



# Ready or Not, Here They Come: A Deeper Look at English Language Learners in the Classroom

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## INTRODUCTION

Schools across America are continuing to see a rise in their population of English Language Learners. The following states have seen the most impact of this growing population: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois and Arizona. In fact, these states are responsible for educating 70% of the students considered to be English Language Learners.

Many of these students are starting school at a disadvantage to their peers. They are behind grade level and often have little to no knowledge of the English language. These students face serious risks of future failure and could potentially become high school dropouts if the necessary interventions are not put in place in order to boost their academic abilities. Reading scores among English Language Learners and their non-English Language peers are noticeably different. There is so much of a gap, it has become known as the “achievement gap.”

There is a great need to raise scores of these below basic students so that they can become successful, participate in all aspects of the classroom, and feel confident in themselves. Teachers have the daunting task of making sure all their students are equipped with the skills needed to become proficient readers. The use of technology becomes a vital key in helping teachers with getting their students some of the necessary skills needed to become proficient readers. With the use of computers and ipads, teachers can gear instruction to areas in which students need the support. These programs can often meet a student at their current level and save all information learned, thus tracking their progress and growth, and leading them on a path that is geared specifically at their level.

### What is ELL?

ELL is the term used for students whose primary home language is other than English and who have been identified as not yet fluent in using the English language.

## OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this project are as follows:

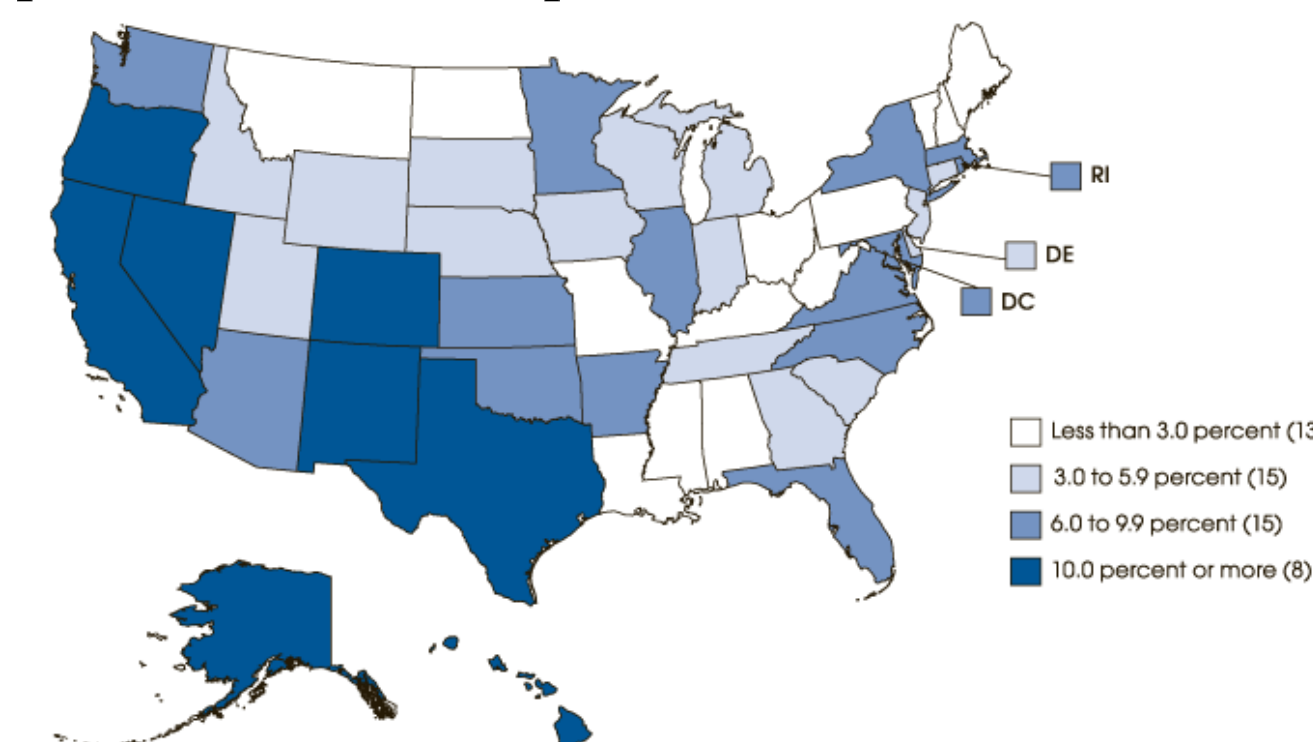
- Best apps for ipad use and programs for computer use would be researched in order to find those that would benefit and improve English language skills for English Language Learners in grades K-2.
- A website would be created as a resource tool for K-2 educators listing useful ipad apps and computer programs in order to boost English Language skills. This website will also hold insightful information showing educators the startling truth and statistics about ELL students.



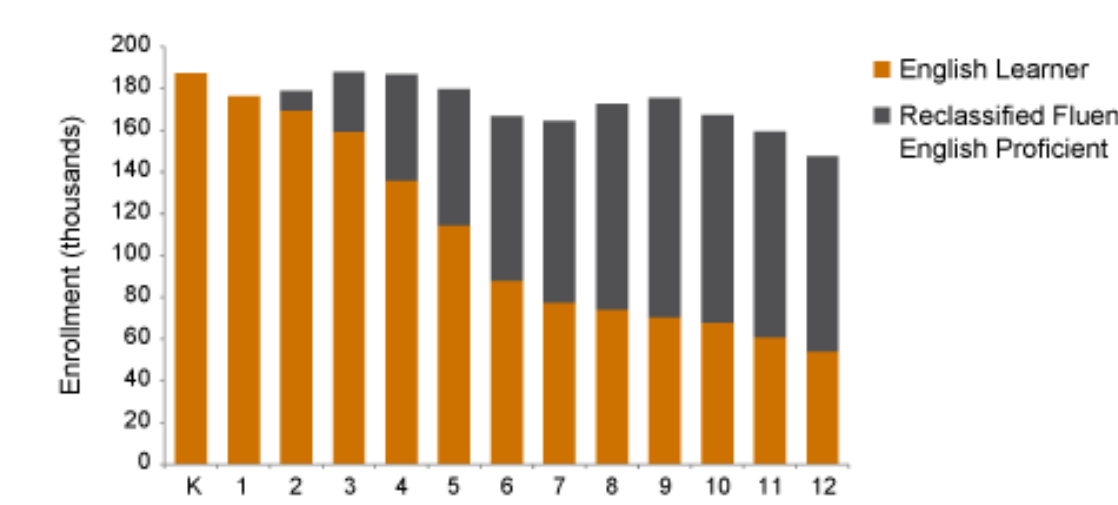
## STATISTICS

Did you know...

- California Public Schools have 22.7 percent of their total population made up of English Language Learners. This is equivalent to 1,413,549 students.
- 43.1% of students enrolled in California public schools speak a language other than English in their homes. This is equivalent to 2,685,793 students.
- 73% of English Language Learners are enrolled in Kindergarten through sixth grades. The other 27% are in grades seven through twelve.
- 84.24% of English Language Learners speak Spanish. This makes Spanish the top language in the state after English.
- The states with the highest number of ELL students were Alaska, California, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, New Mexico, Texas, and Hawaii. In these states, 10% or more of the students were English Language Learners.
- In the 2002-03 school year, 8.7% (~4.1 million students) of the public school population was made up of ELL's.
- In the 2011-12 school year, 9.1% (~4.4 million students) of the public school population was made up of ELL's.

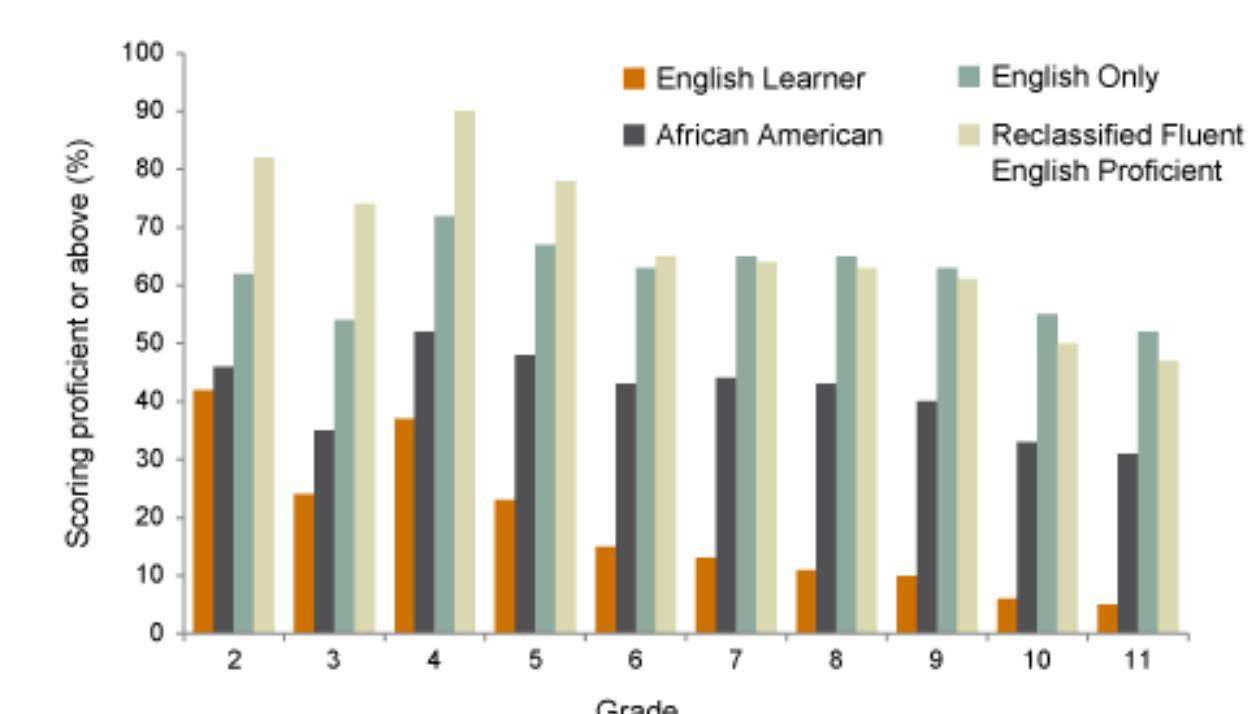


- It is estimated that of ELL students grades K-5, 82% of them are native born. This number decreases to 55% of student's grades 6-12.
- More than 13% of Kindergarteners in California are ELL's. That's the equivalent to 180,000 students. This number decreases as student progress through the grades and are reclassified as English proficient. See the table below for further information.



- Students that score higher than English-only students and EL students in academics

	English Language Arts	Math
All students	82	83
RFEF	94	92
English Only	87	85
EL	44	56



UNTIL GRADE 7, RECLASSIFIED STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO ACHIEVE CST SCORES OF PROFICIENT OR ABOVE

## TECHNOLOGY



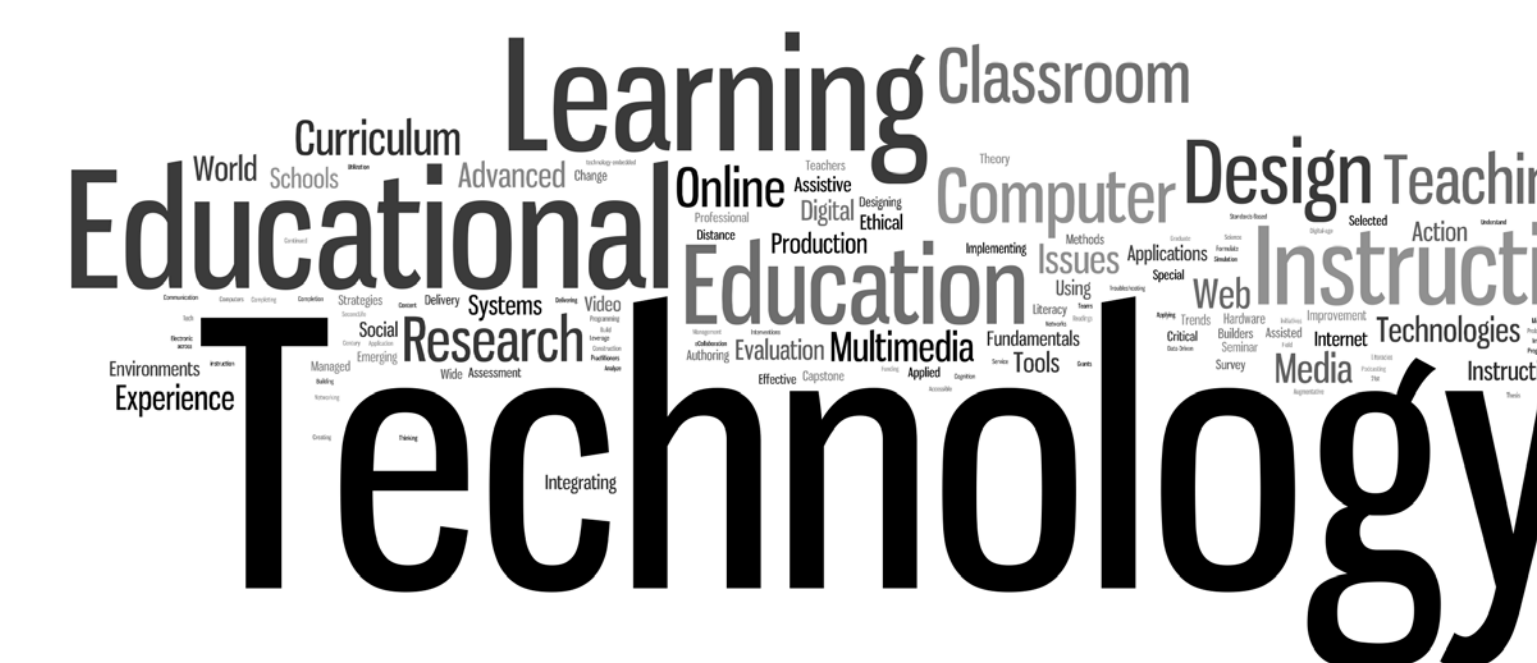
As many studies have indicated, it is predicted in the coming years that almost one in three student in U.S. public schools will be English Language Learners. This puts a lot of weight and pressure on schools since the No Child Left Behind Act, pushes to ensure all subgroups of students will make adequate yearly progress. For this reason, it is crucial for ELLs to quickly succeed and gain proficiency in the English Language. The following areas are those that play an important part to learning a language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. It is believed that technology can play a part in supporting the learning and teaching of English (Kelso, 2010).

*“Computer and communication technologies have a central role to play in facilitating that rapid mastery. With guided, self-paced instruction that allows repetition and personalization, English learners in today’s K-20 classroom are strides ahead of their counterparts years ago.”*

~Dr. Kari Kelso, 2010

The most beneficial programs that support ELL's allow students to work at their own pace and create meaning to the student. These programs allow the students to learn in a safe environment, where students are able to celebrate their successes, practice new concepts and have failures, in an environment that is safe and nonjudgmental. These programs should allow students to interact, converse, and collaborate. They should be personalized for all students, be rich in context and content-based.

Unlike teacher instruction, the use of computers and the Internet allows students the opportunity to readily access programs as well as the ability to repeat lessons and make mistakes while getting immediate feedback of mistakes and successes without judgment being made. Technology also provides an environment in which students can feel safe and unthreatened. Early on in learning a new language, students' progress can be affected by small failures or due to feeling uncomfortable. When using a computer or alternative form of technology, students are able to avoid the anxiety and stress that can come from being in front of a class. Alternatively, they are able to gain confidence in a private setting before being asked to participate in a classroom setting. There education and growth in learning English can also become available to them 24/7 with the flexibility and easy connectivity to the Internet (Kelso, 2010).



## TIPS FOR WORKING WITH ELL'S

- Teach Phonics
  - Build Fluency
  - Support Vocabulary Development
  - Give nonverbal support in order to build comprehension
- It is important for teachers to incorporate the following three concepts into their teaching**
- ELLs must first be taught the sounds of English before they can develop phonological awareness;
  - Teachers will need to differentiate instruction in order to allow more time to practice challenging sounds that may lead to confusion;
  - Phonological awareness is the base of language. Once it is learned in any language, it is transferred to future languages learned (Irujo, 2014).

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, these statistics and research have proven the sheer importance of making sure English Language Learners get the boost needed in order to achieve academically and proficiently. With 73% of ELLs being enrolled in K-6<sup>th</sup> grades, early elementary years become crucial in supporting these students. With the direction the world is heading in regards to technology, students in all grades, though specifically grades K-6 have the opportunity to use computers and ipads to better serve their needs and to boost their English language development. Teachers have the huge task of educating this growing population, regardless the level of the student. Teacher's can also count on technology to support their teaching practices and pick best apps to support students in whatever area they may need support.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Irujo, Suzanne (2014). What Does Research Tell Us About Teaching Reading to English Language Learners. *Reading Rockets*, Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/19757>
- Kelso, Kari (2010). Educational Technologies for English Language Learners. *Center for Digital Education*, Retrieved from [www.centerdigitaled.com](http://www.centerdigitaled.com).

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## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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