

Comprehensive Support for Students Learning English

Severe underfunding has led to English Learners in Virginia having remarkably low outcomes nationally. The state must do more to support this critical student group.

Why Additional Support for English Learners (ELs) Can't Wait

- More than 1 in 8 Virginia K-12 students are current or former EL students.
- Exceptionally low funding contributes to Virginia ranking in the [bottom 10 states for EL graduation rates and 8th-grade reading performance](#) on “The Nation’s Report Card” (the NAEP).
- EL students in Virginia saw the largest percentage drop in SOL pass rates among all subgroups measured for every subject test between 2019 and 2021. Undoubtedly, EL students faced among the most barriers to learning during the pandemic and need additional support.
- EL students were more likely to live in homes [experiencing economic hardship](#) over the pandemic.

Our Current Funding Model is leaving English Learners Behind

- [For state supplemental support of EL students, Virginia only contributes a third \(13.5%\) of the national average \(39%\)](#) beyond the baseline allocation. Virginia’s budget for this and next fiscal year failed to include any new targeted EL funding, despite including \$22 million on first draft.
- Unlike other states, [Virginia fails to fund training for general education](#) teachers who work most with EL students and doesn’t support EL learning materials.
- [Limited advanced coursework opportunities](#) lead fewer EL students to post-secondary education.
- Graduation rates have been mostly stagnant over the past decade for EL students, despite improving for other student groups the state measures.

Virginia Can't Afford Not to Invest in English Learners. Opportunities include:

- [Provide more adequate state funding](#) to support EL students, similar to the national average for state supplemental support - this would be a supplement around \$132 to \$169 million annually.
- Fund Virginia Board of Education updates to the Standards of Quality to increase EL instructor to student ratios more for students with less English proficiency, as national experts [recommend](#).
- Follow the example of states like [Maryland](#) and [Michigan](#), and commission independent studies to assess adequate state-funding levels for EL students.
- Provide EL students with more pathways to academic rigor by [automatically enrolling qualified EL students in advanced courses](#) (with an opt-out option).
- Diversify the teacher workforce by scaling teacher pipelines programs like JMU’s [“Grow Your Own” program](#) which covers education costs for a commitment to teach in high-need school divisions.
- Increase funding for community schools and wrap-around services to support immigrant families and EL students with essential services to break down barriers to learning.