Get Talking About Equity

How access to online language learning increases EL equity

Tech-enabled language learning provides key resources that teachers and school districts can use to bring equity to their classrooms and create greater opportunities for their EL students.

Rosetta Stone | Education

Executive summary

Language proficiency is the foundation for lifelong academic and career achievement. In the United States, students unable to speak, read, and write well in English will struggle in all other areas of their education.

English Learners (ELs) make up the fastest growing school-age population in the nation, representing many cultures and languages. EL students attend public schools in all 50 states, in urban, suburban, and rural school districts.

To meet the English language learning needs of these students, schools must provide learning resources to enable ELs to close the achievement gap and excel at levels that match their English-speaking peers.

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

Top takeaways

- As teachers and districts seek to provide equity to their EL students, language learning technology is opening new doorways to academic success.

- EdTech gives teachers greater opportunity to choose the best language learning approach for each EL student, including blended learning and personalized instruction.

- Online learning makes it easier for EL students to access language lessons outside of regular classroom hours, accelerating their progress.

- Becoming familiar and comfortable with tech-enabled language learning helps ELs close the digital divide with their monolingual English-speaking peers.

- Digital language learning creates exciting opportunities for schools and districts to extend access to EL students' families, strengthening parental and community involvement.

- With the EL population on the rise, educators are looking for effective ways to succeed in their equity initiatives while continuing to invest school and district resources wisely.

Contents

Students and educators share a stake in EL equity

Language proficiency is a critical skill every student must master. It is the foundation for lifelong academic and career achievement. In the U.S., 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 (ELs) 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 U.S. 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 U.S.-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.

The majority of English Learners are U.S.-born American citizens.

Impact of deficient language learning and support

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 can feel the effects of:

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 educational needs.[5]

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."[6]

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.
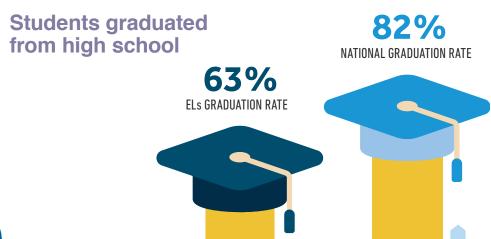
Higher poverty levels. The EL population that needs the most help often receives the least. Colorín Colorado, an educational service for K-12 educators, found that "Nearly 60 percent of ELs nationwide are from low-income families in which parents have 'disproportionately' limited levels of education."[7]

Lower graduation rates. According to an analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education by NPR, "Only 63 percent of [ELs] graduate from high school, compared with the overall national rate of 82 percent." [8]

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."[9] Hence, ELs who lack language skills are less likely to participate in their community and interact with their neighbors, fellow citizens, and local businesses.

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

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.

Students graduated from high school

63%
ELs GRADUATION RATE

82%
NATIONAL GRADUATION RATE

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?

Using tech-enabled language learning helps ELs close the digital divide with English-speaking peers.

EdTech for language learning supports equity

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 by:

Empowering teachers. With EdTech, teachers can decide which language learning situation is best for each EL student. Some students benefit from blended learning while others need more personal time with teachers. EdTech facilitates both and gives teachers more control.

Increasing 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."[10]

Offering 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.

Promoting 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.

Building 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."[11]

Facilitating 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."[12]

Narrowing 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.

Fostering independent learning. Access to EdTech instruction will motivate some students to pursue learning on their own, complementing and reinforcing classroom-based lessons.

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.

Providing a mix of instructional media leads to greater student engagement and collaboration with other students.

Providing a proven digital learning solution

With the EL population on the rise, educators need to find new, effective ways to meet their educational requirements while continuing to invest their district resources wisely.

Students with limited or no English speaking proficiency feel excluded in a classroom taught in English. This alienates students, frustrates teachers, and limits academic success. Certified EL teacher shortages and budget constraints have led many districts to reduce language offerings.

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 is a digital language learning solution that 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. Students begin learning and speaking English immediately. Only English is used in the program, enabling students to learn how to adapt to real conversations.

Pronunciation assistance. TruAccent® speech-recognition technology guides a learner's pronunciation and helps 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 online environment.

ALL-AROUND SUPPORT BUILDS ENGLISH LEARNER CONFIDENCE

Supporting students from all sides improves graduation rates and invites community involvement. Such an approach should provide:

- Equitable access to English language learning
- Online and offline tools for collaborative learning
- Teacher resources to guide home learning
- Blended learning support for teachers

Providing a proven digital learning solution

Improving student access and outcomes

No two students learn English in exactly the same way. Each has unique influences and aspirations as varied as first languages, levels of English skills, school locations, and more. Rosetta Stone extends learning opportunities beyond the classroom, giving students and their parents additional access to learning with:

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. Students can access their Rosetta Stone 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.

> **"The Rosetta Stone program increases oral confidence in learners by providing opportunities to practice listening to their own pronunciation and lowering their affective filter."**

Supporting teachers in and out of the classroom

Teachers use the resources in English for Education to help students develop fundamental English language skills and accelerate the drive toward speaking confidence with tools targeting success, including:

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.

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

Administrator tools. Easy-to-understand reporting tools allow teachers to track and measure student, group, and class progress quickly.

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

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

Providing a proven digital learning solution

Giving school administrators a toolkit for success

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

Flexible solutions. Schools can get language learning 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.

Implementation and product training. Training and Services teams work closely with 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.

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.

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 and support students' heritage and culture.

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.

Case Study: 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

> "I believe that without the Rosetta Stone solution we would not have seen success with our EL students during the…academic year."[13]

Enhancing equity at your school

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 develop and enhance the quality of equity in their classes.

Rosetta Stone can help with this essential mission.

Contact Rosetta Stone today to request a consultation about setting up a language learning program for adult ELs.

Getting started checklist

Here are six steps to consider taking toward EL success:[14]

☑ **Embrace EL diversity** – ELs are linguistically, geographically, and culturally diverse, as are their schooling experiences prior to entering U.S. school systems.

☑ **Focus on academic achievement** – ELs are the lowest academically performing groups of students in K-12 schools and are four times more likely to drop out compared to English speakers.

☑ **Identify Long Term English Learners (LTELs)** – LTELs have spent most or all of their lives in the U.S. and do not share the newcomer's unfamiliarity with the culture or lack of exposure to English.

☑ **Accelerate learning with EdTech** – Digital language learning expands students' opportunities to build speaking confidence and teachers' instructional reach and content.

☑ **Address the ESL teacher deficit** – Twenty-nine states have reported ESL, ESOL, and TESOL teacher shortages. Scholarship and tuition assistance programs help to fill critical vacancies.

☑ **Recognize the bilingual advantage** – Once students learn English they will have a competitive edge over monolingual speakers in the future if their primary language is maintained.

For more information on how to get started, get in touch with one of our solution experts.

Resources:

1. Our Nation's English Learners. U.S. Department of Education, EDFacts 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. "Educators Rising: Recruiting World Language Teachers." Press release. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. September 26, 2017. https://www.actfl.org/news/press-releases/educators-rising-recruiting-world-language-teachers

5. "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

6. 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

7. "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

8. "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

9. "Community Resources Help ELLs Improve Skills, Knowledge," by Dr. Maggie Broderick. HotChalk Education Network. November 16, 2016. http://www hotchalk educationnetwork.com/ell-community-resources/

10. "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

11. 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

12. "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/

13. "Restructuring for learning excellence." Rosetta Stone Case Study. 2014. https://k12hub.rosettastone.com/case-studies/case-study-bullit-county-public-schools

14. Six Steps Toward ELL Success. https://k12hub.rosettastone.com/english-language learning/six-steps-toward-ell-success

Get Talking About **Equity**

RosettaStone | Education

About Rosetta Stone

Rosetta Stone Inc. (NYSE: RST) is dedicated to changing people's lives through the power of language and literacy education. The company's innovative digital solutions drive positive learning outcomes for the inspired learner at home or in schools and workplaces around the world. Our scalable, interactive solutions have been used by over 12,000 businesses, 9,000 public sector organizations, and 22,000 educational institutions worldwide, and by millions of learners in over 150 countries.

Learn More.

www.rosettastone.com/k12

Get Social.

f Rosetta Stone

𝕏 @RosettaStoneEd