

Language support

2017

This report is an excerpt from People for Education's Annual report on Ontario's publicly funded schools 2017.

The 2011 Statistics Canada National Household Survey found that 3.6 million Ontarians were foreign-born—representing 29% of the total population, the highest proportion among all Canadian provinces.¹ More than 1.8 million Ontarians, including approximately 50,000 third- or higher-generation residents,² speak a primary language at home that is neither English nor French.³

Ontario schools provide specialized language programs for children whose first language is not the language of instruction at school (see Table 1).⁴ This support can include both recent newcomers and students whose families speak neither French nor English at home.

In 2017:

- 63% of English language elementary schools and 58% of secondary schools have English language learners.
- 38% of English language elementary schools have English as a Second Language teachers, an increase from 34% in 2008.
- 76% of French language elementary schools have students who require French language support (ALF/PANA students), and on average, one in five students in these schools are receiving language support.

Table 1

Language support programs in Ontario

Program Name		Description
ESL	English as a Second Language	The child's first language is not English, but the child has had the opportunity to develop age-appropriate literacy skills in his or her first language.
ELD	English Language Development	The child's first language is not English and the child has significant gaps in his or her education or first-language literacy skills, possibly due to disruptions in schooling.
ALF	Programme d'actualisation de la langue française	The child's first language is not French, but the child is from Canada.
PANA	Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants	The child's first language is not French and the child is new to Canada, meaning that he or she needs more support to integrate into his or her new community.

Currently, the funding for English language learners (ELLs) is provided to school boards in two categories:

- Recent Immigrant Component: boards are allotted funding for students from non-English-speaking countries who are in their first four years in Canada. This funding gradually decreases over the four-year period.
- Pupils in Canada component: funding is provided to school boards based on Census data for children whose first language spoken at home is neither English nor French.⁵

“With our ESL teacher, these students feel connected to their school and all the supports available. And, their English improves!”

Elementary school,
Toronto Catholic DSB

Success for English language learners

Many families move to Canada with high aspirations for their children. This is borne out by data showing that 83% of immigrant children have aspirations to complete a university degree—a higher proportion than the 60% of children whose families have been in Canada three generations or longer.⁶

Overall, immigrant students are achieving their academic goals. Newcomers tend to match or exceed the achievements of non-immigrant children on OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (an international test administered to a sample of 15 years-olds every three years).⁷ In addition, childhood immigrants are more likely to graduate from high school and complete university than third- or higher-generation children.⁸

“Greatest challenge is the ever-increasing amount of ELL students attending the school. Numbers are quickly rising and students with emotional/behavior needs is increasing as well, impacting the student's readiness to learn.”

Secondary school, Peel DSB

“It is an honour to have many students joining...our school from our partner communities in [Ontario’s] far north. Many students come with varied levels of fluency and challenges in academic school language. We have strong early years supports for literacy, but struggle to meet the needs of students who join us in grades 2–8.”

Elementary school,
Keewatin-Patricia DSB

Some students arrive in Ontario with needs beyond the scope of English or French language learning programs. Ontario’s ELL policy states that in situations where students come from backgrounds with limited access to schooling, additional supports need to be provided.⁹ Despite this requirement, some principals commented that the needs of their students—beyond language acquisition—are not being met.

Challenges running small ELL programs

In communities where there are a high number of ELLs, or where there is a high proportion of ELLs in a particular school, ESL funding can cover the costs of a specialist teacher. But, for schools or boards where there are a small number of ELLs, it may be more difficult to support students’ language needs. Even for the group with the highest need—newly arrived students born in non-English speaking countries—funding is allocated at a rate of only \$3,920 per student for their first year in Canada.¹⁰ For a school with only four or five ELLs, there may not be enough funding to hire dedicated staff or run a separate course.

In 2017, 32% of English language elementary schools had fewer than 10 ELLs enrolled (see Figure 2). Among those schools, 76% have no ESL teacher.

Figure 1
Percentage of English language elementary schools that have ESL teachers

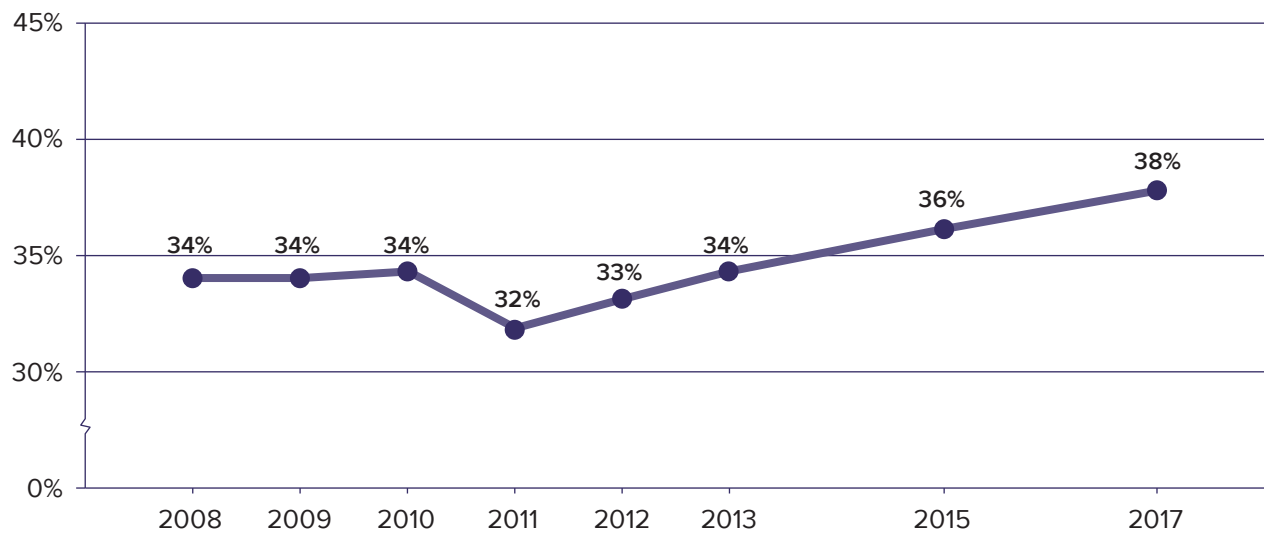
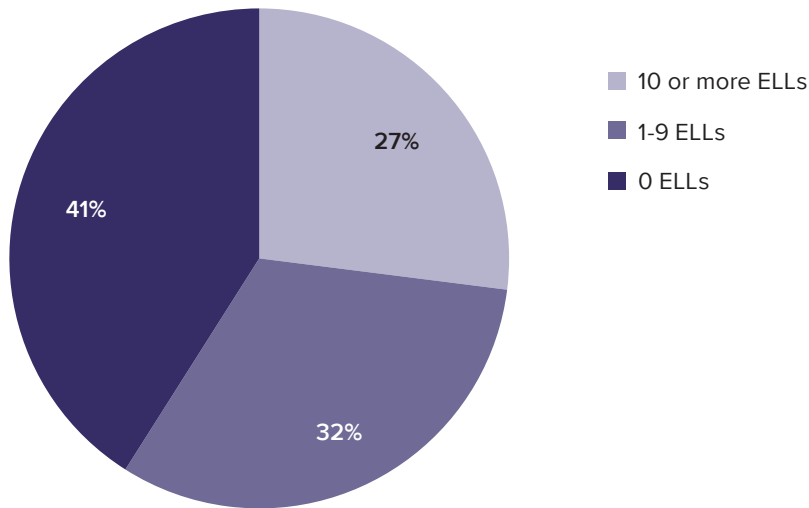


Figure 2

Percentage of English language elementary schools with English language learners



Language support in French language schools

In the French-language system, 76% of elementary schools have French language learners in either the actualisation linguistique en français (ALF) program or programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants (PANA) (see Table 1). Among elementary schools with ALF/PANA students, an average of 20% are in these programs.

“The ALF program contributes enormously to the development of the French language. It is essential to do this at the beginning of [a student’s] learning journey.”

Elementary school,
CSC Providence¹¹

Notes

1. Statistics Canada, *2011 National Household Survey Highlights: Factsheet 1* (Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, June, 2013).
2. Statistics Canada, “Detailed Language Spoken Most Often at Home (103), Other Languages Spoken Regularly at Home (9), Generation Status (4), and Sex (3) for the Population 15 Years and Over of Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Divisions and Census Subdivisions, 2006 Census—20% Sample Data,” *2006 Census Topic-based tabulations* (table), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-555-XCB2006038 (Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, July 17, 2006).
3. Statistics Canada, *2011 Census Profile: Language* (Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, May 31, 2016).
4. “Innovative Programs and Services,” *Éducation en langue française en Ontario*, accessed March 2, 2017; Ontario Ministry of Education, *English Language Learners, ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2007), 22.
5. Ontario Ministry of Education, *Education Funding: Technical Paper, 2016-17*, 40-1.
6. Feng Hou and Qi Zhang, “Table 2: Parental education and student aspiration by immigration status and province or region, 2003 to 2012,” (table) *Regional Differences in the Educational Outcomes of Young Immigrants*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X (Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, November 18, 2015), 3.
7. OECD, *Helping Immigrant Students to Succeed at School—And Beyond* (Paris, FR: OECD, 2015).
8. Feng Hou and Aneta Bonikowska, “Table 3: Educational and labour market outcomes for childhood immigrants 25 to 44 years of age, by admission class,” (table) *Educational and Labour Market Outcomes of Childhood Immigrants by Admission Class*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11F0019M—No. 377 (Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, April 25, 2016), 18.
9. Ontario Ministry of Education, *English Language Learners, ESL and ELD Programs and Services*, 18.
10. Ontario Ministry of Education, *Education Funding: Technical Paper, 2016-17*, 40.
11. This quote has been translated from French. Original quote: “Le programme ALF aide énormément au développement de la langue française. Il est essentiel de le faire au début de leur cheminement de l’apprentissage.”