



CONNECTICUT FAMILY GUIDE TO SUPPORTING ENGLISH LEARNERS (ELs)

Parents and families are key resources in building the capacity for EL success in college and career.

Sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Education in Partnership with the Connecticut RESC Alliance

As educators, we recognize and value how family life and experiences build strong foundations of learning. Here are some suggestions for what you can do to support your child as he or she learns English.

Parents are the first teachers.

- Talk to your child about school. Share stories of your own educational experiences, as well as family history, and topics of interest.
- Reading to and with your children daily in any language increases your child's vocabulary, which makes them better prepared for school.
- Help your children notice the world around them. Ask questions and encourage your child to do the same.

Maintain your native language or heritage language. Research shows that English learners with a firm foundations in their native language learn English faster and more easily.

- Speak your native/heritage language at home.
- Read and write in your native/heritage language, if possible. Encourage your child to do the same.
- Stay connected with other families, community organizations, or groups that also use your native/heritage language, if possible.
- Listen to music, watch television and movies, use apps, read books and tell stories in your native/heritage language.

Being bilingual is an asset.

- Bilingual/biliterate adults earn higher salaries on average than monolingual adults.
- A bilingual brain is more resistant to Alzheimer's and dementia.
- Bilingualism increases understanding of math problems and math concepts.
- Being bilingual helps you to focus better and make decisions.
- A bilingual person develops strong critical thinking skills.
- Strong skills and strategies in native language literacy help people learn a second language easier.

Get involved in your child's school.

- One key element of Connecticut school systems is parent involvement. Schools try to stay in contact with parents through school events, newsletters, and phone calls to parents.
- Join the school parent organization.
- Volunteer.
- Attend school events.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Send emails/letters and have phone conversations with your child's teachers.
- In all your interactions with the school system, don't hesitate to ask for translation services, if needed.

Develop your own English skills.

- While time can be a barrier in taking English as Second language (ESL) classes, most communities in Connecticut offer free evening classes through the Adult Education and library programs.
- Practice English with others. Even if you want to maintain your native language at home, practice English when you go to your child's school and other government agencies, the doctor, in stores, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. How is an English learner (EL) identified in Connecticut?

- To be identified an EL, a family must take a home language survey when you register your child for school or shortly after. It is usually a 3-5 question survey.
- If the home language survey shows your child is eligible, he or she will be tested to see how well he or she uses English.
- Some school districts also conduct a parent interview to ask questions about your child's previous education. Don't be afraid to ask for a translator to help with this interview.

2. What are the program options for English learners?

Program differ by district. Some common options in Connecticut include:

- English as a Second Language (ESL) support- students get ESL services in their classroom (push-in) or out of their classroom (pull-out) by a trained ESL teacher or tutor.
- Dual language: There are two groups of students, one native-English group and one group of another language. Content is taught for about half the time in each language, but content is not repeated.
- Transitional Bilingual: ELs are taught in a separate classroom in the native language and English by a certified bilingual teacher. All students speak the same native language. The amount of native language instruction decreases over time. This program has a limit of 3 years.
- Sheltered Instruction: Content and language develop occur in the same mainstream, English classroom. All students in the class are English learners.
- Other: Additional program options and supports may also be offered by districts.

3. What are the Connecticut Core Standards (CCS)?

- The CT Core Standards (CCS) tell what students in preK-12th grade should be able to know and do by the end of the grade level in math and literacy. The standards are designed to have all students ready for a career or college after graduating.
- The CCS do not tell teachers what to teach. Districts/teachers write their own lessons and units based on the CCS.

4. What state standardized assessments do English Learners take?

- All students including ELs are required to participate in state assessments including English language arts, Mathematics and Science in grades 5, 8 and 10.
- If the English learner (EL) student has enrolled for the first time in a U.S. school and has attended for fewer than 12 months, the student MAY be exempted from the English language arts portions of the Smarter Balanced Assessments and Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA).
- Language supports for ELs during assessments are available and determined by school/district staff and student's grade level. See your child's school for more information.
- Each year students take a standardized language assessment administered by the district to determine his or her language proficiency in English.

5. When does my child stop being an English learner?

- Technically speaking, your child will no longer be labeled an EL, when he or she passes the standardized language assessment.
- Research shows it takes 5-10 years to be fully proficient in a language.
- Full bilingualism is a lifelong process.

WEB RESOURCES FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

National PTA Parents' Guides for Student Success (English and Spanish)

<http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583>

The guides are available in English and Spanish and include:

- What children should be learning in English language arts and mathematics in each grade with the Connecticut Core Standards.
- What parents can do to support learning.
- Tips for planning for college and career readiness.

Council of Great City Schools- Parent Roadmaps for the Common Core (English and Spanish)

<http://www.commoncoreworks.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=330>

Grade specific guides that explain the expectations of the Common Core English language arts.

<http://www.cgcs.org/Page/366>

Grade specific guides that explain the expectations of the Common Core in math.

Council of Great City Schools- Video Common Core State Standards (English and Spanish)

<http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/157>

Video explaining the idea of the Common Core State Standards

Colorín Colorado Family Resources (English and Spanish)

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/families/>

Support for families and schools of children in bilingual programs.

Connecticut Parenting (English and Spanish)

www.ctparenting.com

Resources on a variety of topics, including education.

Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center

<http://www.cpacinc.org/>

Information for parents about advocacy and education for students with special needs

Connecticut Parent Information Resource Center

www.ctpirc.org

Resources for parents in CT

Connecticut Family Learning Initiative- Family Publications (English and Spanish) and Newsletters (English)

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=320764>

Newsletters and publications that address how parents can be involved in their child's learning.

Southern CT State University- Resources for Parents of English Learners

<http://www.southernct.edu/groups/tat/resourcesformscholars.html>

Click on the link on the page, then click on PARENTS

Publications and articles that help parents support literacy and learning for English learners

2-1-1 Directory

www.211ct.org

Directory of resources and agencies in CT

WEBSITES TO REINFORCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

<http://www.usingenglish.com/>

A large collection of tools and resources for learning and teaching English.

<http://capl.washjeff.edu/index.php>

Images demonstrating the meanings of words to improve vocabulary development.

<http://www.manythings.org/>

Quizzes, word games, puzzles, and a random sentence generator to reinforce English skills.

<http://en.bab.la/games/>

Dictionary and vocabulary, supplemented with quizzes, games, and a community forum.

<http://www.eslbasics.com/>

Free English videos for beginners.

<http://international.ouc.bc.ca/pronunciation/>

Okanagan College's resource offers 13 different unit lessons for learning and teaching English pronunciation.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish>

Practice with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation and connections to real world events.

<http://www.eslgold.com/>

Practice pronunciation, find a book to study, and even talk to someone in English.

<http://www.real-english.com/>

Videos from real English speakers, plus quizzes and community support.

<http://repeatafterus.com/>

English texts with recordings for practicing listening in English.

<http://www.vocabulix.com/>

More than 90 vocabulary lessons and lessons in verbs, grammar, and reading in English.

<http://wordsteps.com/>

A personal collection of words you want to learn and ways to practice with a mobile app or online.

The RESC Alliance

Every school district in Connecticut benefits from services provided by Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs). Through RESCs, districts and communities have access to high quality, cost-effective collaborative programs and initiatives.

All RESCs support the instructional and operational components of Connecticut school districts. RESCs design and deliver community-based education, training, and human service programs, which add to the economic well-being and quality of life throughout the state.

RESCs are poised to serve their districts with timely, relevant, tailored and cost-effective services. The Alliance has an active role in statewide initiatives

The RESC Alliance EL Professional Learning Community drafted this document.

For more information visit www.rescalliance.org