

New Information for Families with English Learners in Chicago Public Schools

If your child is or has been an English Learner in CPS, you might have questions about how English Learners are doing in school. Information from a new study by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research shows that **English Learners are succeeding in CPS!**

What does it mean to be an English Learner?

According to CPS and the Illinois State Board of Education, an English Learner is a student whose home language is a language other than English and who would benefit from additional English language classes to fully understand school lessons.

English Learners take a test called ACCESS each year, and their score on this test measures how well they can listen, speak, read, and write in English for their grade level. Once a student earns a passing score on the ACCESS test, they are designated “English proficient,” and they are no longer considered an English Learner.

How many English Learners are in CPS?

In 2019, there were almost 68,000 English Learners in the school district. The number of English Learners is growing in CPS and across the country.

Can my child be successful as an English Learner in CPS?

Yes! The Consortium study found that most CPS students (almost 8 out of 10) who started kindergarten as English Learners listened, spoke, read, and wrote at grade level in English by the end of 5th grade.

How do English Learners in CPS do in school compared to their classmates?

Most students who began kindergarten as English Learners earned grades and test scores that were similar to or higher than their classmates who were not English Learners.

English Learners who became proficient in English by 8th grade had:

- Higher attendance;
- Higher math test scores; and
- Higher grades in math, English, science, and social studies than their classmates who were not English Learners.

Why do I sometimes hear that English Learners are behind in school?

Most information about English Learners only reports the school performance of students who have not yet passed the ACCESS test. It does not include information about the performance of students who have successfully passed the ACCESS test—which is the majority of English Learners by the fifth grade.

This new study reports the achievements of 18,000 English Learners from kindergarten all the way through 8th grade, which is why it gives a more accurate picture of how English Learners are doing in CPS.

What about the English Learners who were not proficient in English by the end of 8th grade? How did they do in school?

In our study, about 1 out of 5 English Learners did not pass the ACCESS test by the 8th grade. Most of these students began school with much lower test scores than their peers. They were still learning and improving, but because they started farther behind, it's harder for them to catch up. School was more challenging for them—they had lower attendance, grades, and test scores than their classmates. The good news is that schools and families can help their English Learners to succeed in school.

What can I do to help my child be successful in school?

If you are concerned about your child's progress, you can:

- Talk to your child's teachers and ask how your student is doing in school. Make sure your child's teacher knows about any concerns you have.
- Ask how your student is doing on the ACCESS test. If your student has a low score on the ACCESS test, ask the school what services are available to support learning English and to support them in all of their classes. Even as early as 1st grade, low ACCESS scores indicate students need extra support.
- Make sure your child continues to come to school every day as they enter the middle grades and in high school.

This information is from the study, *English Learners in Chicago Public Schools: A New Perspective*, by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. Learn more at our website: consortium.uchicago.edu.