

English Learners

BRIEFING REPORT



MARCH 2020



Arlington
Public
Schools



ENGLISH LEARNERS

The Office of English Learners (OEL) was formerly known as the ESOL/HILT Office. In the last year, after input from parents, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders, a new name was born. Teachers' titles were changed from the previous ESOL/HILT teacher to the new name, English Learner (EL) Teacher. In addition to the name of the office and job titles, English language proficiency levels names were changed to make it easier for students, parents and staff to understand and to better align with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) naming convention. Lastly, secondary course titles were changed to better meet the needs of our students and parents. The new course titles make it easier for parents and students to understand the EL program and how students are progressing through their language development. The new name also allows APS to better align with other Virginia divisions and school districts around the country.

In 2019-20, APS proudly serves nearly 5000 English learners in their quest to attain academic English, acquire content knowledge and prepare for college and career. Services are provided to eligible students with the support of English Learner teachers in collaboration with general education teachers. 18.4% of students in APS are English learners (ELP Levels 1-4) and an additional 2000 plus students recently became English proficient (ELP Level 6), as defined by the Virginia Department of Education. Combined, those two groups make up approximately 26% of students in APS.

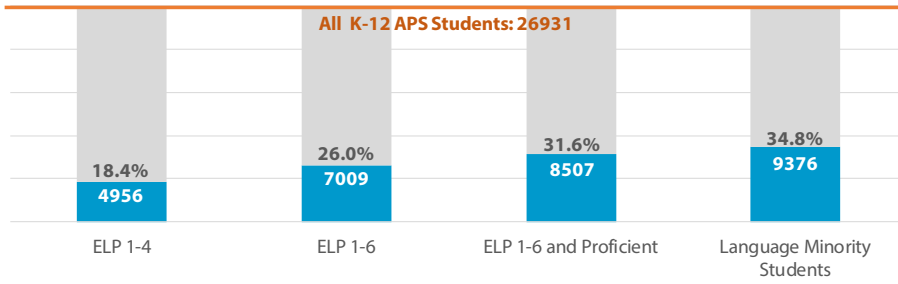
MAJOR SERVICES PROVIDED

The major services provided by the Office of English Learners include, but are not limited to:

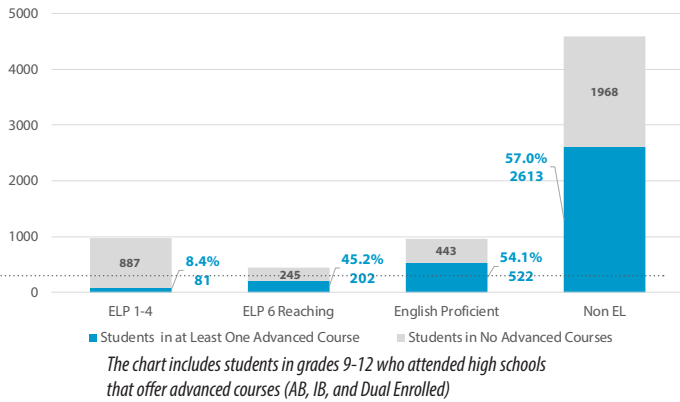
- Working with teachers, administrators, staff and families to facilitate English language development to increase English language proficiency.
- Creating, revising, assessing, enhancing and implementing instruction for English learners at all elementary, middle, comprehensive and alternative high schools.
- Using data to make informed decisions on instructional programming.
- Providing consistent professional learning opportunities to support schools and benefit English learners.
- Remaining current in research findings to maintain a high level of expectation and success for English learners.
- Building positive working relationships with offices and departments in APS to collaborate and meet the needs of English learners and their families.
- Increasing family and community engagement in English learner education through ongoing family outreach and provision of relevant parent workshops by Bilingual Family Liaisons and community-based organizations.
- Facilitating the educational growth of English learners identified with a disability by providing direct service, co-teaching, coaching teachers, and monitoring progress through work of the EL Resource Teachers.
- Teaching English learners to cope and manage feelings brought about by trauma, loss, acculturation, assimilation and family reunification through the EL Counselors.

DATA THAT PROVIDES INSIGHT

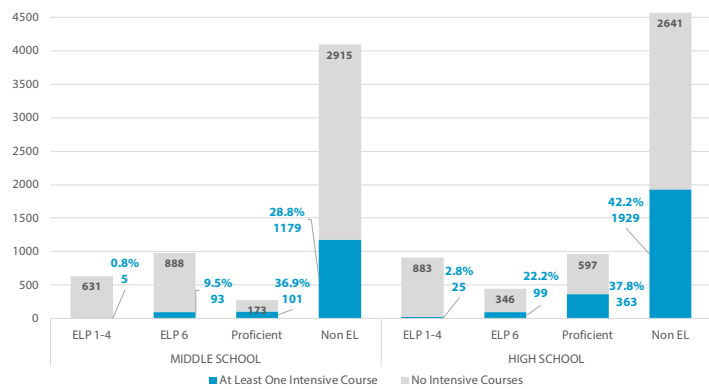
September 30, 2019 EL Enrollment



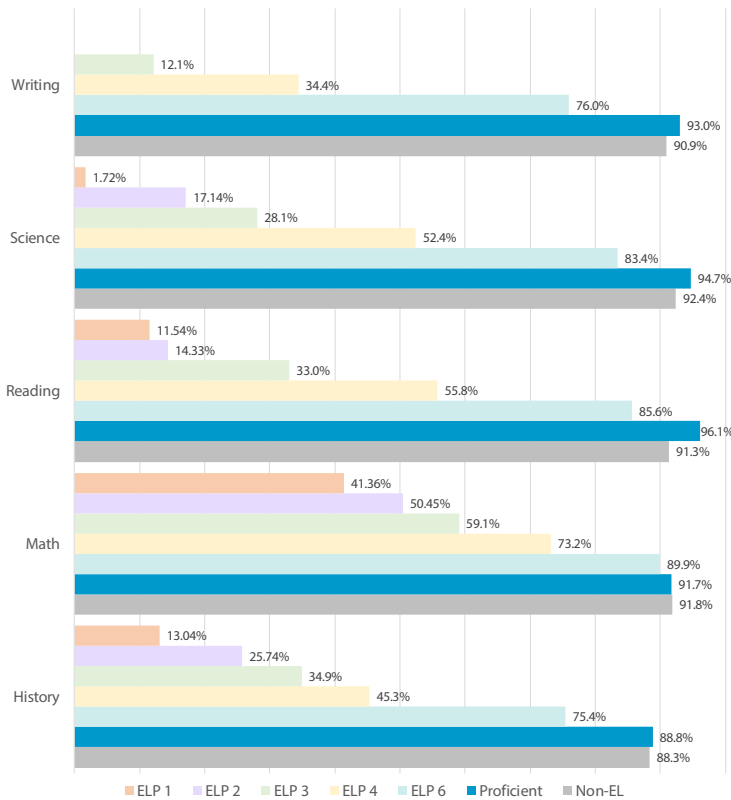
2018-19 High School Students Enrolled in at Least One Advanced Course by EL Status



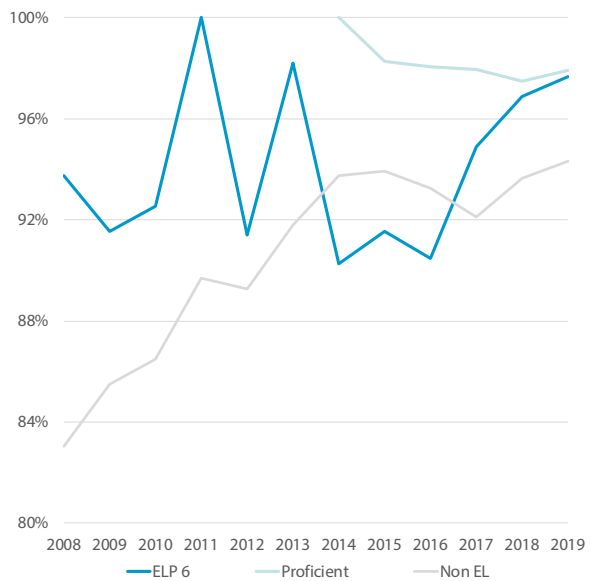
2018-19 MS & HS Students Enrolled in at Least One Intensified Course by EL Status



2018-19 SOL Performance by EL Status



Diploma Rates by EL Status: 2008 to 2019



Proficient students were not identified in our data set prior to 2013-14. They would be included in the Non EL population prior to 2013-14.



BRIGHT SPOT

For 27 years, the **Latino Youth Leadership Conference** (LYLC) has provided Latino students at the secondary level an opportunity for leadership development, exposure to professionals in a variety of careers and for developing a sense of pride in speaking Spanish. This year's theme, "I Am the Future," was on full display with the student-led art show, breakout sessions on leadership, guest speakers from 15 different career paths, as well as the keynote address from local radio star, El Chepe, an APS graduate. 218 students, from grades 8-12, participated and were treated to a day of experiences that will enhance and impact their academic, personal and professional lives.

The full day event, conducted entirely in Spanish, opened with a special greeting by Cintia Johnson, Interim Superintendent of Schools, followed by Tannia Talento, Chair of the APS School Board. The keynote speaker, Joel Silva, also known as "El Chepe" of Radio El Zol, 107.9 endeared himself to students and staff alike. His message was powerful and full of encouragement, Joel is a product of APS and a former English learner, having attended Long Branch, Thomas Jefferson and graduated from Wakefield High School which allowed him to connect extraordinarily well with conference attendees. The Urban Latino Performance Group, comprised of all APS students, provided meaningful, relevant entertainment to help kick off the day.

After students worked in small groups on leadership characteristics and styles, they were given a variety of options to attend the fifteen different career sessions. Some examples of the engaging sessions included working in television reporting, cinematography, health careers, police work, social work, medical forensics and more. Students left the full-day conference feeling empowered, proud and happy.

ONGOING WORK

In 2019, APS and The Department of Justice (DOJ) signed a Settlement Agreement. Although the academic results for our English learners are very good, we signed an agreement that covers a variety of areas. The sections in the agreement are: Identification and Placement of ELs; Communications; Provisions of EL Services and Access to the Core Curriculum; Staffing and Professional Development; Curriculum and Resource Allocation; EL Access to Special Services; Program Monitoring and Evaluation; Reporting; and Enforcement. Some of the key points of the Settlement Agreement are:

- Continue to properly identify and support English learners as they acquire English.
- Continue to communicate with parents, including with translations and interpretation in order to ensure parents understanding of the EL services and other APS programs and services.
- Continue to provide English learner instruction to all English learners, including those with disabilities, with the goal that they can become proficient in English;
- Train middle and high school core content teachers of English Learner students so that ELs meaningfully access grade-level curricula;
- Properly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its English Learner programs over time.

In 2018-19 West Ed, a research, development, and services agency and a national leader in English learner education, conducted a comprehensive data review and evaluation of the APS English learner program. In October, 2019, West Ed presented the results of the evaluation to the APS School Board. Dr. Aida Walqui and Dr. Martha Palacios presented the key findings and held an in-depth conversation with the Board about how to continue to develop the English learner services provided to English learners in APS, as well as how to continue to support the families of ELs.

The evaluation had four big-picture recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1

Articulate and communicate an ambitious vision and a shared mission for English Learners

- In order to be maximally effective, all activities within the district should be guided by a clear and coherent vision that reflects how staff believe English Learners are capable.
- Key to the vision and mission is that it is shared by all educators, rather than thinking of the education of English learners as being the primary responsibility of EL teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Offer a coherent portfolio of professional learning opportunities for all educators to strengthen classroom teaching and learning for English learners.

- Continuous professional learning for all teachers, not just EL teachers, should be consistent and focus on the language development needs of English learners.
- Learning opportunities for ELs that balance high challenge with high support.
- Engage ELs in quality interactions that include sustained reciprocal conversations on content.
- Sustain academic rigor and a language focus in teaching ELs.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Ensure that positive school climate and caring relationships continue to grow at the elementary level and that they be consistently instituted at the secondary level.

- A welcoming school climate is of paramount importance in establishing trusting relationships with students and their families.
- Students, too, must feel that the school is a safe place and that they can feel comfortable approaching teachers and other adults.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Define, operationalize, and communicate to educators, parents, and the community at large the purpose, design, approach, and practices of all instructional programs for English Learners.

- Look at secondary Level 1 and 2 EL courses and increase academic rigor, opportunities for quality interactions, and purposeful language focus.

- At elementary, issue guidance with respect to classes and circumstances during which ELs can participate in pull-out instruction.
- Increase coordination and communication within and across school sites, as well as between the district and school sites, in regard to the roles of the many entities serving ELs (eg: Gifted Services, Special Education, etc.).

MOVING FORWARD

The English Learner program evaluation has provided a road map of ways to make the EL services even more effective. The four recommendations give ideas on ways to look at the work that is being done and improve it to better meet the needs of our students and their families. With a strong focus on improving instruction, specifically around rigor, language focus and high-quality interactions, that comes through continuous and consistent professional learning for all teachers, the program evaluation has presented the direction to continue to grow in.

In addition to the EL Program Evaluation, the Office of English Learners will continue to work closely with schools, administrators, teachers and parents in the work of the DOJ Settlement Agreement. In order to be in compliance we will implement the requirements of the document with fidelity.

