



WELCOMING NEW IOWANS

ENGLISH LEARNERS IN IOWA

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As a first line of welcome and support for immigrant families, Iowa public schools are helping students learn English so they can succeed in school and become a productive part of our communities and our economy.

Why English Learning Programs Matter

Just as pioneers settled in Iowa centuries ago, immigrants still seek a better life in Iowa, “the beautiful land.” Our state has a long history of welcoming refugees from war-torn and impoverished home lands, coming to our state seeking the American dream. Today our Iowa public schools are teaching English to students from many different cultures and backgrounds so that they may receive the full benefits of a sound education.

An English learner is a student who is in the process of learning to speak, read, write and understand academic English. This is the English that is used in classrooms, textbooks and tests. English learners are usually students whose home language is not English. Students receive language development to improve their skills while also learning about other subjects such as math and science. Students are tested annually for proficiency.

Top Four Native Languages of Iowa English Learners



As well as many others, including:

Vietnamese, Bosnian, Chinese, Somali, Burmese, Lao, Russian, Marshallese, Nepali, French, Rundi, German, Dinka, Hmong, Pohnpeian, Nilo-Saharan, Germanic, Telugu, Tagalog, Urdu, Korean, Hindi, Tigrinya, Chuukese, Ukrainian, Japanese, Albanian, and more.

The Annual Condition of Education Report, Iowa Department of Education, 2021



English Learners in Public Iowa Schools: By the Numbers

In 31 Iowa public school districts, 8.2% of students are currently learning English. English Learners are among the fastest-growing populations in our schools, comprising over 6% of the student population in Iowa.

Percent of Students Learning English in Iowa Public Schools

2000–01

11,248

2.3% of all students

2021–22

31,681

6.6% of all students

Top 5 Districts in Serving English Learners, 2021–22

Storm Lake

41% of students

Postville

38.7% of students

Denison

36% of students

Marshalltown

32.9% of students

West Liberty

27.5% of students

Language Learning Takes Time

English proficiency is reached when students can:

- Listen, speak, read and write in English
- Be successful in the classroom setting where there is language instruction
- Be able to actively participate in their classroom, school, community and beyond

Iowa Department of Education Statistics

Getting Results: Graduation Rates of Students with Limited English Proficiency Through the Years

Iowa public schools are making progress in closing achievement gaps for students not fluent in the English language.

	2009 Grad Rate	2020 Grad Rate	Grad Rate Change
English Learners	64%	76.7%	+ 12.7%
All Students	87.3%	91.8%	+ 4.5%

Iowa Condition of Education Reports, Iowa Department of Education, 2011 & 2020