



By Delaware Business Now - OCTOBER 2018

# Report: English learners, a majority of whom are native-born, victims of obsolete school funding formula

A [new series of fact sheets](#) launched by the Delaware Hispanic Commission, the Arsht-Cannon Fund, Delaware English Language Learners Teachers and Advocates, and the Rodel Foundation of Delaware show the state is behind the curve in dealing with a fast-growing portion of the school population.

Initial findings are as follows:

- 75% of Delaware EL students are native-born Americans.
- 78% of ELs are in grades K-5.
- 50% of ELs are also low-income.
- From 1997 to 2016, Delaware has experienced a statewide increase of over 400% in the number of English learner students—including nearly 600% growth in Sussex County.
- Today more than 10,000 English learner students attend Delaware schools, representing nearly 100 different languages, the most common of which is Spanish.
- Delaware is one of only four states that does not provide additional funding for English learners..

“The EL student population has grown at a fast rate and the majority of the population is Hispanic,” says Javier Torrijos, chair of the Delaware Hispanic Commission. “It is very important that Delaware meets the educational needs of all EL students. These students not only face a language barrier but also often come from low-income homes that present more challenges for them to obtain a higher education and eventually a pathway to a successful career.”

The partners will release five fact sheets throughout the next several months. The information

will investigate a school year in the life of an English learner, how the education system is serving them, what be done to better meet their needs, and the potential consequences if the state doesn't make an investment.

"We hope this series sheds light on this critically underserved group of students," says Paul Herdman, CEO of the Rodel Foundation. "If we aim to equitably and effectively educate every student in Delaware's public schools, we need to level the playing field and the first step is to understand the assets they bring and the challenges they face. By getting this information into the hands of our community and political leaders, we hope we contribute to this important equity conversation."

Blending state- and national-level data with infographics and anecdotes, the fact sheets bring to light compelling information while myth-busting common misconceptions.

"English Learners are not merely the ESL teacher and district coordinator's responsibility; they're everyone's responsibility. It is to everyone's benefit when all students, including ELs, are school- and college-ready," says Oribel McFann-Mora, president of Delaware English Language Learners Teachers and Advocates (DELLTA). "It's important that the resources needed to support ELs—like qualified teachers, quality curriculum and materials—are ready and available at every school and school district."

"It is heartbreaking to know that so many of our youngest Delawareans sit in the back of the classroom without the support needed to learn," says Christine Cannon, executive director of the Arsht-Cannon Fund. "Many of these students are left struggling and, without the foundational skills of reading and writing, they could face significant lifelong consequences in terms of their health, educational advancement, and economic status."

Find Fact Sheet No. 1, "Who Are English Learners in Delaware's Schools?" online at [bit.ly/ELsInDE](https://bit.ly/ELsInDE), along with additional information and resources about the state's EL student population.