



The Multilingual Mosaic

Fast facts about California's
linguistically gifted learners

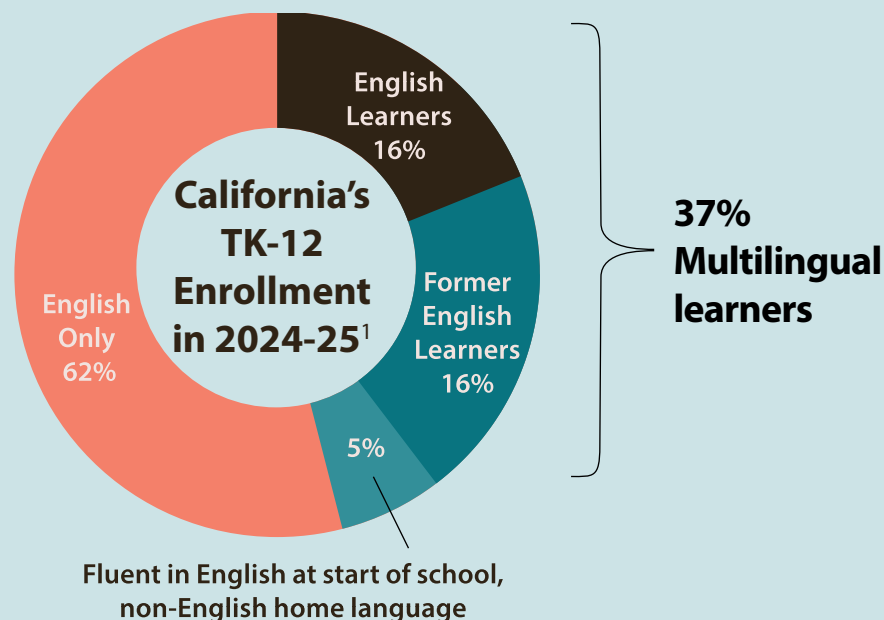


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WEST YEARS

June 2026

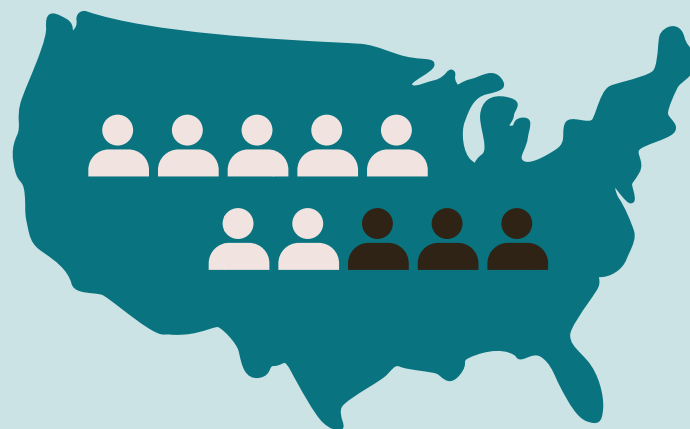


Nearly 40% of California's TK-12 students are multilingual learners who speak over 100 different home languages.



Multilingual students bring a wealth of cultural and linguistic diversity to the classroom.

- 79% of students with a non-English home language speak **Spanish**, nearly 3% speak **Mandarin**, and nearly 2% speak **Vietnamese**.²
- The next most common languages spoken include **Cantonese, Arabic, Russian, Korean,** and **Philippine** languages.

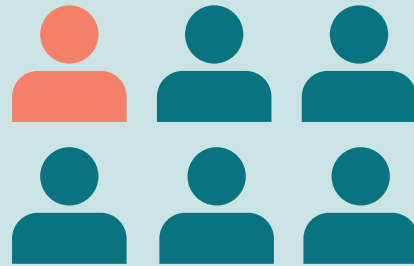


The **majority (73%)** of students in California with limited English proficiency were **born in the U.S.**³

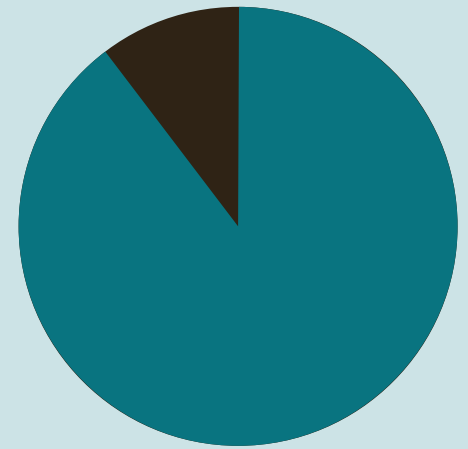
California schools serve the second-largest population of English learner students in the nation.



Nearly **1 million** English learner students call California home.⁴



Nearly 1 in 6 students are English learners who are developing fundamental English skills while also working to master subjects like math, reading, and science.⁵



95% of California's school districts serve English learners.⁶

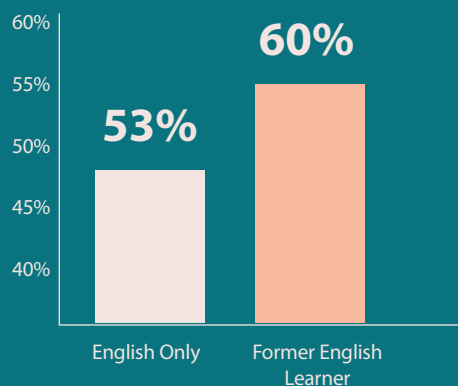


Students' multilingualism is a valuable academic and economic asset.

Multilingual students have stronger problem solving, decision-making, and multitasking skills than their monolingual peers.⁷

Former English learners have better attendance and outperform their English-only peers on state reading tests.⁸

Share of students meeting grade-level standards in ELA



Compared to English-only speakers, fluent bilingual students:



are less likely to drop out of high school

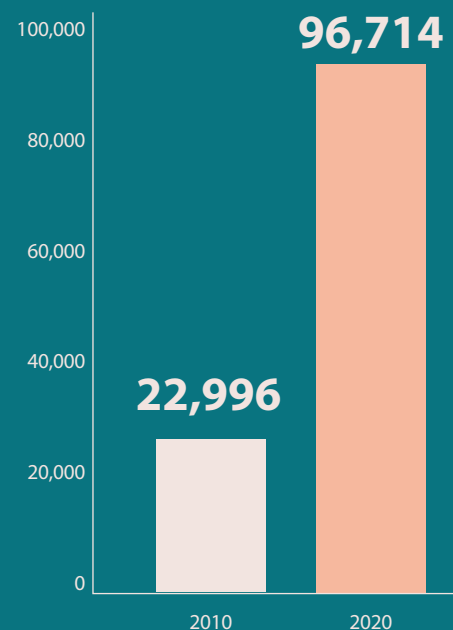


earn salaries **up to 20% higher**⁹



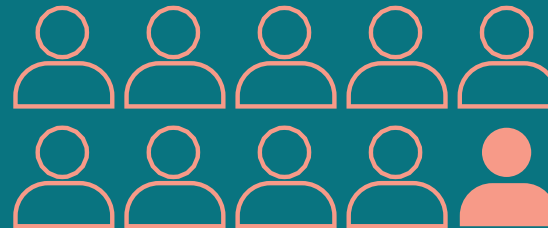
are more likely to work in jobs with high levels of prestige¹⁰

Employers report growing demand for employees with fluency in multiple languages. Between 2010 and 2020, job postings seeking bilingual skills in California **quadrupled**.¹¹



English learners face opportunity gaps that hinder not only academic outcomes, but also college readiness.

California supports only 1 in 10 English learners to reach grade-level standards in math and English language arts.¹²



Share of graduates meeting A-G requirements



29% of English learner graduates



58% of non-English learner graduates

In 2024-25, only **29%** of English learner graduates were supported to complete A-G coursework required for admission to California's public four-year universities, compared to 58% of non-English learner graduates.¹³

English learners are more likely to gain English fluency and thrive academically in multilingual education settings.

Compared to their peers in English-only programs, English learners in dual language immersion programs:¹⁴

- are up to 14 percentage points **more likely to reach English proficiency** by sixth grade
- outperform peers in reading by the equivalent of **7-9 months of learning**
- perform as well as — and often better than — students in English-only programs in math and science.

By seventh grade, Latinx English learners in any bilingual program outperform peers in English Immersion programs in reading and math.¹⁶

Latinx English learners in dual-immersion programs show **twice the growth** in reading and faster growth in math compared to Latinx ELs in other bilingual programs.



**4 out of 5 English learners
are Latinx in California.¹⁵**

How should the facts about California's multilingual learners inform action?



Invest in English Learner Excellence

State leaders should modify the state's Local Control Funding Formula to make sure funding levels reflect the true costs of providing evidence-based instruction and supports for English learner students. School and district leaders should budget in a way that effectively targets funding to positions and programs that directly serve their English learner students.



Expand Dual Language Immersion

State and local leaders should invest in establishing and expanding dual language immersion programs that reflect California's rich cultural and linguistic diversity.



Grow the Bilingual Teacher Workforce

The state needs to issue at least 500 additional bilingual teacher authorizations by 2030 to meet its **Global 2030** goals, and many, many more to meet the true demand from students and families.¹⁷ Supporting early care and education professionals who want to teach in the TK-12 system is one way to make progress toward this goal, as this group is nearly as linguistically diverse as California's young children. California should address the financial barriers that block early childhood educators from TK-12 classrooms and invest in alternative credentialing pathways.



Defend Multilingual Learners' Rights

The federal administration is attacking English learners' protected rights by trying to strip them of the funding and support they are entitled to. We cannot allow them to succeed. State, district, and school leaders must uphold those rights by ensuring multilingual students receive the services, opportunities, and supports they are owed under federal and state law. **English learners' rights** include but are not limited to additional services, accommodations on state assessments, and access to college preparatory coursework. Parents also have the right to request bilingual programs and have their child's district consider them.

Endnotes

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- 4 Migration Policy Institute. (2022). English learners in K-12 education by state [Dataset]. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/english-learners-k-12-education-state>
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- 11 Bay Area Council Economic Institute. (2022). The economic benefits of multilingual learning. http://www.bayareaeconomy.org/files/pdf/BACEI_MultilingualLearning_Oct2022.pdf
- 12 California Department of Education. (2025). English language arts/literacy and mathematics: Smarter balanced summative assessments [Dataset]. <https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/>
- 13 California Department of Education. (2024). 2023–24 four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate [Dataset]. <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?cds=00&agglevel=state&year=2023-24>
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