

EXPAND SUPPORT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The Community Legislative Action Team recommends an increase in weighted English Language Learner (ELL) funding to .39, in accordance with evidence-based practice and as recommended by the 2013 task force report on ELL education in Iowa.

Background

- English Language Learners (ELL) are the fastest growing group of students in the Des Moines Public School District, representing more than 22% of the student population.
- The District serves more than 7,300 ELL students, with 156 committed teachers and staff, at 50 different sites in the community.
- The diverse student population represents 106 different nations and speaks 200 different languages and dialects.
- Since 1990, the ELL population has grown by more than 700% while overall student population has remained stable.
- The ELL population in the Des Moines Public School District accounts for nearly a quarter of the ELL student population statewide.

Why This is a Good Investment

- Better Prepares Students: Increasing the weighted funding will improve services provided to ELL students and help develop their proficiency in the English language so they can be successful in the educational setting.
- Lower Student-Teacher Ratio: ELL enrollment at DMPS has increased by an average of nearly 300 students per year over the past 10 years, a trend expected to continue for the foreseeable future.
- Expand Intensive Language Centers: Intensive language programs are particularly important to support immigrant and refugee students who have little or no literacy in their home language

Why This is urgent

- ELL students would benefit from additional time given the amount of learning required to achieve proficiency in a second language.
- The belief that children immersed in the English language will accelerate proficiency does not align with research.
- We believe that children benefit from learning in their primary language before a secondary language can be effectively taught. This process takes time.
- DMPS continues to enroll refugee students from around the world. The critical needs of these students, in addition to learning English, are multiple and resource intensive.
- The ELL student graduation rate in the state is 82.9%, compared with an overall graduation rate of 90.8%. Additional resources are necessary to close this gap.