



English Learners in Ohio

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 Ohio. 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 Ohio using U.S. Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) data, and EL students as reported by the Ohio 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 Ohio accountability mechanisms that affect ELs under ESSA.

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

In 2016, approximately 514,000 foreign-born individuals resided in Ohio, accounting for 4 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 Ohio increased from 31 percent in the period between 1990 and 2000 to 51 percent between 2000 and 2016. This growth rate is 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 Ohio 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 Ohio (8 percent) than in the United States overall (26 percent), as shown in Table 2. Additionally, about 84 percent of children of immigrants in Ohio were native born, comparable to 86 percent nationwide. In Ohio, 9 percent of children in low-income families had one or more foreign-born parents, which is considerably lower than the share of low-income children nationally (32 percent).

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

	Ohio		United States	
	Foreign Born	U.S. Born	Foreign Born	U.S. Born
Number	513,592	11,100,781	43,739,345	279,388,170
Share of total population	4.4%	95.6%	13.5%	86.5%
Population Change over Time				
% change: 2000-16	51.4%	0.8%	40.6%	11.6%
% change: 1990-2000	30.7%	4.0%	57.4%	9.3%
Age Group				
Share under age 5	1.1%	6.2%	0.7%	7.0%
Share ages 5-17	6.5%	17.0%	5.1%	18.5%
Share ages 18+	92.5%	76.9%	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/OH/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 Ohio children ages 5 to 17 are LEP.³ In contrast, the most recent data from the Ohio Department of Education, from school year (SY) 2016–17, indicate ELs represented 4 per-

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

	Ohio		United States	
	Number	Share of Population (%)	Number	Share of Population (%)
Children between ages 6 and 17 with	1,671,240	100.0	47,090,847	100.0
Only native-born parents	1,543,034	92.3	34,838,528	74.0
One or more foreign-born parents	128,206	7.7	12,252,319	26.0
Child is native born	107,241	6.4	10,501,024	22.3
Child is foreign born	20,965	1.3	1,751,295	3.7
Children in low-income families	985,286	100.0	28,363,805	100.0
Only native-born parents	896,658	91.0	19,216,957	67.8
One or more foreign-born parents	88,628	9.0	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 Ohio 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
Ohio	80.1	66.1	73.6
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/>.

cent of the state preK-12 student population, or 58,603 students.⁴

Although ACS data seem to undercount EL children, they can be used to examine (with due caution) the nativity of ELs, a variable school data systems do not capture. Table 3 shows that in Ohio, almost three-fourths 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 slightly lower, at 71 percent.

The most recent data available that show the top languages spoken by ELs in Ohio come

from the Consolidated State Performance Reports submitted by each state to the federal government. Table 4 shows that in SY 2015-16, Spanish was spoken by 38 percent of Ohio ELs, with Somali, Arabic, Chinese, and German rounding out the top five.

Among Ohio school districts with enrollment of more than 1,000 ELs, the districts that enrolled the most ELs were Columbus City Schools, Cleveland City School District, and South-Western City School District (just outside Columbus). Table 5 also shows that in the districts with the largest number of ELs, these students made up between 7 percent (Hilliard City Schools) and 25 percent (Princeton City Schools) of total enrollment.

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

	Number of ELs	Share of ELs with a Home Language Other Than English (%)
Spanish; Castilian	19,347	37.7
Somali	3,781	7.4
Arabic	3,413	6.7
Chinese	1,029	2.0
German	794	1.5

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Note: Shares were calculated based on 51,301 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students reported by the state in 2015-16.

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

Table 5. Number of ELs and EL Share of Students in Ohio School Districts with More Than 1,000 ELs, SY 2016–17

	Number of ELs	EL Share of Students in District (%)
Columbus City Schools	8,862	17.7
Cleveland Metropolitan School District	3,811	9.8
South-Western City School District	3,594	16.2
Cincinnati Public Schools	2,586	7.5
Akron Public Schools	1,881	8.8
Dublin City Schools	1,848	12.2
Westerville City Schools	1,704	11.7
Princeton City Schools	1,398	24.9
Hilliard City Schools	1,041	6.7

EL = English Learner, SY = School Year

Source: Ohio School Report Cards, “Download Data—2016-17—Disaggregated District Data—District Disaggregated LEP,” accessed May 11, 2018, <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/Download-Data.aspx>.

Finally, Table 6 shows that as grade level increases, the population and share of ELs in Ohio K-12 schools decrease. Whereas 6 percent of early-elementary students were ELs in SY 2016–17, that number was 2 percent for grades 9 through 12. This reflects the trend that more students achieve English proficiency (and thus exit EL status) over time than immigrate to the United States as adolescents or remain ELs beyond the typical five- to seven-year time frame.

II. EL Student Outcomes in Ohio

Ohio uses the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment (OELPA) for annual assessment of students’ English language proficiency. Although domain scores (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are reported with five performance levels, overall proficiency levels are reported

using three categories.⁵ Table 7 shows the share of ELs scoring at each level, by grade.

Across the state, 15 percent of ELs scored at the highest proficiency level. The share of students scoring proficient—and thus exiting EL status—was highest in grades 2 through 4. In high school, only 7 percent of students scored proficient in SY 2016–17.

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

Table 6. Number of ELs and EL Share of Students in Ohio, by Grade, SY 2016–17

	Grades K-2	Grades 3–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
EL share of students in grade band	5.6	4.6	2.8	2.2
Number of ELs	19,562	17,260	10,527	10,473

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: Ohio School Report Cards, “Ohio School Report Cards—Enrollment—Enrollment by Student Demographic (State),” accessed June 6, 2018, <http://bireports.education.ohio.gov/>.

Table 7. Share of Ohio ELs at Each OELPA Proficiency Level (%), by Grade, SY 2016–17

	K (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	7 (%)	8 (%)	9–12 (%)	All (%)
Emerging	20.1	11.6	8.3	8.5	11.5	13.5	12.6	21.3	22.8	28.2	16.6
Progressing	75.0	77.2	67.5	66.2	59.4	64.2	66.8	68.9	69.1	65.2	68.4
Proficient	4.9	11.2	24.2	25.3	29.1	22.3	20.6	9.8	8.1	6.6	15.1

EL = English Learner; OELPA = Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment; K = Kindergarten; SY = School Year. *Source:* Ohio Department of Education, “OELPA Performance Data: 2016-2017” (presentation, Ohio Department of Education, Cleveland, June 5, 2017), <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Testing/Ohio-English-Language-Proficiency-Assessment-OELPA/Final-ESL-Advisory-Committee-June-5.pdf.aspx>.

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 Ohio 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).

Ohio administers Ohio’s State Tests (OST) for accountability purposes. Students take OST tests for ELA in grades 3 through 8 and end-of-course tests in ELA I and II; math in grades 3 through 8 and for Algebra I and Geometry (or Integrated Math); and in high school for Biology or Physical Science,⁶ American History, and American Government.⁷ Scores are reported at six achievement levels: limited, basic, proficient, accelerated, advanced, and advanced plus.

Table 8 shows considerable achievement gaps between the share of ELs and non-ELs scoring proficient or above on ELA tests, with that gap growing larger at older grade levels. The gap

Table 8. Share of Ohio ELs and Non-ELs Scoring Proficient or Above in English Language Arts (%), by Grade or Course, SY 2016–17

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)	English I (%)	English II (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or above	45.7	45.9	50.0	36.5	28.8	15.1	20.4	15.1
Share of non-ELs who scored proficient or above	64.6	63.5	68.4	61.0	60.1	51.1	59.5	56.1

EL = English Learners; SY = School Year.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, “Ohio School Report Cards—Advanced Reports—Test Results—Test Results with Student Disagg (State),” accessed June 6, 2018, <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/Power-User-Reports.aspx>.

Table 9. Share of Ohio ELs and Non-ELs Scoring Proficient or Above in Math (%), by Grade or Course, SY 2016–17

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)	Algebra I (%)	Geometry (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or above	58.6	59.8	46.7	40.7	28.4	28.0	18.4	14.1
Share of non-ELs who scored proficient or above	71.2	72.9	62.2	60.8	56.8	55.7	45.9	43.4

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, “Ohio School Report Cards—Advanced Reports—Test Results—Test Results with Student Disagg (State).”

was smallest in 4th grade (18 points) and largest in English II (41 points).

As with ELA, there are considerable gaps between ELs and non-ELs on OST math assessments (see Table 9). The gap was smallest in 3rd grade (13 points) and grew to 29 points in Geometry.

Science test scores also show gaps between ELs and non-ELs, with those gaps varying considerably across grade levels (see Table 10). The gap was a modest 18 points in 5th grade, but rose to 38 and 39 points for 8th grade and Biology, respectively.

Table 11 shows that considerable gaps also exist between ELs and non-ELs on the OST social studies exams, with the gap smallest in 4th grade (16 points) and widening considerably in American government (39 points) and history (38 points).

Finally, there were notable gaps between the graduation rates of Ohio ELs and of all students. For the class of 2016, the share of ELs to graduate within four years was 50 percent in Ohio, compared to 67 percent for the nation as a whole. By comparison, the four-year graduation rate for all students was the same in Ohio as it was nationwide, at 84 percent.⁸

Table 10. Share of Ohio ELs and Non-ELs Scoring Proficient or Above in Science (%), by Grade or Course, SY 2016–17

	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 8 (%)	Biology (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or above	51.5	28.7	23.1
Share of non-ELs who reached proficient or advanced	69.0	66.6	62.0

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, “Ohio School Report Cards—Advanced Reports—Test Results—Test Results with Student Disagg (State).”

Table 11. Share of Ohio ELs and Non-ELs Scoring Proficient or Above in Social Studies (%), by Grade or Course, SY 2016–17

	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	American Government (%)	American History (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or above	62.4	41.0	33.8	31.4
Share of non-ELs who scored proficient or above	78.1	64.7	72.7	69.6

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, “Ohio School Report Cards—Advanced Reports—Test Results—Test Results with Student Disagg (State).”

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, 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).⁹

Beginning in 2018, Ohio students will be screened for initial EL identification using the Ohio English Language Proficiency Screener (OELPS). In previous years, districts were given a choice between a number of commercially available tests.¹⁰ Once identified, ELs are given the OELPA annually until they score highly

enough to be reclassified as English proficient. To be reclassified, students must reach at least level 4 (out of 5 levels) on all four domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).¹¹

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.¹²

Ohio's ESSA plan does not specify a maximum number of years within which ELs are expected to achieve English language proficiency. Rather, it includes a table that shows the progress it expects students to make annually toward higher levels of English proficiency, based on their initial English proficiency level and the grade in which they were identified as an EL. On the OELPA, students can earn a maximum of 20 points (four domains times five points); based on this, the state defines adequate progress for each year as a student earning one or two more points on the OELPA than he or she did the previous year. What is considered expected progress also depends on how close students are to the full 20 points; those with a lower point count get credit for improving by two points, whereas K-8 students with at least 12 points and high school students with at least eight points get credit for a one-point gain.

About 45 percent of Ohio ELs made the expected progress in SY 2015–16. Using this baseline, the state aims to increase the share of ELs making the expected amount of progress by about 3 percent each year with a goal of reaching 75 percent by SY 2025-26. In line with ESSA guidance, Ohio 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.¹³

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. Ohio will include former ELs for four years in their calculation of academic achievement and academic progress indicators.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ Ohio's ESSA plan indicates it will use option 2 for its recently arrived ELs.¹⁶

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.¹⁷

Endnotes

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- 4 Ohio Department of Education (ODE), “Ohio School Report Cards—Advanced Reports—Enrollment—Enrollment by Student Demographic (State),” accessed July 9, 2018, <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/Power-User-Reports.aspx>.
- 5 Ohio uses the three categories (emerging, progressing, and proficient) set by the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) Consortium, of which Ohio is a member.
- 6 Results for Physical Science are not discussed in this section due to the very small number of students taking the test.
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- 14 Ibid.
- 15 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/>.
- 16 ODE, *Revised State Template for the Consolidated State Plan*.
- 17 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.

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For more information on the impact of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* on EL and immigrant students, visit: www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/nciip-english-learners-and-every-student-succeeds-act.

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