



Montana English Language Learner Overview

February 11, 2026

English Language Learners (ELs)

- ELs are students (typically aged 3-21) whose primary or home language is not English and who are in the process of acquiring English proficiency, requiring specialized, tailored instruction to succeed in academic settings.
- Initial identification is through a home language survey upon enrollment. Also by teacher observation in educational settings and/or by their need for support in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English.
- Upon initial identification, students are given an EL screening assessment known as the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Screener to determine EL classification and services.
- Once identified as an EL, a student must receive supports and services until they have tested proficient on the WIDA ACCESS test and exit EL status.
- Districts are required to identify and provide supplemental supports to ELs under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 3113(b)(2) of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Federal Title III Program

Title III is a federal formula grant program that provides supplemental support to EL students to ensure they attain English language proficiency and meet challenging state academic standards. Districts with significant numbers of EL students can apply for funding.

Montana FY 2026 Title III Overview

FY 2026 Allocation	\$500,000
State Administration Budget	\$150,000
LEA Flowthrough	\$350,000
Number of LEAs Receiving Funds	61
Number of EL Students Served	4011
Amount Per Student	\$82.27

Montana EL Students 2016-2025

The table below shows the number of EL students each school year compared to non-EL students from 2016-17 to 2025-25.

School Year	English Learner Status	Enrollment Count
2016-2017	English Learner	2,918
2016-2017	Not English Learner	143,457
2017-2018	English Learner	3,113
2017-2018	Not English Learner	143,659
2018-2019	English Learner	3,391
2018-2019	Not English Learner	144,394
2019-2020	English Learner	3,558
2019-2020	Not English Learner	145,623
2020-2021	English Learner	3,628
2020-2021	Not English Learner	142,004
2021-2022	English Learner	3,555
2021-2022	Not English Learner	145,643
2022-2023	English Learner	4,107
2022-2023	Not English Learner	146,466
2023-2024	English Learner	4,335
2023-2024	Not English Learner	144,250
2024-2025	English Learner	4,695
2024-2025	Not English Learner	139,822

Montana EL Assessment and Achievement

The EL achievement information below comes from the OPI 2024-25 State Report Card.

The EL assessment overview provides the numbers of students assessed, achieving proficiency, and showing progress.

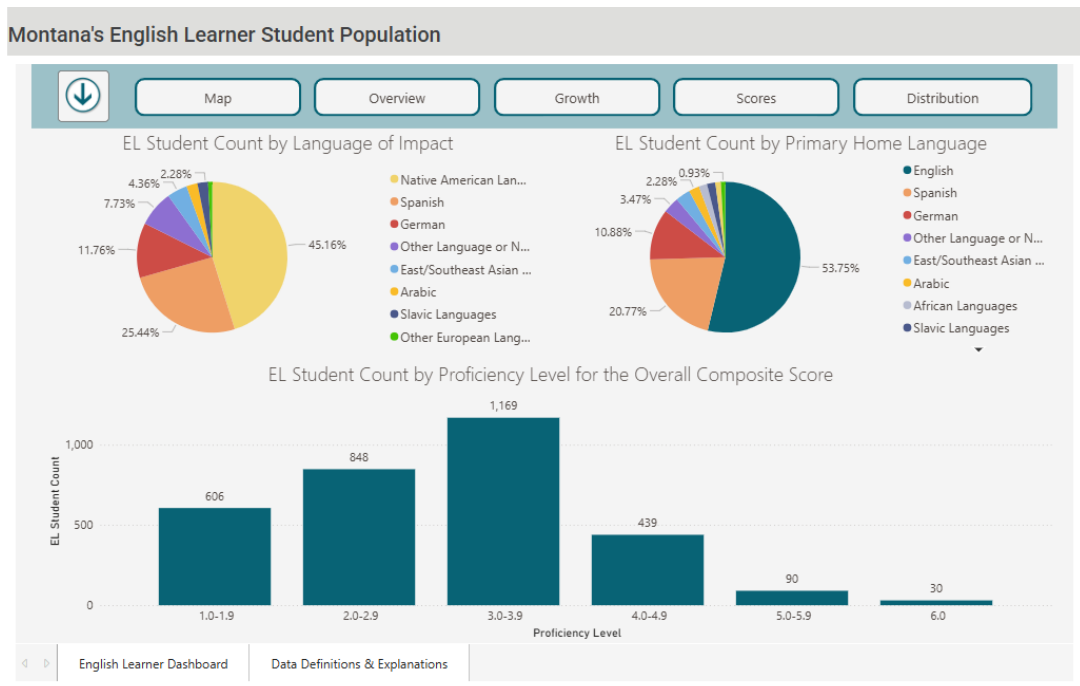
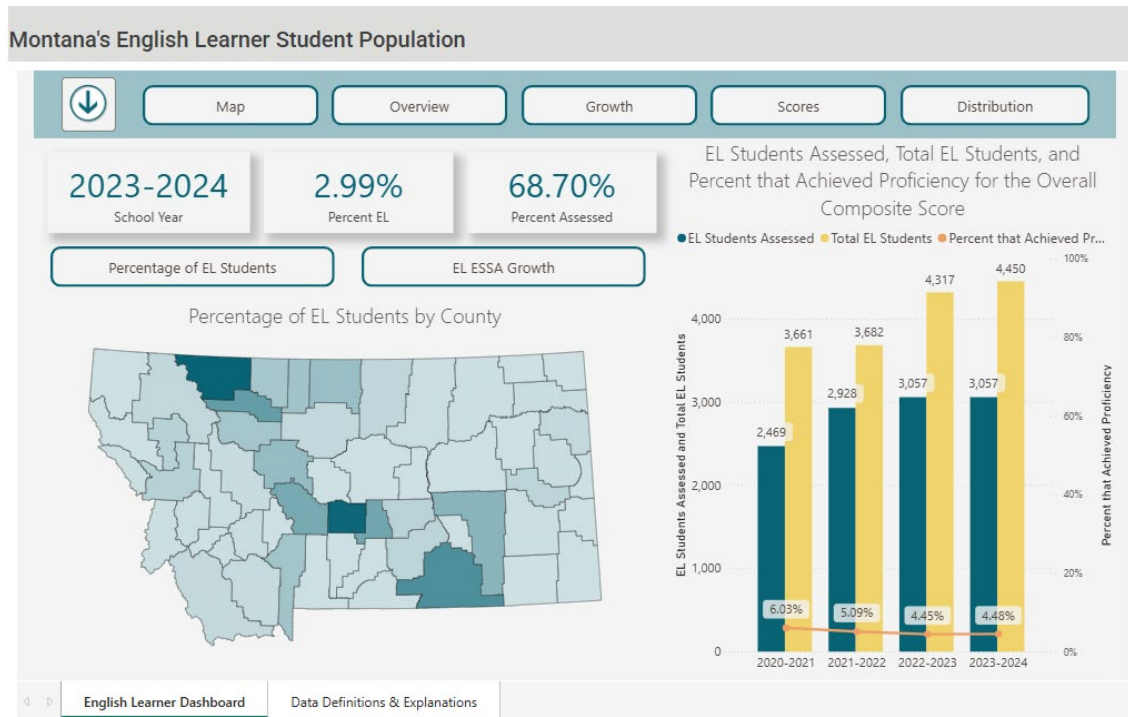
English Learners	
# English Learners	4,714
# Assessed	3,553
# Achieved Proficiency	180
# Progress Eligible	2,314
% Achieved Proficiency	5 %
% Students Showing Progress on the EL Assessment	36 %

In the EL proficiency breakdown below, the blue bar shows the percentage of ELs who are proficient or advanced versus the long-term goals outlined in Montana’s ESSA plan for the 2023-25 school years.

English Learner	2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			
	Novice	Nearing Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	Novice	Nearing Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	Novice	Nearing Proficient	Proficient	Advanced
English Learner (2025)	72%	20%	7%	2%	72%	21%	7%	1%	73%	23%	4%	0%
% Proficient or Advanced Trend (2023 - 2025)												

Montana EL GEMS Data

The EL map and graphs below come from the OPI Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students (GEMS) database. They show EL populations by county, assessment data, and EL home and impact languages.



Montana EL Teacher Certifications

The numbers below show the number of teachers who renewed or gained an initial license that included an EL endorsement in 2024-25.

In 2024-2025:

- 24 teachers renewed their Montana teaching license with an English Second Language Learner Endorsement.
- 22 new teacher licenses included an English Second Language Learner Endorsement.

Native American Language Class 7 Endorsements

Native American students may be identified as ELs if a tribal language is listed as the home language or a language of impact on the home language survey and the WIDA screener identifies them as EL.

The OPI provides a Class 7 Native American Language and Culture Specialist license based upon verification by the authorized representative of a tribal government that has a MOU with the OPI. The chart below shows active class 7 languages by tribal language from SY 2021-26.

Endorsement Area	SY2021	SY2022	SY2023	SY2024	SY2025	SY2026
<i>Grand Total</i>	24	29	38	26	24	23
Assiniboine K-12	3	4	1	2	3	3
Blackfeet K-12	10	8	8	8	4	4
Cheyenne K-12	5	4	2	1	2	4
Chippewa K-12			4		1	
Cree K-12	3	2	11	4	2	2
Crow K-12	3	5	9	4	10	9
Dakota K-12		2	1	1	1	
Gros Ventre K-12		2	1	2		1
Pend d'Oreille K-12		1				
Salish K-12		1	1	4	1	

Additional Information and Resources

[U.S. Department of Education Title III Website](#)

[Office of Civil Rights Requirements for ELs](#)

[OPI EL Guidance for School Districts](#)

[OPI Title III Funding Guide](#)

[2024-25 Montana State Report Card](#)

[Regional Education Laboratory \(REL\) Southwest Native American EL Study Summary](#)

[What Works Clearinghouse Promising Practices Research In EL Instruction 2021-Present](#)