

ACCESS TO ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING INCREASES EL EQUITY

Language proficiency is a critical skill every student must master. It is the foundation for lifelong academic and career achievement. In the US, students will struggle in all other areas of their education without the ability to speak, read, and write well in English, while feeling less included in American society.

English Learners (EL) and the teachers, curriculum and instruction directors, principals, and superintendents who support them, all have a stake in students learning to speak English.

ELs are usually either newcomers in elementary school or long-term English learners from late middle school to high school. They are as smart as their native English-speaking peers, but their progress is hampered because of inadequate English language ability.

Educators and school administrators will grapple with this situation for years to come. According to the United States Department of Education, over 4.8 million EL students were enrolled in grades K-12 in the 2014-2015 academic year, or roughly 10 percent of the total student population.¹ ELs are the fastest growing school-age population in the United States, projected to account for 25 percent of enrollment by 2025.²

ELs are a diverse group, representing many cultures and languages. While Spanish is their most common native language, ELs also speak nearly 150 other languages depending on where they live. ELs attend public schools in all 50 states, in urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Some ELs are immigrants, but the majority are US-born American citizens.³

To meet the English language learning needs of these students, schools must ensure equity. That is, to provide learning resources to enable ELs to close the achievement gap and excel at levels that match their English-speaking peers. Equity in one case might mean giving some students additional classroom time and teacher interaction, while providing other ELs with independent, computer-aided instruction.

This paper will examine how technology-enabled English language learning contributes to equity that benefits EL students, teachers, and school districts.



IMPACT OF DEFICIENT LANGUAGE LEARNING AND SUPPORT

Individuals and communities rely on sharing a language to join in activities, exchange ideas, hone social skills—and give learning the chance to flourish.

In the US, English language learning is the focus for every school district committed to student equity.

In districts where language learning falls short or is not robust, both EL students and their dedicated teachers will feel the effects:

As teachers and districts struggle with their own frustrations and limitations to provide equity to their EL students, language learning technology is opening new doorways to academic success

• **Insufficient training.** A study from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine revealed that educators of EL students do not get the proper training to meet their social, emotional, and education needs.⁴

• **Inadequate resources.** The National Education Association found that "current school resources are inadequate" and that many EL students receive "English as a Second Language classes with little or no support for academic content, and a diminishing number receive primary language instruction."⁵

• **A sense of exclusion.** ELs unable to communicate confidently will naturally feel left out from the learning process. This sense of isolation helps widen the achievement gap and makes it harder to form lasting bonds with their fellow English-speaking students.

• **Higher poverty levels.** The EL population that needs the most help often receives the least. Colorín Colorado, an educational service for K-12 educators, found that "Nearly 60% of ELs nationwide are from low-income families in which parents have 'disproportionately' limited levels of education."⁶

• **Lower graduation rates.** According to an analysis of data from the Department of Education by NPR, "Only 63 percent of [ELs] graduate from high school, compared with the overall national rate of 82 percent."⁷

• **Decreased community involvement.** An article on HotChalk Education Network says, "As English Language Learners of all ages work to improve both their content knowledge and English language skills, they engage meaningfully with their communities in a number of ways."⁸ Hence, ELs who lack language skills are less likely to participate in their community and interact with their neighbors, fellow citizens, and local businesses.

As teachers and districts struggle with their own frustrations and limitations to provide equity to their EL students, language learning technology is opening new doorways to academic success. Let's see how.



EDTECH FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING SUPPORTS EQUITY

Technology continues to have a growing and profound impact on teaching and learning. Indeed, tech-enabled language learning tools are key resources that teachers and school districts can use to bring equity to their classrooms and close the achievement gap for their EL students.

Not surprisingly, some educators view the introduction of tech-enabled language tools with caution. They have understandable concerns and questions, such as: How will these tools affect the teacher/student relationship? Are they merely fancy toys that will undermine true learning? Will they lead to the downsizing and even replacement of human teachers?

Rather than a threat, tech-enabled (or EdTech) language learning can improve the learning outcome for EL students and give teachers more time to teach. For example:

- **Empowers teachers.** With EdTech, teachers can decide which language learning situation is best for each EL student. Some students may benefit from blended learning while others may need more personal time with teachers. EdTech facilitates both and gives teachers more control.
- **Greater student engagement.** According to an analyst for CDW-G, a technology solutions provider, "Variations in instructional media allow teachers to focus on teaching and allow students to access the learning process....Students tend to engage and collaborate on projects when technology is made available."⁹
- **More convenient access to language lessons.** EdTech makes it easier for EL students to access language learning lessons outside of regular classroom hours, accelerating their progress.
- **Greater inclusion.** As EL students rapidly expand their language skills through tech-enabled learning, they will feel more integrated in the classroom and develop stronger attachments to their classmates.
- **Builds stronger communities.** Bilingual students play an integral part in their communities. A report from the Philadelphia Education Research Consortium found: "Strategic school-family-community partnerships are associated with higher levels of academic achievement, improved school attendance, higher graduation rates, greater enrollment in postsecondary education, and more positive attitude toward school."¹⁰
- **Facilitates student and teacher interaction.** According to Todd Rose of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, newer personalized learning models that include some form of online instruction can free "up more time for high-value relationships between the teacher and the student and [between] that student with other students."¹¹



- **Narrows the digital divide.** EL students, especially those in early grades, who use some form of technology to learn language will become more familiar and comfortable with technology, helping them close the digital divide with their monolingual English-speaking peers.
- **Promotes independent learning.** Access to EdTech instruction will motivate some students to pursue learning on their own, complementing and reinforcing classroom-based lessons.

Rosetta Stone English for Education gives administrators, teachers, and families proven online and offline resources to help students learn English

While some schools may be new to tech-enabled language learning, other schools have already seen the benefits gained by their EL student population, teachers, and administrative staff. As more districts turn to EdTech in their quest for equity in their classrooms, it's important to find the right tech tools.

What capabilities and features should be considered? Let's find out.

ROSETTA STONE ENGLISH FOR EDUCATION

Achieving equity in classroom outcomes for EL students is a challenge for every school. Some ELs may need more one-on-one instructional time with a teacher, while others benefit from self-directed learning. Families are also perfectly positioned to provide students additional support when the right programs are in place.

Rosetta Stone English for Education gives administrators, teachers, and families proven online and offline resources to help students learn English, and features:

Foundational content. ELs use an award-winning interactive program that develops fundamental English language skills, gets learners speaking immediately, and accelerates the drive toward speaking confidence.

- **Dynamic Immersion.** ELs begin learning and speaking English immediately. Only English is used in the program so students learn to readily adapt to real conversations.
- **Pronunciation assistance.** TruAccent® speech recognition technology guides a learner's pronunciation helping ELs build confidence in their speaking abilities.
- **Live Tutoring.** ELs talk directly and practice their skills with native English-speaking tutors in a safe, friendly environment.

Classroom Builders. A teachers' library of resources supports a higher degree of EL classroom integration with activity guides to reinforce online content.

- *The Teacher's Guide* expands teachers' instructional reach with complete lesson plans aligned with online lessons.
- *Student Activities* engage learners with differentiated reading passages, comprehension questions, workbooks, memory games, and more.



Implementation and product training. Training and Services teams work closely with administrators and educators to assist in a successful program launch and to monitor overall progress. One key goal is to implement online programs that will blend effectively with in-class teacher instruction.

Professional development. An essential part of the English for Education offering is professional development. Educators have access to training sessions on relevant EL topics.

Placement and progress test for Grades 6-12. Students complete an online assessment that teachers use to identify each EL's best starting point in the program. This leads to better learning outcomes.

Family connection resources. Resources include weekly language learning activities students and families can do together, monthly webinars in Spanish about family support for ELs, and best practice tips for teachers to increase family engagement in classroom activities.

Access to The Bridge. Teachers exchange ideas, ask questions, and share best practices in this favorite K-12 online customer community where language teachers connect with each other.

When a school or district chooses English for Education, additional EdTech features further support the drive toward English language learning equity.

- **Administrator tools.** Easy-to-understand reporting tools allow teachers to track and measure student and group progress quickly.
- **Mobile apps.** EL students can practice and learn their lessons, inside and outside the classroom, with Rosetta Stone mobile apps for portable digital devices.
- **Anytime/anywhere accessibility.** ELs can access their lessons at any time and in any location—in the classroom, at home, in a wired hotspot—and on almost any digital device, ensuring steady and sustained progress in their language proficiency.
- **Flexible solutions.** Schools can get language training programs customized to meet their particular needs and challenges for the best use of district-wide resources.
- **Scalable programs.** Districts and schools can scale a program easily to serve the greatest number of ELs in the most efficient way possible.
- **Wide language choice.** Rosetta Stone offers up to 24 languages for school instruction, including English, Spanish, French, Mandarin, Portuguese, and many more to accommodate today's diverse EL population. This enables teachers to learn a language spoken by their students' families.



Rosetta Stone can provide customized eLearning language programs to add equity to the learning potential of EL students. Let's look at how these solutions are being implemented in the nation's schools.

BOOSTING EL STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

With 23 schools in the district, Bullitt County Public Schools (BCPS) in Kentucky had seen its EL student population surge. Even so, they didn't see the need to hire full-time EL personnel at each school.

District officials were perplexed, though. How could they serve the needs of their burgeoning EL student body given resource constraints—and where the schools were spread out over a wide geographic area?

BCPS needed a scalable language learning program that could support ELs through independent study with a response-to-intervention (RTI) learning approach. The solution

would have to be affordable and improve English-proficiency testing scores to meet the adequate yearly progress requirements mandated by the then-followed No Child Left Behind Act.

BCPS chose an independent-study model from Rosetta Stone. ELs would now be

required to spend 30 to 40 minutes a day, five days a week, working through lessons from Rosetta Stone. ELs would also attend language labs through the day, assisted by school personnel.

After implementing the program, BCPS recorded these results:

- 57.3 percent increase from the previous year in WIDA ACCESS for the composite scores of ELs
- Top 10 percent of learners improved their ACCESS composite scores by more than 200 percent
- Annual savings of over \$550 per EL, providing an ROI of over 65 percent

According to Greg Schultz, assistant superintendent, student learning division, of Bullitt County Public Schools: "I believe that without the Rosetta Stone solution we would not have seen success with our EL students during the...academic year."¹²

ENHANCING EQUITY AT YOUR SCHOOL

As the EL population continues to rise, educators and school districts will need to find new, effective ways to meet their educational requirements and, at the same time, invest their district resources wisely.

"I believe that without the Rosetta Stone solution we would not have seen success with our EL students during the...academic year."¹²

Greg Schultz, Assistant Superintendent, Bullitt County Public Schools



Tech-enabled language learning tools can be a key part of every school's curriculum—not only by promoting education, but also by giving teachers and principals more choices, more flexibility, and more freedom to achieve their pedagogical goals.

In short, to bring and enhance the quality of equity in their classes.

Rosetta Stone can help with this essential mission.

Go to the Rosetta Stone [portal](#) to get more information specially prepared for teachers, directors, principals, and superintendents.

Or [contact Rosetta Stone now](#) to request a consultation about setting up a language training program for your school.

-
1. Our Nation's English Learners. U.S. Department of Education, ED Facts Data Warehouse (EDW), 2015-15. SEA File C141, LEP Enrolled. <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-characteristics/index.html>
 2. The National Education Association. <http://www.nea.org/home/32409.htm>
 3. "What You Need to Know About ELLs: Fast Facts," by Lydia Breiseth. Colorín Colorado. 2015. <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/what-you-need-know-about-ells-fast-facts>
 4. "Schools Are Falling Short for Many English-Learners," by Corey Mitchell. Education Week. March 7, 2017. <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/03/08/schools-are-falling-short-for-many-english-learners.html>
 5. ALL IN! How Educators Can Advocate For English Language Learners. National Education Association. 2015. Page 7. <http://supported.nea.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/How-Educators-Can-Advocate-for-English-Language-Learners.pdf>
 6. "What You Need to Know About ELLs: Fast Facts," by Lydia Breiseth. Colorín Colorado. 2015. <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/what-you-need-know-about-ells-fast-facts>
 7. "English Language Learners: How Your State Is Doing," by Claudio Sanchez. National Public Radio (NPR). February 23, 2017. <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/02/23/512451228/5-million-english-language-learners-a-vast-pool-of-talent-at-risk>
 8. "Community Resources Help ELLs Improve Skills, Knowledge," by Dr. Maggie Broderick. HotChalk Education Network. November 16, 2016. <http://www.hotchalkeducationnetwork.com/ell-community-resources/>
 9. "Ed Tech Helps English Language Learners Flourish," by Curtiss Strietelmeier. EdTech. November 21, 2017. <https://edtechmagazine.com/k12/article/2017/11/ed-tech-helps-english-language-learners-flourish>
 10. Working Together To Support English Language Learners: School-Family-Community Engagement. Philadelphia Education Research Consortium. June 2016, page 4. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED571777.pdf>
 11. "As More Schools Look to Personalized Learning, Teaching May Be About to Change," by Tim Walker. neaToday. June 9, 2017. <http://neatoday.org/2017/06/09/personalized-learning/>
 12. "Restructuring for learning excellence." Rosetta Stone Case Study. 2014. <https://k12hub.rossettastone.com/case-studies/case-study-bullit-county-public-schools>