

Advice for Advocating for More Support or Staffing for English learners

Here are my recommended steps.

1. Is there an EL district person that they can talk to? The idea here is to gain strength in numbers. If so, do all the below with that person, and maybe other teachers if they are in agreement with you.
2. It appears there is no federal guidance on caseload for EL teachers. I'm not sure if WI has official guidance. Check out this post on some neighboring state recommendations:
<https://www.immigrantsrefugeesandschools.org/post/student-teacher-ratios-for-english-learners>. 37 for a half-time teacher would be equal to 74 for a full-time teacher, which seems to be well beyond any recommendations. Present this information to your administrators as the facts. It isn't about reducing your workload, it is about providing all students with what they deserve.
3. Can you get data on how these students are faring over the long-term. For example, how many are exiting out of EL services each year? If this is a low number, I think you can make the case that having a full-time teacher (or more) would increase exit rates and save the district money over the long term.
4. Take your case before the school board. I would do this with the EL parents and other supporters.
5. The final option is to consider this a violation of EL students' rights (which it is) and to report it to the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education. You can report anonymously: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>.

You could/should also reach out to your local CESA.

1. I agree with the earlier suggestion to contact the district-level person who is in charge of multilingual education (ESL, bilingual education, and/or dual-language programs) and explain your situation. If there is a full-time ESL teacher, I would start with that person and compare notes.

2. I'm not aware of set teacher-student ratios at the WI state level that trigger the hiring of a full-time ESL teacher. Amy Maciolek is the Multilingual Learners and Title III Education Consultant (amy.maciolek@dpi.wi.gov) with Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). She may have more specific information about teacher-student ratios with multilingual learners. The website suggested by another advice giver from Immigrant Connections <https://www.immigrantsrefugeesandschools.org/post/student-teacher-ratios-for-english-learners> is another good starting point. As mentioned, there are legal guidelines that dictate the quality of Bilingual and ESL programs and staffing, e.g., from the Dear Colleague Letter (January 2015): "School districts have an obligation to provide the personnel and resources necessary to effectively implement their chosen EL programs. This obligation includes having highly qualified teachers to provide language assistance services, trained administrators who can evaluate these teachers, and adequate and appropriate materials for the EL programs" (p. 14).

3. The Dear Colleague Letters (2014, 2015) and other legal guidelines are summarized and linked in Chapter 14 – Legal Framework for EL Identification and Support of the Wisconsin DPI EL Policy Handbook (<https://dpi.wi.gov/english-learners/el-identification-and-placement>). The English Learner Policy Handbook can be found on the DPI Bilingual and English Learner Education website, <https://dpi.wi.gov/english-learners>. It is chock full of information and is regularly updated (and easily accessible – all digital!). In case you're not familiar with this Bilingual and English Learner website, I encourage you to scroll through that, too (see menu).

4. I agree with the suggestion that there is power in numbers. You need allies to effect any changes. Meeting with parents and like-minded teachers to organize a presentation to principals of the schools involved and/or your local school board could help your case. If you go this route, be sure to do your homework: obtain specific information about the demographics and English language levels of ELs in schools you serve as a teacher and be specific about your asks. (Ask yourself, what do you want to get out of the meeting and what information supports your asks?)

These suggestions are offered in the order they came to mind, not in any prescribed order. Choose the ones that are most helpful to your teaching needs and school contexts. Wishing you well!

I would take a systems approach until more hours can be allotted to you and/or more staff can be hired. Work on building capacity among teachers/staff. Trainings!!! Use google drive to house and store folders/items that will be used by multiple stakeholders for quick reference and guide teachers/staff to these resources/procedures. For example, ESL Shared Drive for District then folders for different categories of people that interact with MLs.... Teachers (further broken down into grade bands or whatever subset works best in your situation/Admin/Secretaries/Parent Coordinators/SPED Team. Or create a website. Anything that you can do to make info accessible so that when you're not around there are resources and a "go-to" space to attempt to find answers until you arrive/are able to respond.

Legal docs/resources/research to support advocating for more EL support:

<https://dpi.wi.gov/english-learners>

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-el-students-201501.pdf>

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ell/services.html>


Recommendations for Time Commitments for ELLs to Ensure Academic Success:

See attached and link below

https://www2.wested.org/www-static/online_pubs/Foster_Academic_Success_092309.pdf

Very helpful site with all sorts of info in an easy to find/digest format for all persons interacting with MLs. Should be very helpful for legal advocacy, non-legal advocacy and in classroom resources as well.

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/wisconsin-ell-resources>

Hope this helps a little  Wishing you all the best. Those kids are lucky to have you. Stay strong, because they need you. You've got this. Any other support I can give so you don't have to "re-create the wheel", please let me know.

I know exactly what you mean. I just had a meeting with the principal regarding a student who is struggling with the language barrier so much that she attempted suicide.

I believe the problem here is that most do not understand how intense this issue is. I went in as an advocate/interpreter, which one is appreciated and the other catches their attention.

I have been fighting this issue for 20 plus years and yes, I get results as in this case, but this should have been resolved years ago.

My advice is if the administration isn't listening, present the issue (well written out in detail) to the District Superintendent and propose your solution. I would even have the parents there as well or at least signed statements from them.

One issue we face here is the frustration of the parents not being able to help their children with homework due to the language barrier so I have formed an organization to teach the parents English free of charge. This would also benefit the schools as well since in all my years of teaching my greatest asset was the partnership I had with the parents in order to best serve the students.