

# Five ways you can support English language learners and how DreamBox Learning programs can help

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

BY THE NUMBERS (IN 2019)

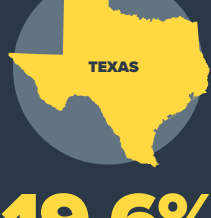
## EL students identify **Spanish** as their home language

**3.9 million**  
TOTAL STUDENTS

**75.7%**  
OF ALL EL STUDENTS

**7.9%**  
OF ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

### Top three states for Spanish-speaking EL students



**19.6%**



**18.6%**



**16.5%**

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

By 2025, **1 out of 4** students in the United States will be an English language learner.



Disruptions to the 2020-2021 school year have impacted all learners, but [research](#) shows that English language learners may have struggled more than other populations during remote learning due to limited access to technology, at-home language barriers, and missed opportunities to engage with peers and teachers for language development.

## 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.

#### Dreambox support

Content matters. The DreamBox Reading Plus content library 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, integrity, and diversity. It respects and reflects the experiences and cultures of all students, with special care for students whose backgrounds have historically been underrepresented.

**“We love the wide range of texts that are available at every level for our students to access. From fiction to nonfiction, students can choose from a variety of texts at their level that pique their interests and keep them reading. We find that students are more apt to stick with texts when they have the option to choose – and the topic is of interest to them. DreamBox Reading Plus truly lends itself to this in the best ways – students have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of topics – and have the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the texts they read. This is key to build lifelong readers!”**

Trina Cornell, Reading Specialist  
Holman Middle School,  
Pattonville School District, Missouri

### 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.

#### Dreambox 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.

#### Dreambox support

Both DreamBox Math and DreamBox 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.

DreamBox 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* and is a WIDA-certified resource. With DreamBox Reading Plus, students get real-time scaffolding support that meets English learners’ proficiency levels and supports their progress.

**“The DreamBox 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

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

#### Why

According to [The Inclusive Classroom, Teaching Mathematics and Science to English-Language Learners](#) 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 social studies—once understood in the first language – when instruction shifts to the second language.

#### Dreambox support

Students using DreamBox Math can 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. DreamBox Math allows students to use their bilingualism as an effective way to process information and communicate mathematical ideas.

### 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.

#### Dreambox support

Both DreamBox Math and DreamBox 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.

DreamBox Reading Plus is the only reading program that measures and monitors each student’s motivation and confidence as a reader. Documented [research](#) shows that students make statistically significant gains in confidence and interest as they complete a year of reading instruction and practice with DreamBox Reading Plus.

**“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 DreamBox 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

## DreamBox programs have been proven to drive learning for English language learners

In one large Florida school district, across all grade groups (elementary, middle and high school), English language learners who engaged in DreamBox Reading Plus instruction (~30 hours) were more likely to advance from below satisfactory to satisfactory levels on their state test than their ELL and non-ELL peers who did not engage in DreamBox Reading Plus practice.

