



Montana English Language Learner Overview



February 2026



Overview

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

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



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.

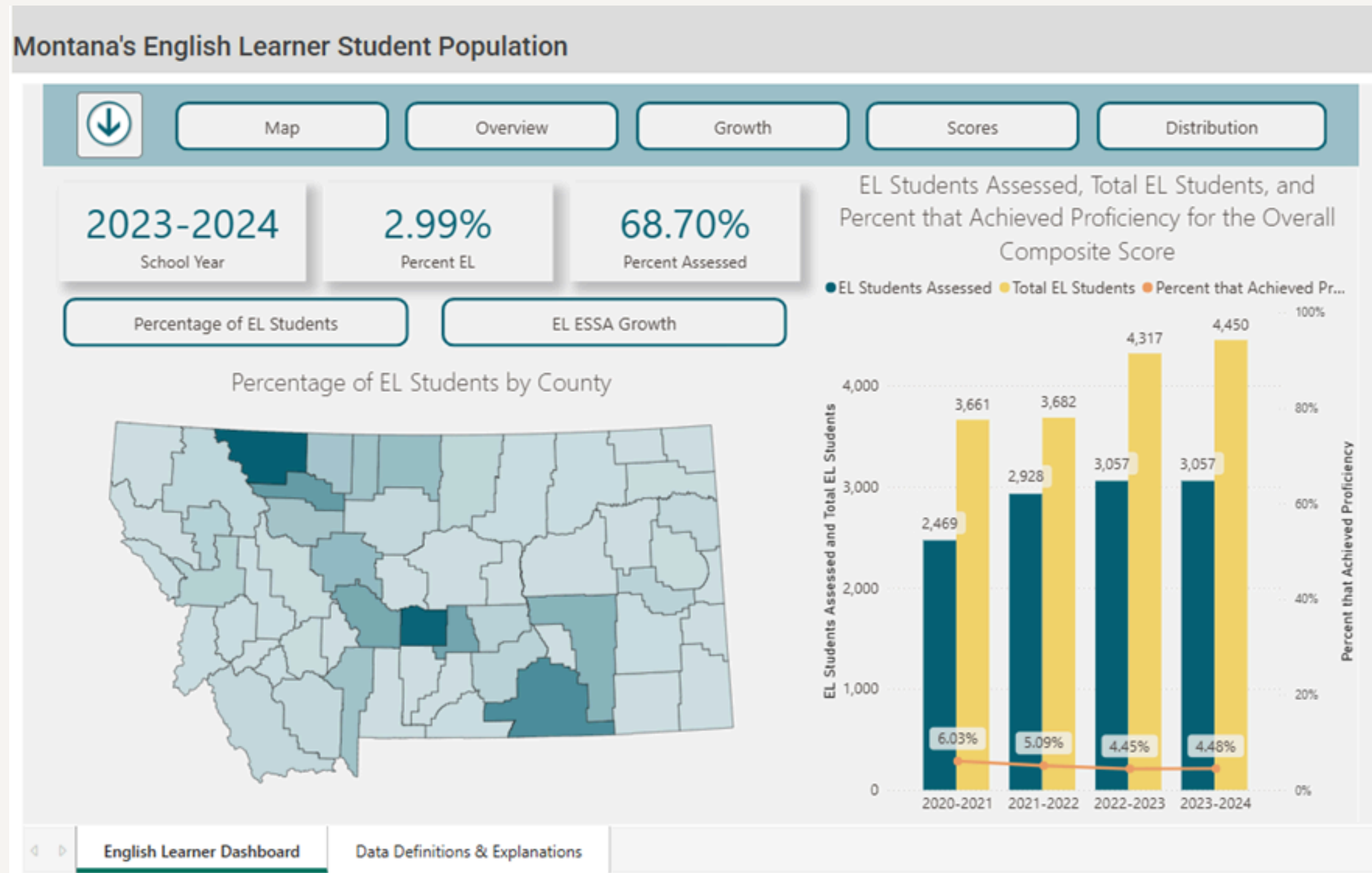
English Learner	Nearing Proficient				Proficient				Advanced			
	Novice	Proficient	Advanced	Novice	Proficient	Advanced	Novice	Proficient	Advanced	Novice	Proficient	Advanced
English Learner (2025)	72%	20%	7%	2%	72%	21%	7%	1%	73%	23%	4%	0%
% Proficient or Advanced Trend (2023 - 2025)												





Montana EL GEMS Data

The following EL map and graphs 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's English Learner Student Population



Map

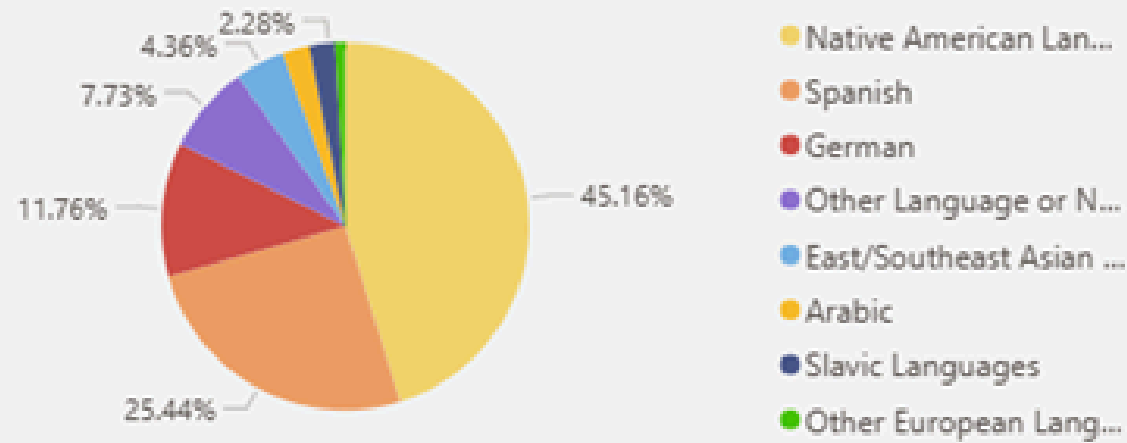
Overview

Growth

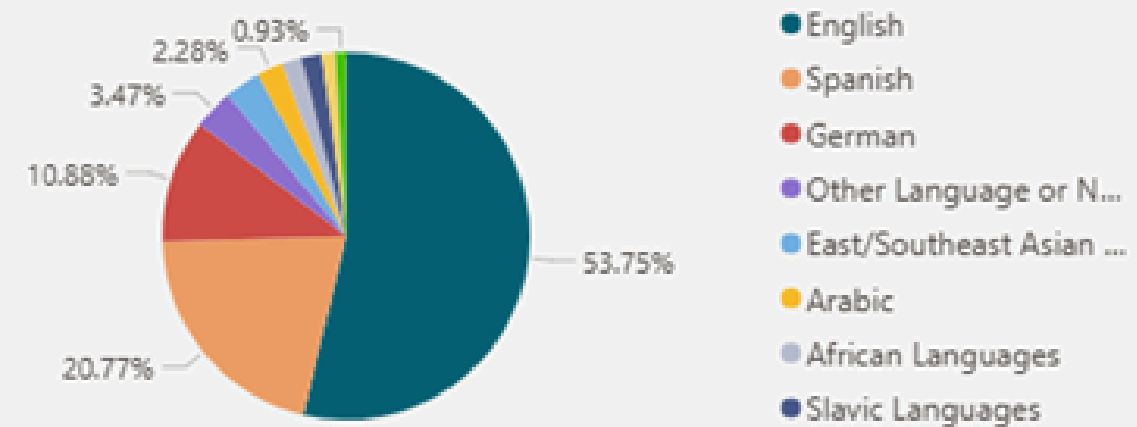
Scores

Distribution

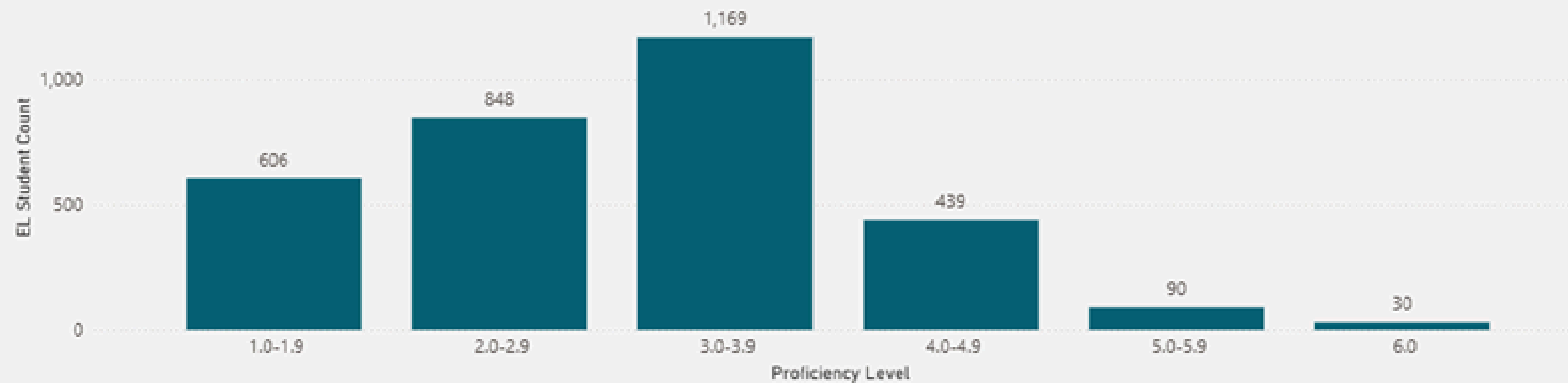
EL Student Count by Language of Impact



EL Student Count by Primary Home Language



EL Student Count by Proficiency Level for the Overall Composite Score



English Learner Dashboard

Data Definitions & Explanations

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](#)





Questions?



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