

Five Ways You Can Support English Language Learners and How Discovery Education Programs Can Help

English language learners make up over 10% of the student population in the United States. And, over 8% of those students are Spanish speakers.

BY THE NUMBERS (IN 2021)

EL students identify **Spanish** as their home language

4 million
TOTAL STUDENTS

76.4%
OF ALL
EL STUDENTS

8.4%
OF ALL PUBLIC
SCHOOL STUDENTS

Top three states for EL students



20.2%



18.9%



18.8%

The [National Education Association](#) estimates that this student population will continue to grow.

Research indicated EL students score lower on national assessments.

- In 2022, the average NAEP reading score for 4th-grade EL students (190) was 32-points lower than the score for their non-EL peers (222).
- The average NAEP mathematics score for 4th-grade EL students was lower than the score for their non-EL peer (216 vs. 239).
- These patterns have held true for every assessment year since NAEP scores disaggregated by students' EL status first became available.

How can educators help bridge gaps for these students and ensure they continue to have the right support to meet academic goals?

1. Provide authentic and meaningful contexts to help students develop reading comprehension, acquire English language skills more easily, and feel motivated to learn.

Why

[Research](#) has shown that when students read a text about their own culture, they were able to read the passage faster, recall more information about the text, and apply background knowledge necessary to understand the text. In other words, cultural context impacts comprehension, and helps students learn and feel like they belong within the classroom.

Discovery Education Support

Content matters. The content library in Discovery Education *Experience* and Reading Plus offers texts that allow students to explore their interests while supporting classroom learning objectives. The program contains an extensive library of engaging informational and literary selections that maintain the highest standards of quality.

“As a teacher to students who are English Language Learners, Discovery Education in one of the strongest resources available to me, as I make content available to students who are new to the U.S. and are just starting to learn English. It is a strong intervention tool when used to help students learn reading comprehension.”

Eugene Montoya
Teacher, Arizona

2. Administer balanced and dynamic assessments that empower English language learners to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways.

Why

Because English language learners often have an incomplete grasp of academic math language, traditional tests cannot provide a complete view of each student's understanding of math concepts. In many cases, these students know more math than they can demonstrate on traditional assessment instruments. However, providing ongoing, balanced, and dynamic assessments can be challenging. It requires providing tests that lessen the language complexity without reducing the rigor of the assessed mathematics.

Discovery Education Support

DreamBox Math uses formative assessments as students engage within the platform to measure understanding and progress. The program provides continuous feedback to students in real time as it adjusts the learning path to meet their needs. All student progress is captured across intuitive, role-specific reports, so educators can understand where students demonstrate growth and where they need extra support.

DreamBox Math has been a tool our Spanish-speaking students could come in and use right away. Before, they weren't always able to interact with other students, but now they can do the same thing everyone else is doing.



Melissa Fitzgerald, Director of Student Support Services
Alleghany County Schools, North Carolina

3. Empower students to use personalized, adaptive technology for learning.

Why

When technology uses pedagogically sound approaches and curriculum materials, it can increase the individualization of each student's learning experience. Technology support allows educators to expand and use the limited time they have strategically to facilitate English learning. This powerful approach can be leveraged to create the additional time required to meet student needs.

The Reading Plus vocabulary component supports our English learners in a systematic way, providing an extra focus on Tier 2 words. The visual skills component has been an effective tool to improve fluency rates for our struggling readers as well.

Sara Shorey, Principal
Adams Elementary School,
Santa Ana USD, California

Discovery Education

Both DreamBox Math and Reading Plus provide adaptive, individualized instruction based on students' responses, level of comprehension, strategies, and right and wrong answers. The programs adapt, individualize, and support learning for English language learners at varying levels of proficiency. Adaptive curriculum differentiates the amount of scaffolding for students in every activity. It provides extra help when needed, but also challenges students who excel. This approach empowers students to learn and practice skills on their own, at their own pace. Reading Plus leverages advanced technology and data to provide the personalized intervention and instruction English learners need for literacy skill acquisition. The program aligns with TESOL *Principles to Support English Learners*. With Reading Plus, students get real-time scaffolding support that meets English learners' proficiency levels and supports their progress.

4. Offer students the opportunity to learn in both Spanish and English.

Why

According to [research](#), when students use their native language in the classroom to work with their peers or individually, their academic performance, as well as English-language development, improves. Students retain skills in content areas like mathematics and science—once understood in the first language—when instruction shifts to the second language.

Discovery Education Support

Discovery Education *Experience* offers a vast collection of Spanish-language resources. Students can find popular series, authentically translated videos and text, and interactives to support Spanish-speaking students.

Students using DreamBox Math can also access lessons in English and Spanish. These lessons were built from the ground up with specific text and audio that ensures content and instruction are culturally appropriate for Spanish-speaking students. This approach hinges on the idea that students benefit when classroom instruction allows bilingual students to choose the language they prefer for arithmetic computation.

5. Strategically build student confidence.

Why

Many English language learners are self-conscious about making errors or moving slower than their peers. As a result, they may hesitate to participate in whole group instruction. This presents a challenge because to learn, students must feel confident enough to make errors, explore content, and ask questions when they need support. By focusing on what students do well and encouraging students to explore, experiment, and set their own goals, educators can help these learners participate and build their confidence in the process.

Discovery Education Support

Both DreamBox Math and Reading Plus encourage students to take an active part in their success. The immersive, interactive, learner-driven math and reading lessons motivate students to own their learning journey. As students set goals and self-direct their experience, they build their skills and confidence and take pride in their growth every step of the way.

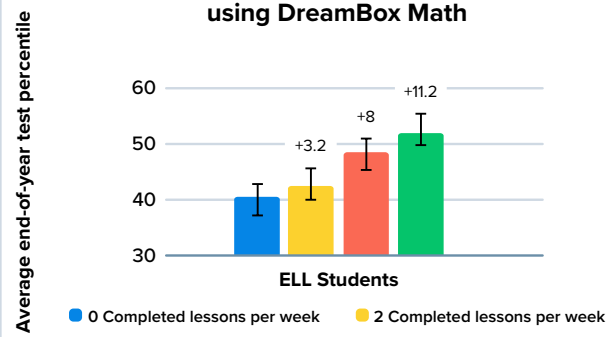
Reading Plus is the only reading program that measures and monitors each student's motivation and confidence as a reader.

At the outset, most of these readers lack academic confidence. When they're asked to read, it's not something they're excited about—especially if they have a history of struggling with literacy. But Reading Plus has changed the way they think about reading. When they can pick the text they want to read, and when they can engage with that text online, the way they want, when they want—then reading becomes something better. It becomes more like what they're used to outside school. Now they experience the reading in school in a very different way than what they're used to, and they're more interested and excited about it.

Amalia Lopez,
Curriculum and Instruction Specialist
Lindsay Unified School District, California

Discovery Education Programs have been proven to drive learning for English language learners

In one large California district, ELL students who completed five DreamBox Math lessons per week scored eight percentile points higher than ELL students who did not use the program.



Learn more about how Discovery Education supports English language learners

[Discoveryeducation.com/info/dreambox-english-language-learners/](https://discoveryeducation.com/info/dreambox-english-language-learners/)