

Overview of Different Approaches for Funding Services for English Learners

Funding Services for English Learners

OVERVIEW

According to our recent 50-State Comparison on K-12 funding, **48 states** and **Washington D.C.** provide additional funding for EL students. **Mississippi** and **Montana** are the only states that do not provide additional funding. States allocate increased funding for EL students through one of the following mechanisms: flat or multiple student weights, resource-based allocation, categorical grants, census-based, reimbursement system, or hybrid funding. For additional EL policies beyond funding, see our [50-State Comparison on EL policies](#).

FLAT OR MULTIPLE STUDENT WEIGHTS

At least **33 states** allocate money for EL students through their state's student-based funding formula using additional weights or dollar amounts. States that employ this method of EL funding either provide a single, flat weight/amount or provide multiple student weights/amounts depending on student characteristics. Although this policy approach for EL funding is common among states, weights range significantly—from .05 for one EL category in **Texas** to 2.0 for one EL category in **New York**—and represent distinct funding amounts determined by a state's base amount of funding.

See Table 1 for a complete breakdown of states using flat or multiple student weights to allocate funds to EL students.

Student weights or amounts are a popular EL funding mechanism because funds tend to be more insulated from budgetary cuts. Overall, this policy approach is considered **stable**, **transparent**, and **equitable**. However, there is not always a guarantee that additional funds provided will be spent on EL students. Most student-based funding formulas do not mandate how funds are spent. Instead, state formulas simply allocate funds to districts, and districts decide how additional EL funds are expended.

- **New Mexico** (N.M. Stat. Ann. § 22-8-22) provides an additional weight of 0.5 for each student who is counted as a participant in a Bilingual Multicultural Education program.

RESOURCE-BASED ALLOCATION

Six states use resource-based allocation to fund EL students: **Illinois**, **Tennessee**, **Virginia**, **Washington**, and **Wyoming**. States that use a resource-

based allocation account for EL students in their primary funding formula by covering staffing costs. These policies explicitly provide sufficient funding for a prescribed number of teaching and support staff positions based on student counts—usually achieved by explicit teacher-to-student ratios.

- **Tennessee** (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-3-307) provides increased funding for EL students to cover the following student-to-teacher ratios: teachers: 20:1 and translators: 200:1.

CATEGORICAL FUNDING

Five states—**Alabama**, **Delaware**, **Idaho**, **Indiana**, and **West Virginia**—provide EL funding through categorical grant programs. This funding stream exists outside of a state's primary funding model and money is allocated for specific programs through line-item appropriations in the state budget. A district will receive a designated allocation amount from the state, which typically can only be expended on EL students.

- **West Virginia** (W. Va. Code Ann. § 18-9A-22) provides EL funding through a categorical grant program. Funds are distributed to districts based on the varying English proficiency levels of students within a district and the capacity of districts to deliver requisite services.

REIMBURSEMENT SYSTEM

One state, **Wisconsin**, uses a reimbursement system to allocate additional funds for EL students. Reimbursement funding is provided outside the state's primary funding formula and are made to districts based on actual accrued costs. All reimbursements are made subject to appropriations and at the approval of the chief state school officer.

- **Wisconsin** (Wis. Stat. Ann. § § 115.95, 115.995) provides a percent reimbursement to districts subject to appropriations, found by evenly dividing the total appropriation by annual reported costs. For districts in which EL students comprise at least 15 percent of total student enrollment, an annual set-aside of \$250,000 is divided proportionally and allocated to qualifying districts.

CENSUS-BASED FUNDING

Alaska is the only state that provides additional EL student funding via a census-based mechanism. Census-based funding assumes that each district or charter schools has the same percentage of a student population, regardless of the actual demographics of the district. For example, a state could assume that 4 percent of students in each district are EL students.

- **Alaska** (AK ST §14.17.410, 14.17.420) applies an additional weight of 0.20 to each district's student count. The state combines this funding with funding for other student populations: students receiving special education and gifted and talented students.

HYBRID FUNDING

Three states provide additional funding for EL students using two funding mechanisms or a hybrid funding mechanism: **Arizona, Colorado, and Connecticut**. Hybrid states mostly employ weighted student funding with an additional categorical funding mechanism. Often, states combine these systems over time as they have adapted new EL funding policies.

Hybrid funding systems are often the result of school funding reform tacked on to a historic funding system, not the result of a systemic reform. In addition, hybrid funding mechanisms may increase administrative burden for both state and local administrators.

- **Colorado** (Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§ 22-24-104, 22-54-104) uses a hybrid funding mechanism for EL students through two funding streams: a pre-existing categorical program that divides available funding among districts subject to appropriations based on the percentage of EL students; and an additional flat weight of 0.08 is applied to the student count of EL students under the primary funding formula.

Table 1: English Learner Funding Weights/Dollar Amounts

State	Percentage Weight(s) or Dollar Amount	Weight(s) or Dollar Amount	Source
Arkansas	Flat Amount	Flat funding amount of \$359 (2021-22) is distributed to districts for each ELL student.	Act 2021-342 (2021-2022 enacted budget)
California	Multiple Student Weights	Additional weight of 0.2 is applied to the district's percentage of pupils who are classified as English language learners. Additional weight of 0.65 to the district's percentage of classified pupils in excess of 55 percent of total enrollment.	CA EDUC § 42238.02
Connecticut	Flat Weight	Additional flat weight of 0.25 is applied to the number of ELL pupils.	Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 10-262f S.B. 1202
D.C.	Flat Weight	Additional weight of 0.49 is applied to ELL students.	D.C. Code Ann. § 38-2905
Florida	Flat Weight	Additional weight of 0.199 is applied to ELL students.	Fla. Stat. Ann. § 1011.62 S.B. 2500
Georgia	Flat Weight	Additional weight of 1.5892	Ga. Code Ann. § 20-2-161
Hawaii	Multiple Student Weights	Additional weights for 3 proficiency categories (2020-21): Fully proficient: 0.065 Limited proficient: 0.194 Non-English proficient: 0.389	Hawaii State Department of Education
Iowa	Multiple Student Weights	Intensive/emerging EL: additional weight of 0.26 Intermediate/progressing EL: additional weight of 0.21	Iowa Code Ann. § 280.4
Kansas	Flat Weight	The greater of the following options: 1) The full-time equivalent enrollment in approved programs multiplied by .395 2) The number of students enrolled in approved programs multiplied by .185	Kan. Stat. Ann. § 72-5150
Kentucky	Flat Weight	Additional weight of .096	Kentucky Dept. of Education and School Funding Task Force
Louisiana	Flat weight	Additional weight of .22	SCR 2 (2021 legislative session) La. Const. Ann. art. VIII, § 13
Maine	Multiple student weights	Additional weight of 0.70 per EL student for school admin. units with 15 or fewer EL students, 0.50 per EL student for school admin. units with 16-250 EL students,	Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 20-A, § 15675

		and 0.525 for school admin. units with more than 250 EL students.	
Maryland	Flat weight	Additional weight of 1.00 in fiscal year 2022.	Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 5-224
Massachusetts	Multiple student amounts	Provides additional dollar amount by grade (2021-2022 budget): EL PK-5 of \$2,399 EL 6-8 of \$2,521 EL high school of \$2,164	2021-2022 Final Budget Chapter 24 Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 70, § 3
Michigan	Multiple student amounts	The state funds a dollar amount per English language learner based on WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS composite scores as follows: (a) \$935.00 for students with a composite score between 1.0 and 1.9 (b) \$645.00 for students with composite score between 2.0 and 2.9 (c) \$105.00 for students with a composite between 3.0 and 3.9, If budgeted funds are insufficient to fund these payments, the department shall prorate payments on an equal percentage basis.	Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 388.1641
Minnesota	Multiple student amounts	Both a flat dollar weight and multiple dollar weights that vary by EL concentration: a) \$704 multiplied by the greater of 20 or the adjusted average daily membership of eligible English learners and b) \$250 times the English learner pupil units calculated based on the English learner concentration percentage	Minn. Stat. Ann. § 124D.65 Minn. Stat. Ann. § 126C.05 Minn. Stat. Ann. § 126C.10
Missouri	Flat weight	Additional weight of 0.60 for every limited English proficiency student above the threshold.	Mo. Ann. Stat. § 163.011
Nebraska	Flat Weight	The lesser of the following: 1). The school district's designated maximum limited English proficiency allowance; or 2.) The statewide average general fund operating expenditures per formula student multiplied by .25 , then multiplied by: (a) The number of students who are determined to be limited English proficient if total number of students is greater than or equal to 12; or (b) 12, if the number of students who are determined to be limited English proficient is between one and 12.	Neb.Rev.St. § 79-1007.08
Nevada	Flat weight	Additional weight of 0.24 (2021-2022) and 0.23 (2022-2023)	Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 387.1211 SB458 (Budget bill)

New Hampshire	Flat amount	Additional dollar amount of \$725.63 (2020-2021) and \$740.87 (2021-2022)	N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 198:40-a N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 198:40-d New Hampshire Dept. of Education
New Jersey	Flat weight	Additional weight of 0.50 for bilingual/limited English proficient students. Additional weight of 0.1250 for bilingual/limited English proficient students who are also eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (combination students)	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:7F-46 N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:7F-51 Educational Adequacy Report 2020
New Mexico	Flat weight	Additional weight of 0.50	N.M. Stat. Ann. § 22-8-22
New York	Multiple student weights	The extraordinary needs percent (based on economic disadvantage, English language learners and sparsity) ranges between an additional 1.0 and 2.0 .	N.Y. Educ. Law § 3602 New York State Education Department State Aid Handbook (2021-2022)
North Dakota	Multiple student weights	Students qualify for additional weights determined by their participation in program instruction Additional weight of 0.40 for students who are determined to be in the least proficient category on a test of English language proficiency. Additional weight of 0.28 for students who are determined to be in the second least proficient category on a test of English language proficiency. Additional weight of 0.07 for students who are determined to be in the third least proficient category on a test of English language proficiency but have not been in the third least proficient category for more than three years.	N.D. Cent. Code Ann. § 15.1-27-03.1
Ohio	Multiple student weights	Additional weight of .2104 for base students learning English Additional weight of .1577 for students who achieve an advanced, accelerated, or proficient level on the state's English language arts assessment in the previous year Additional weight of .1053 for students who achieve an advanced, accelerated, or proficient level on the state's English language arts assessment in the previous two years	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3317.016

Oklahoma	Flat weight	Additional weight of .25	Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 70, § 18-201
Oregon	Flat weight	Additional weight of .5	Or. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 327.013
Pennsylvania	Flat weight	Additional weight of .6	24 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 25-2502.53
Rhode Island	Flat weight	Additional weight of .1	16 R.I. Gen. Laws Ann. § 16-7.2-6
South Carolina	Flat weight	Additional weight of .20	Note: While pupil weightings are outline in statute (S.C. Code Ann. § 59-20-40), the most recent weightings used to determine funding levels are set by the state department of education's annual report. Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Funding Manual
South Dakota	Flat weight	Additional weight of .25 multiplied by the number of students who scored below a level four on the state-administered language proficiency assessment.	S.D. Codified Laws § 13-13-10.1
Texas	Multiple student weights	Additional weight of .1 for a student of limited English proficiency Additional weight of .15 for students of limited English proficiency in bilingual education program using a dual language immersion/one-way or two-way program model Additional weight of .05 for any other student using a dual language immersion/one-way or two-way program mode	Tex. Educ. Code Ann. § 48.105
Utah	Flat Weight	Additional weight of 0.025 for fiscal year 2021-2022 Additional weight of 0.1 for future years pending approval	Utah Code Ann. § 53F-2-314
Vermont	Flat Weight	Additional weight of .20	Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 16, § 4010