | 74.0 |
| One or more foreign-born parents | 74,233 | 16.2 | 12,252,319 | 26.0 |
| Child is native born | 64,834 | 14.2 | 10,501,024 | 22.3 |
| Child is foreign born | 9,399 | 2.1 | 1,751,295 | 3.7 |
| Children in low-income families | 260,091 | 100.0 | 28,363,805 | 100.0 |
| Only native-born parents | 201,951 | 77.6 | 19,216,957 | 67.8 |
| One or more foreign-born parents | 58,140 | 22.4 | 9,146,848 | 32.2 |

Note: The definition of children in low-income families includes children under age 18 who resided with at least one parent and in families with annual incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

Source: MPI Data Hub, “State Immigration Data Profiles: Demographics & Social.”

Table 3. Nativity of Kansas and U.S. LEP Students, 2012–16

| | Share of K-12 LEP Children Born in the United States (%) | | |
|---------------|--|-------------|-------|
| | Grades K-5 | Grades 6–12 | Total |
| Kansas | 77.7 | 45.4 | 63.0 |
| United States | 82.3 | 56.5 | 70.6 |

Note: Analysis based on Limited English Proficient (LEP) children ages 5 and older enrolled in grades K-12.

Source: MPI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2012–16 American Community Survey (ACS) data, accessed through Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, “Integrated Public Use Microdata Series,” accessed April 25, 2018, <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/>.

school data systems do not capture. Table 3 shows that in Kansas, almost two-thirds of school-aged children who were reported as LEP in census data were born in the United States, with a larger share among elementary school children than older students. The rate of native-born LEP children in the United States overall was somewhat higher, at 71 percent.

The most recent data available on the top languages spoken by ELs in Kansas come from the Consolidated State Performance Reports submitted by each state to the federal government. Table 4 shows that in school year (SY) 2015-16, Spanish was spoken by 83 percent of Kansas ELs, with Vietnamese, Chinese, and Arabic having the next largest groups of speakers.

II. EL Student Outcomes in Kansas

Kansas uses the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment 2 (KELPA2) for annual assessment of students’ English language proficiency. Table 5 shows the share of ELs scoring at each of KELPA2’s three proficiency levels, by grade.

Across the state, 7 percent of ELs scored at the lowest proficiency level (not proficient) and 28 percent scored at the highest level (proficient), at which time they can be considered for reclassification. The share of students scoring proficient was highest in grades 4 through 6.

Table 4. Top Home Languages Spoken by Kansas ELs, SY 2015–16

| | Number of ELs | Share of ELs with a Home Language Other Than English (%) |
|--------------------|---------------|--|
| Spanish; Castilian | 43,993 | 83.4 |
| Undetermined | 2,200 | 4.2 |
| Vietnamese | 1,386 | 2.6 |
| Chinese | 662 | 1.3 |
| Arabic | 637 | 1.2 |

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Note: Shares were calculated based on 52,751 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students reported by the state in SY 2015–16.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, “SY 2015-2016 Consolidated State Performance Reports Part I—Kansas,” updated October 18, 2017, www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy15-16part1/index.html.

Table 5. Share of Kansas ELs at Each KELPA2 Proficiency Level (%), by Grade, SY 2016–17

| | Grade 3 (%) | Grade 4 (%) | Grade 5 (%) | Grade 6 (%) | Grade 7 (%) | Grade 8 (%) | High School (%) | All Students (%) |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Not Proficient | 4.1 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 3.5 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 8.1 | 7.1 |
| Nearly Proficient | 64.3 | 50.0 | 53.2 | 54.9 | 64.5 | 66.9 | 69.5 | 65.4 |
| Proficient | 31.6 | 45.6 | 42.6 | 41.6 | 29.2 | 26.5 | 22.4 | 27.5 |

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: Kansas State Department of Education, “Kansas Report Card 2016-2017—KELPA2 Overall Proficiency Level Reports,” accessed May 31, 2018, http://ksreportcard.ksde.org/kelpa.aspx?org_no=State&rptType=3.

Next, the fact sheet looks at outcomes of the EL subgroup on state standardized assessments. It is important to note two things about the participation of ELs on these assessments. First, compared to other student subgroups based on ethnicity, poverty, gender, and special education status, ELs are a much more dynamic population: as students gain proficiency, they exit the EL subgroup and new ELs are identified as they enter the U.S. school system. By definition, students who remain in the EL subgroup are not performing at a level where their achievement on mainstream assessments is comparable to that of their English-proficient peers. Whereas this lag is expected for students in their first several years of learning English, concerns about the significant numbers of long-term ELs—those identified as ELs for six or more years—not scoring proficient in English language arts (ELA) and math have driven policymakers to strengthen the ways they hold schools accountable for EL outcomes on academic assessments.

Second, under NCLB, states were allowed to exempt newly arrived EL students from taking the ELA test for one year and to exclude the math scores of those newcomers from accountability reports. For that reason, the results below do not include all Kansas ELs. The rules for including newly arrived ELs in reports on subgroup outcomes will change as ESSA provisions go into effect in 2018 (see “Accountability for EL Academic Achievement” below).

The Kansas Assessment Program (KAP) is the system of exams the state uses for accountability purposes, with students tested in ELA and math in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school, and in science in grades 5 and 8 and in high school. Results are reported as four achievement levels: limited ability, basic ability, effective ability, and excellent ability to use knowledge and skills for college and career readiness. The third level is considered the target level for students, and those who reach level 4 are said to have exceeded the target.⁵

Table 6. Share of Kansas ELs and Non-ELs Meeting or Exceeding the Target in English Language Arts (%), by Grade, SY 2016–17

| | Grade 3 (%) | Grade 4 (%) | Grade 5 (%) | Grade 6 (%) | Grade 7 (%) | Grade 8 (%) | High School (%) |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Share of ELs who met or exceeded target | 18.4 | 26.2 | 22.1 | 15.8 | 11.8 | 7.2 | 6.8 |
| Share of non-ELs who met or exceeded target | 44.4 | 52.3 | 47.7 | 42.1 | 36.3 | 29.2 | 31.0 |

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: Kansas State Department of Education, “Kansas Report Card 2016-2017—Performance Level Reports,” accessed May 31, 2018, http://ksreportcard.ksde.org/assessment_results.aspx?org_no=State&rptType=3.

Table 7. Share of Kansas ELs and Non-ELs Students Meeting or Exceeding the Target in Math (%), by Grade, SY 2016–17

| | Grade 3 (%) | Grade 4 (%) | Grade 5 (%) | Grade 6 (%) | Grade 7 (%) | Grade 8 (%) | High School (%) |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Share of ELs who met or exceeded target | 33.0 | 21.3 | 15.9 | 14.3 | 11.5 | 9.9 | 7.1 |
| Share of non-ELs who met or exceeded target | 55.7 | 41.7 | 36.0 | 34.4 | 31.1 | 26.7 | 24.9 |

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: Kansas State Department of Education, “Kansas Report Card 2016-2017—Performance Level Reports.”

Table 6 shows considerable achievement gaps between the share of ELs and of non-ELs who met or exceeded the target in ELA, with a consistent gap of 22 to 26 points across grade levels.

As with ELA, there are considerable gaps between ELs and non-ELs on the KAP math assessment (see Table 7). Gaps decreased somewhat from younger to older grade levels, ranging from 17 to 23 points.

Science test scores also show steady gaps between ELs and non-ELs of around 24 to 27 points in all three grade levels tested (see Table 8).

Finally, graduation rates in Kansas have been increasing over the last five years for ELs, even as they remain roughly the same for students as a whole. For the class of 2017, the share of ELs to graduate within four years was 80 percent, compared to a four-year graduation rate of 87 percent for all students.⁶ These rates are higher those at the national level for the most recent

year available (SY 2015–16), which were 67 percent for ELs and 84 percent for all students.⁷

III. Accountability under ESSA

In 2017, all 50 states (plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) submitted plans to the U.S. Department of Education that outline their approach to complying with new accountability regulations under ESSA. Among the new requirements are provisions requiring states to standardize how they identify students for and exit them from EL status, extending the number of years schools can include former ELs’ scores in reporting on the outcomes of the EL subgroup, and allowing states to develop their own English language proficiency indicator (replacing the three required Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives in NCLB). Implementation of the new policies began in SY 2017–18. However, as many states have adopted new or significantly revised English language proficiency assessments over the last few years,

Table 8. Share of Kansas ELs and Non-ELs Meeting or Exceeding the Target in Science (%), by Grade, SY 2016–17

| | Grade 5 (%) | Grade 8 (%) | High School (%) |
|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Share of ELs who met or exceeded target | 23.5 | 9.9 | 9.8 |
| Share of non-ELs who met or exceeded target | 47.1 | 35.7 | 37.1 |

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: Kansas State Department of Education, “Kansas Report Card 2016-2017—Performance Level Reports.”

some intend to wait to update their English language proficiency benchmarks until they have collected sufficient data from the new assessments.

Learn More about ELs and ESSA

For additional analysis, maps, and state-level data on English Learner education in the United States, check out the MPI [ELL Information Center](#) and its [ESSA resources](#).

A. Identification and Reclassification of ELs

Following federal guidelines, all states require schools to follow a two-step process for identifying students as ELs. First, parents or guardians complete a home-language survey when they enroll their child in a new school district. The survey generally includes one to four questions to identify students whose first language is not English or who live in households where a language other than English is spoken.

If students in such circumstances do not already have scores from a state-approved English language proficiency test on file, they are given a screening test to gauge their English language ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (as required by ESSA). Students scoring below proficient are categorized as ELs. Schools must inform parents in a timely manner of their child's English language proficiency level and of the types of support the school can provide, including the right to opt out of services (but not the right to decline EL status and subsequent annual testing).⁸

In Kansas, students are screened for initial EL identification using the KELPA-P (with the P standing for placement). Students are identified as ELs if they score below proficient on any domain (listening, speaking, reading, or writing) or on the composite score.⁹ Once

identified, ELs are given the KELPA2 annually until they score at the proficient level, at which time they can be reclassified and exit EL status.¹⁰

B. Accountability for English Language Proficiency

Whereas parents and teachers are primarily interested in the progress of individual students toward English language proficiency, state accountability systems track whether the ELs in entire schools and districts are progressing to and achieving proficiency within the state-determined timeline. States include English language proficiency in their accountability systems in two ways. First, they set a long-term goal for increasing the percent of students making progress toward proficiency (with interim goals along the way), and, second, they include an annual indicator of progress toward English language proficiency in the calculation they use to identify schools in need of improvement.¹¹

Kansas students are expected to take a maximum of seven years to achieve English language proficiency, with expectations for individual students set based on their initial English proficiency level. The state plans to use data from the 2017 through 2021 iterations of the KELPA2 to set achievable speed-to-proficiency benchmarks starting in 2021. In the meantime, a student will count as having made progress toward proficiency if he or she moves up at least half a level on the KELPA2 (one "assessment performance index level") from year to year.

Based on calculations of this interim definition, about 28 percent of Kansas ELs made the expected level of progress in 2017. Using this baseline, the state aims to increase the share of ELs making the expected amount of progress by between 3 percent and 4 percent each year with a goal of reaching 95 percent by 2030. In line with ESSA guidance, Kansas plans to factor in whether schools are making relatively less progress in moving students toward English

proficiency in their criteria for identifying schools in need of comprehensive support and improvement.¹²

C. **Accountability for EL Academic Achievement**

In addition to progress toward English proficiency, ESSA requires states to report and include in their accountability systems data on how well ELs, as a subgroup, are performing on the indicators that apply to all students (including ELA, math, and science tests; graduation rates; and a school-quality or student-success indicator such as attendance). Using this information, ESSA calls for states to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement based on the performance of all students, including subgroups of students, and for targeted support and improvement for schools that have one or more underperforming subgroups such as ELs.

As noted earlier, the EL subgroup is unique in that students exit the subgroup once they reach a level at which their English proficiency is no longer keeping them from general academic achievement similar to that of their English-proficient peers. Because of this, ESSA allows states to include former ELs within the EL subgroup for up to four years after they have exited EL status. Former EL students' scores in math and reading can thus be used in accountability measures as a way to give schools credit for the progress those students have made. Kansas will not include former ELs in their calculation of academic achievement and academic progress indicators, but it will create a separate former EL subgroup for ELA and math reporting purposes.¹³

Unlike for other subgroups, ESSA also provides two types of exemption states may choose to apply to recently arrived ELs on state standardized tests:

1. In their first year in the United States, ELs can be exempt from taking the ELA test. They must be tested in math that year, but their scores will not be included in accountability calculations. Regular test-taking and accountability procedures will apply thereafter.
2. ELs take ELA and math tests in their first year, but their scores can be excluded from accountability measures. In the second year, outcomes on both tests are reported as a growth score from year one to year two. From their third year on, students are assessed and their scores included in accountability measures as is done for all students.

States also have a third option: they may assign option 1 to some recently arrived ELs and option 2 to others based on characteristics such as their initial English language proficiency level.¹⁴ Kansas's ESSA plan indicates it will use option 1 for its recently arrived ELs.¹⁵

As states move forward with ESSA accountability plans, policymakers are taking the opportunity to revise existing regulations on funding, program requirements, teacher training, and other aspects of school administration. Provisions that affect EL students should be scrutinized closely by stakeholders at all levels, whether parents, teachers, or community organizations. Data on EL demographics and performance, such as those provided in this fact sheet, will prove an important tool in this effort.¹⁶

Endnotes

- 1 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, “State Immigration Data Profiles: Language & Education,” accessed April 25, 2018, www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/language/KS/US/.
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- 5 Kansas Assessment Program, “Summative Score Reports,” accessed July 13, 2018, <https://ksassessments.org/scorereports>.
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- 8 U.S. Department of Education, *Tools and Resources for Identifying all English Learners* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2016), www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap1.pdf.
- 9 KSDE, “English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)/Bilingual Education Program Guidance 2017-2018,” updated October 19, 2017, www.ksde.org/Portals/0/Title/ESOL/ESOLProgramGuidance.pdf.
- 10 Prior to SY 2017–18, students had to score proficient on the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA) for two consecutive years to exit EL status. See KSDE, *Revised State Template for the Consolidated State Plan. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act* (Topeka, KS: KSDE, 2018), www.ksde.org/Portals/0/ECSETS/ESEA/KSconsolidatedstateplan01182018_Approved.pdf.
- 11 Susan Lyons and Nathan Dadey, *Considering English Language Proficiency within Systems of Educational Accountability under the Every Student Succeeds Act* (Chicago: Latino Policy Forum and Center for Assessment, 2017), www.latinopolicyforum.org/publications/reports/document/Considerations-for-ELP-indicator-in-ESSA_030817.pdf.
- 12 KSDE, *Revised State Template*.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 EdTrust, “Setting New Accountability for English-Learner Outcomes in ESSA Plans,” accessed April 26, 2018, <https://edtrust.org/setting-new-accountability-english-learner-outcomes-essa-plans/>.
- 15 KSDE, *Revised State Template*.
- 16 For additional information on accessing and understanding state English Learner demographic and outcome data, see Julie Sugarman, *A Guide to Finding and Understanding English Learner Data* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2018), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/guide-finding-understanding-english-learner-data.

About the Authors



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