

ENGLISH LEARNERS

SPRING 2020 | BRIEF 3

WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

High School English Learners - Increasing Retention and Graduation

Historically, English learners (ELs) have comprised approximately 8% of the total state public school student population. But as ELs move toward proficiency and exit EL status over time, the percentage of ELs at the high school level has traditionally remained under 5%.

In 2018-2019, Oklahoma public schools served 8,970 ELs in grades 9-12, composing 4.64% of that year's total 9-12 population. While Oklahoma enjoys comparatively low dropout rates, it is important to recognize that EL students in the state remain significantly more likely to drop out between grades 9-12 than their non-EL peers.

In 2018-2019, ELs comprised 4.64% of the state's 9-12 population but represented 8.55% of the total number of dropouts. It is also important to note that the highest dropout rate among ELs occurs consistently in grade 9. And while EL males drop out at numerically higher numbers than EL females, this may be explained by the fact that males outnumber females by approximately 25% within the EL state high school population.

Lastly, for school years 2017, 2018 and 2019, the percentage of ELs as part of the state 9-12 population has consistently increased by roughly a percentage point per year.

WHY IT MATTERS

- English learners comprise approximately 8% of Oklahoma students.
- The percentage of Oklahoma ELs at the high school level has steadily risen over the past three years, reaching 4.64% in 2018-2019.
- As the percentage of Oklahoma ELs at the high school level has increased, we have seen a corresponding increase in the dropout rate among those ELs, from 6.86% in 2017 to 8.55% in 2019.
- In 2019, the 8.55% dropout rate for grade 9-12 Oklahoma English learners was more than three times greater than the 2.3% dropout rate of their grade 9-12 non-EL peers.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- **Improve** EL retention and graduation by creating conditions that foster and encourage educational persistence among EL students.
- **Provide** a culturally relevant curriculum primarily focused on English language proficiency (ELP) to ensure equitable access to learning.
- **Provide** support for students who previously have not seen themselves as academically proficient.
- **Work** to ensure the curriculum is perceived as relevant to life after graduation.
- **Provide** support for Individual Career Academic Planning (ICAP) components.
- **Provide** supplemental post-secondary enrollment and process supports to better prepare first-generation EL students for college success.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How are we ensuring that students attain a level of English language proficiency that allows access to learning?
- How are we providing an educational environment that requires the intentional use of all four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) every day?
- What supports could we offer our potential first-generation college students in planning for their futures?
- How can we ensure ELs have support for Individual Career Academic Planning?
- Are we asking if students see themselves as high school graduates? What is our intervention if they do not?
- How can we best ensure our curriculum is perceived as relevant to our EL students?

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

Provide strong peer-to-peer and student-teacher relationships. Relationships based on rigor and relevance have been shown to be significant factors in high school completion.

Apply available resources to those areas the school can control, such as curriculum, school climate, fostering relationships and class size.

Provide resources to support culturally relevant curriculum, positive school climate, small class size and opportunities for fostering relationships.

Provide equal access to the curriculum.

Ensure student English language proficiency is a primary focus of any curriculum.

Establish 9th-grade interventions to support greater student engagement and connections to the school.

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