

By the Numbers: Multilingual Learner Literacy Outcomes in New York

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New York's students bring rich linguistic and cultural assets that should fuel their learning. The state recognizes this through the New York State Seal of Biliteracy, awarded to graduates who demonstrate proficiency in two or more languages, including English. The State's education system, however, has yet to translate students' linguistic strengths into high literacy rates.

For years, New York has fallen short on literacy for English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLLs), students who are learning English as a new language. While participation in the Seal of Biliteracy has grown since its launch in 2015, only [10,591 students—5.8% of seniors—earned the Seal of Biliteracy](#) in 2024. Of those, only 2,874¹ were currently or former multilingual learners, a mere 1% of students who took advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate their brilliance in biliteracy. Multilingual learners have the potential to be literate in multiple languages, but realizing that promise requires a coordinated, systemwide effort.

This report (one in a series by EdTrust-New York) examines trends in multilingual learner literacy performance in English and home language measures to identify where students need stronger support.

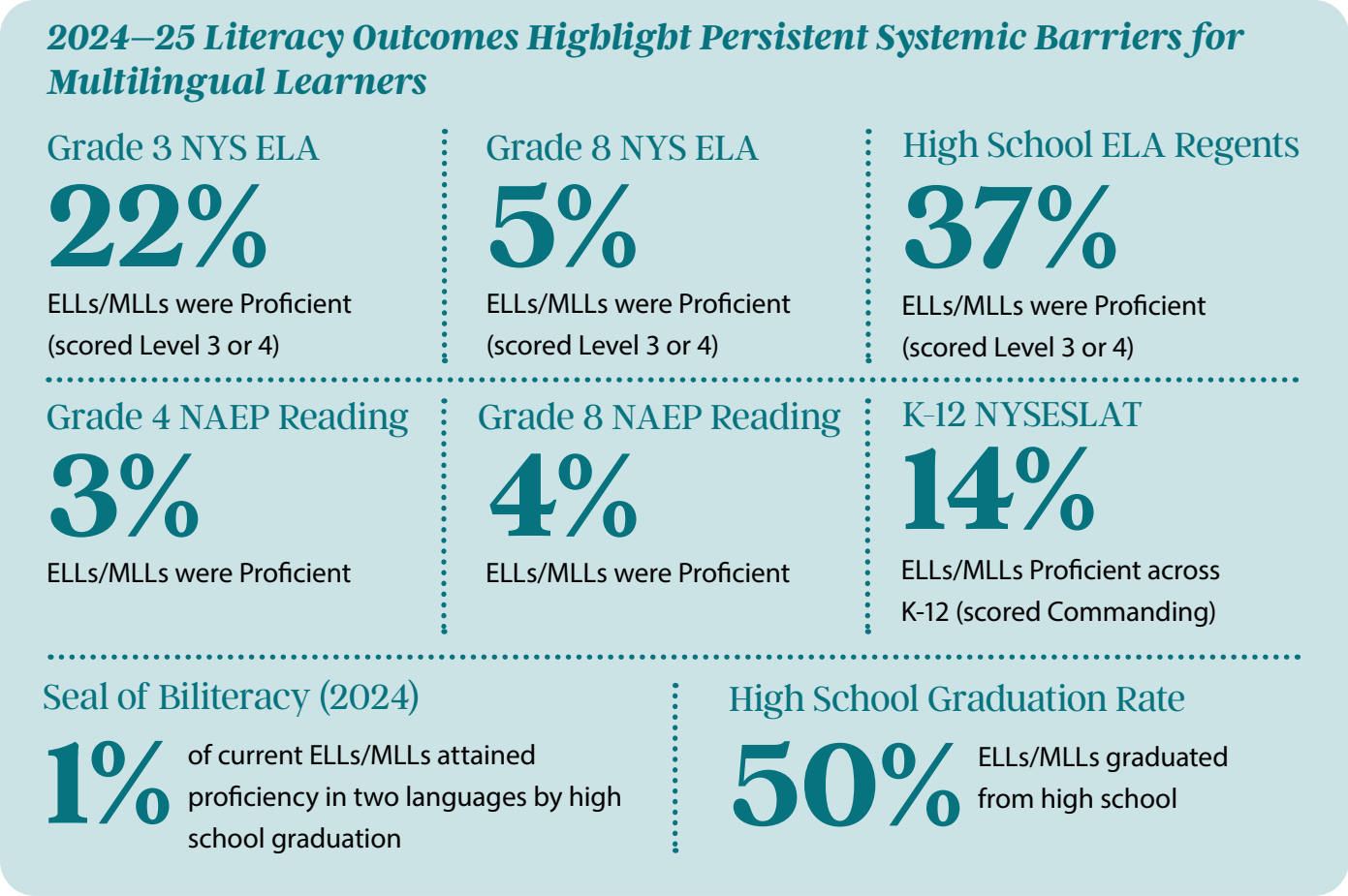
Understanding the Changing Landscape of Multilingual Learners in New York State

Multilingual learners are a growing and dynamic group across New York's schools. In 2025, 280,312 students—12% statewide—were identified as ELLs/MLLs. While the largest numbers are concentrated in major districts like New York City, Yonkers, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, some smaller districts serve larger percentages of multilingual learners—including 60% of students in East Ramapo Central School District and 42% in Hempstead Union Free School District. Multilingual learners are also now enrolled in rural and suburban communities that have not historically served these students. In recent years, New York has welcomed thousands of migrant families, newcomer students, and asylum seekers, many of whom arrive with specialized needs and interrupted schooling. Spanish and Chinese are the most common home languages statewide—but New York's linguistic landscape is diverse. In the Utica City School District, for example, where 16% of students are multilingual learners, Karen is

spoken more widely than Spanish, alongside Arabic, Pashto, Burmese, and Somali.

This evolving group of students is reshaping who New York school's serve—and what they must deliver. When multilingual learners have access to high-quality instruction, their academic performance soars. National studies show multilingual learners who become proficient in English often close in on average reading proficiency by the fourth grade and, in some cases, outpace their monolingual English speaking peers in growth². Once proficient in English, they perform on par or surpass their peers on many academic measures. In New York City, 72% of ELLs/MLLs who reached English language proficiency—called former ELLs—scored proficient in grades 3-8 ELA exams in 2025, compared to 63% of students who were never identified as English Language Learners. Statewide, former ELLs also graduate at higher rates, with a 92% graduation rate in 2024, outpacing all students (85%).

When looking at the performance of multilingual learners who have not yet reached English proficiency, it is important to note that they are not a monolithic group, with some requiring differentiated support. Approximately 14.5% of ELLs/MLLs have received English as a New Language (ENL) or Bilingual Education services for more than seven years and 19% are identified as students with disabilities, indicating that some students need substantially more support in language and literacy. That said, the gaps in performance as a whole are stark. In 2025, only 12% of ELLs/MLLs in grades 3-8 scored proficient, compared to 58% of their monolingual English speaking peers—a 46 percentage point gap that widens to 52 percentage points by grade 8. Equally troubling, only 50% of ELLs/MLLs graduated on time in 2025, as opposed to 88% of non-ELLs. The 6-year graduation rate for ELLs/MLLs demonstrates gains but still lags behind, rising to only 64% because students stay enrolled at much higher rates than their peers after their senior year.



These literacy outcomes should raise concern. Multilingual learners and their families are doing double the work³ to achieve in school—yet too often, the system fails to provide the support they need to become proficient readers and writers in English or their home language. These outcomes are not inevitable and we must expect more than the status quo. With the right instructional support, many of these students can reach proficiency in shorter periods of time⁴. In fact, 39% of ELLs/MLLs are already at the Expanding level of English language development, just one step shy of proficiency—most after only receiving 0-3 years of service. This signals a real opportunity to help those students reach proficiency and requires targeted literacy instruction that builds fluency and comprehension in English, while strengthening literacy in the home languages of multilingual learners.

We know what these students need, but too often the system gets in the way. Persistent barriers hinder the ability of these students to thrive, including:

- Limited access to quality bilingual education programs (dual language and transitional bilingual) that build biliteracy;
- Inadequate district and leadership support and expertise;
- Insufficient teacher preparation, especially among content area educators, to effectively serve multilingual learners;
- Lack of evidence-based language and literacy instruction;
- Lack of quality home language assessments and instructional materials;
- Overreliance on inappropriate assessments and instructional materials in English; and
- Persistent misconceptions about bilingual education and biliteracy.

Addressing these barriers requires coordinated, system-level action, and state funding.

What Multiple Assessments Reveal About Multilingual Learner Literacy

This report reviews performance across different types of assessments: home language literacy assessment, NYS English Language Arts proficiency, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in Reading, and English Language Proficiency as measured by the The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Each of these measures provides only a partial view of how well our school systems support literacy for multilingual students. Looking at patterns across assessments between languages, and between language and literacy assessments, however, provides a more complete understanding of the interaction between home language literacy and English, and between English language development and English literacy proficiency⁵.

Types of Assessments for Language and Literacy Proficiency

Assessment	Details
Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener (MLS)	A home language literacy assessment that measures literacy proficiency in 19 languages administered to select students at each schools' discretion. Developed for the state of New York, the MLS is a literacy assessment tool used in the process of identifying Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) and evaluate students' literacy in their home language.
English Language Arts	The Grade 3-8 English Language Arts and high school Regents Examination in English Language Arts are taken by students in Grades 3-8 and in high school (typically in the 11th or 12th grades) to measure students' proficiency in the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Standards.
National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in Reading	The NAEP assessment in reading comprehension is given every two years to students at grades 4 and 8, and approximately every four years at grade 12. The assessment measures reading comprehension by asking students to read selected grade-appropriate materials and answer questions based on what they have read.
The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT)	The NYSESLAT is designed to annually assess the English language proficiency of all ELLs/MLLs enrolled in Grades K-12 in New York State schools. The test is part of the State's compliance with federal laws that mandate the annual assessment and monitoring of the English language proficiency of all ELLs/MLLs.

Wide Variation in Home Language Literacy Signals Diverse Instructional Needs

Understanding students' literacy abilities in their home language is essential since English-only assessments do not capture the full range of literacy skills multilingual learners possess. At the same time, students' proficiency in home language literacy largely predicts students' proficiency in English literacy. To better understand this connection, New York State created the Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener (MLS) in 2016, funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages, to measure home language reading comprehension and math skills in 19 languages. Since 2016, the assessment has been administered to 37,000 students in 400 districts and 1,500 schools. Table 1 shows the 10 languages most widely assessed between January 2021 and December 2025.

Table 1. Percentage of MLS Usage by Language, January 2021 to December 2025

MLS Test Language	% Students Tested
Spanish	81.4
French	4.9
Chinese	3.4
Arabic	3.3
Russian	1.7
Bangla	1.5
Haitian Creole	1.5
Dari	0.8
Urdu	0.5
Pashto	0.3

While originally designed to identify Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)⁶, the MLS is now also used as a general literacy screener for newly arrived multilingual learners. SIFE often have lower than age-expected literacy proficiency in their home language due to interrupted schooling; therefore, these data do **not** fully represent the home language literacy abilities of the whole multilingual learner population. New York does not have statewide assessments in home language literacy, and greater utilization of assessments such as the MLS is sorely needed to provide a true picture of the literacy assets of multilingual learners. Many multilingual learners in bilingual programs are likely to have much higher home language literacy performance but there is no statewide system to capture these existing strengths.

Table 2 highlights both the average performance and wide variability in MLS results for the 18,238 students tested from January 2021 to December 2025. Middle school students average at a third grade reading level in their home languages, but performance spans from kindergarten to ninth grade. High school students average at a fourth grade reading level in their home languages, with an even broader range from kindergarten to above ninth grade.

Table 2. Reading Level Placements on Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener, 2021-2025

Grade Band	Average Grade Placement*	Interpretation	Range of Placement Results
Elementary (3 - 5)	2	Students mastered K and 1 content and can be taught Grade 2 content	K to 7
Middle (6 - 8)	3	Students mastered K-2 content and can be taught Grade 3 content	K to 9
High (9 - 12)	4	Students mastered K-3 content and can be taught Grade 4 content	K to above 9

**Placement on the MLS means the student is ready to be taught content at the placement grade.*

Such a wide range of literacy performance for students within each grade is an important finding. This data suggests many multilingual learners in middle and high school have mastered foundational literacy skills in their home languages like orthographic and phonological skills, but may need support in fluency, academic vocabulary, and comprehension of complex texts in their home language in order to engage with grade level curriculum. At the same time, some students perform above grade level, underscoring the range of literacy strengths in home language that may exist in a given classroom or grade.

The implications are clear: multilingual learners need more than English language development alone to strengthen their literacy. They bring varied and often under-recognized literacy profiles in their home language. Their biliteracy development greatly affects their literacy proficiency in English and overall academic success. Home language literacy strengths need to be recognized to support English literacy development. Students need opportunities to strengthen language and literacy in their home languages. Resources should target literacy support for multilingual students of all ages, but especially those reading at or around the third grade level in their home language. Students reading at that critical threshold require more targeted instruction in foundational skills in both languages to reach literacy proficiency overall.

Understanding the Decline in Multilingual Learner ELA Achievement

New York State English Language Arts Grades 3-8

While not pure literacy measures, Grades 3 to 8 ELA assessments provide insight into multilingual learners’ literacy skills in English. The outcomes are deeply concerning—proficiency *declines* as students move through elementary and middle school and gaps between these students and their monolingual English-speaking peers *widen*. In 2025, just 22% of ELLs/MLLs were proficient in third grade, dropping to 5% by eighth grade. In contrast, proficiency among non-ELLs remains relatively stable—59% in third grade and 57% in eighth grade.

Why outcomes diverge so sharply is an important question to consider, with several factors that likely contribute:

- **Data set variation:** As students reach English proficiency, they are no longer counted in the multilingual learner data. This is why looking at data on students formerly identified as ELL/MLL is key to understanding how students perform once they are proficient.
- **Enrollment shifts:** Newly arrived students in older grades will likely have less exposure to English and may not have had formal and consistent schooling in their home countries, lowering overall proficiency rates in older grades.
- **Rising text complexity:** Students in upper elementary and beyond face challenging texts and reading assignments, as content area standards across subjects and the texts used in instruction increase in complexity.
- **Declining literacy supports:** Literacy support is often not provided beyond elementary school. (See EdTrust-New York’s [report on the state of adolescent literacy](#) in New York.) In middle school and beyond, multilingual learners lack access to literacy support in content-area instruction, making it difficult for acceleration in literacy.

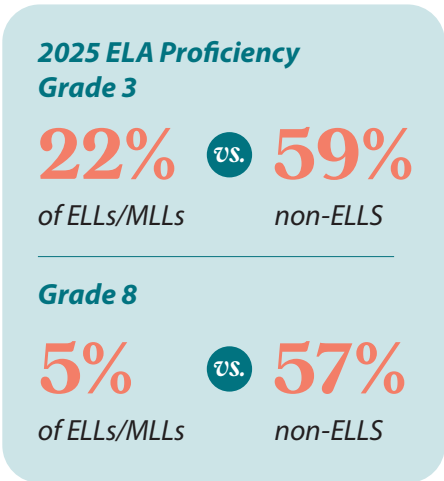
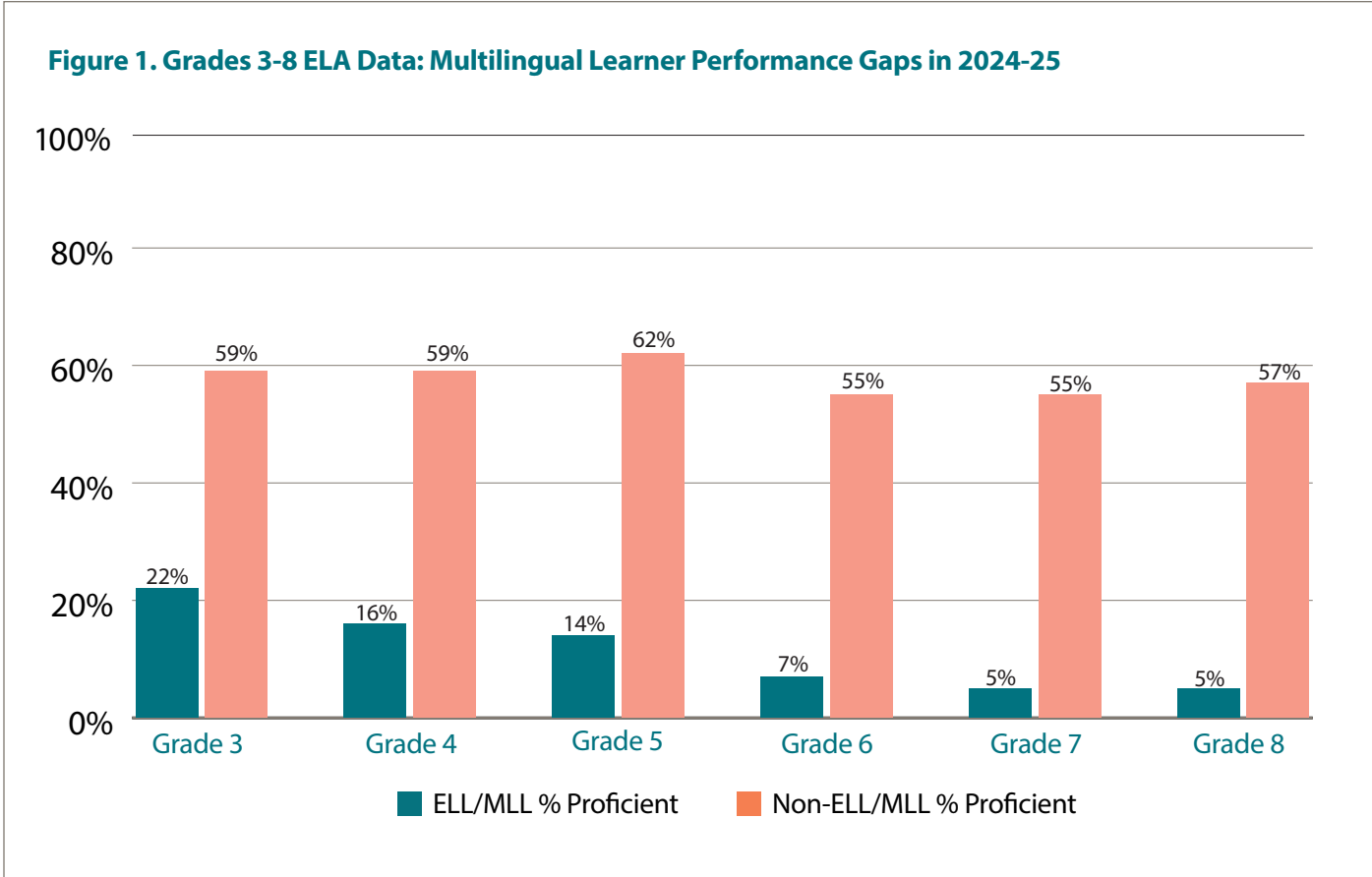


Table 3. Grades 3 & 8 ELA Data: Percent Multilingual Learners Scoring Proficient (Levels 3 & 4) from 2022 to 2025

Grade	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
3	22%	16%	13%	22%
8	6%	7%	4%	5%

The transition to middle school is a critical area of focus. Outcomes in the fifth and sixth grades warrant close attention, as this is when targeted literacy support begins to wane—and gaps begin to widen most sharply.



National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Results Reveal Deep Literacy Gaps for Multilingual Learners

NAEP reading results—the gold standard for assessing literacy proficiency—also paint a stark picture of multilingual learner outcomes in New York. In 2024-25, only 3% of Grade 4 and 4% of Grade 8 ELLs/MLLs scored proficient in reading. At the lower end of the proficiency continuum, 79% of Grade 4 and 85% of Grade 8 ELLs/MLLs scored Below Basic (the lowest NAEP performance level), compared to 41% and 35% of all students, respectively.

Similar to the trends noted on the New York State ELA outcomes, while the share of all students performing Below Basic declines by eighth grade, the opposite is true for multilingual learners—the gap widens over time.

Table 4. 2024 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Results

	READING GRADE 4				READING GRADE 8			
	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
All Students	41%	28%	22%	9%	35%	34%	26%	5%
ELLs/MLLs	79%	17%	3%	0%	85%	10%	4%	1%

These results make it clear that English language development alone is not enough. Even bilingual education programming, without strong literacy instruction, can fall short. Multilingual learners need a comprehensive approach to literacy education.

There is a common assumption that multilingual learners develop word recognition and decoding skills at rates similar to their English-only peers. This data tells a more complicated story. Many students scoring Below Basic struggle with fluency, word reading, and decoding⁷. The scale of this challenge signals that school systems are not adequately supporting multilingual learners to reach the level of word reading fluency needed to support comprehension⁸, and the majority of multilingual learners also need stronger support to develop automatic word recognition in English.

A Closer Look at Multilingual Learner Performance on the ELA Regents Exam

High school ELA Regents, administered typically in 11th or 12th grade, offer more insight into how well multilingual learners are supported to read, write, and analyze complex texts. In 2025, only 37% of ELLs/MLLs were proficient on the ELA Regents compared to 81% of their peers—a 44 percentage point gap. This low proficiency rate is persistent year over year: in 2022, it was 30% rising to only 37% in 2025. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the proficiency rate was 45% in 2019. Notably, this represents a sharp increase from middle school, where proficiency rates range from 4% and 8% depending on the year and grade level⁹.

While the assessments are not designed to be compared across grade levels, why outcomes jump nearly 25 percentage points between middle and high school is worth examining. Some possibilities are:

- **Enrollment shifts:** Some multilingual learners newly enrolled in high school are more likely to be proficient in literacy in their home language and can transfer these linguistic assets to reading in English.
- **Greater academic demands:** Increasing exposure to academic content and complex texts from middle to high school builds background knowledge and may lead to gains in language and literacy.
- **High-stakes assessments:** As a graduation requirement, the ELA and other Regents exams create a rigorous bar for students to meet in order to complete high school on time. As a result, schools provide additional test prep and exam-focused instruction.

The bottom line remains. Even with these gains from middle to high school, most multilingual learners are not reaching proficiency in high school. Since the overall ELA Regents proficiency rate remains low, especially compared to a higher graduation rate (50%), it raises questions about how well school systems are preparing multilingual learners in literacy as they graduate from high school. The ELA Regents exam is often the greatest hurdle for multilingual learners to clear for graduation—lower proficiency in ELA leads to lower graduation rates. A higher share of multilingual learners graduate from high school than reach ELA proficiency, likely due to factors such as stronger performance on content exams that are translated into their home languages, the use of waivers and exemptions from Regents exams offered during and post-pandemic¹⁰, and test preparation.

Table 5. Percentage of Multilingual Learners Proficient (Scored Level 3 or above) on the ELA Regents from 2019 to 2025

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
ELLs/MLLs	45%	n/a**	38%	30%	27%	32%	37%
Non-ELLs/MLLs	88%	n/a**	88%	84%	82%	85%	81%

***Spring 2020 standardized state assessments, including the June 2020 Regents examinations, were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are not reported.*

Many Multilingual Learners Do Not Reach English Proficiency in K-12

The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) shows limited progress in English language proficiency across K-12 from 2022 to 2025. The assessment, administered only to students designated as ELL/MLL, measures learners’ English language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The reading and writing portions capture students’ ability to apply language skills to grade-level texts in English.

In 2025, only 14% of multilingual learners across K-12 reached proficiency (“Commanding” level)¹¹. Proficiency varies by grade but remains low overall, ranging from 7% in Grade 9 to 21% in Grade 6. The largest share of students —39%— fall in the ‘Expanding’ level, just one level shy of proficiency, indicating that schools are able to support students to progress through the first few performance levels quickly. Many multilingual learners, however, get stuck at this advanced level without fully reaching proficiency because that last shift from Expanding to Commanding is arguably the hardest stage in language development. Literacy and complex analytical language skills¹² are the major barriers in that last hurdle to reach language proficiency.

Table 6. NYSESLAT English Proficiency Rates for Multilingual Learners (K-12) from 2022 to 2025

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
All Grades	14.6%	14.5%	13.6%	14%



Figure 2. 2025 NYSESLAT, Distribution of Multilingual Learners by Performance Levels in K-12

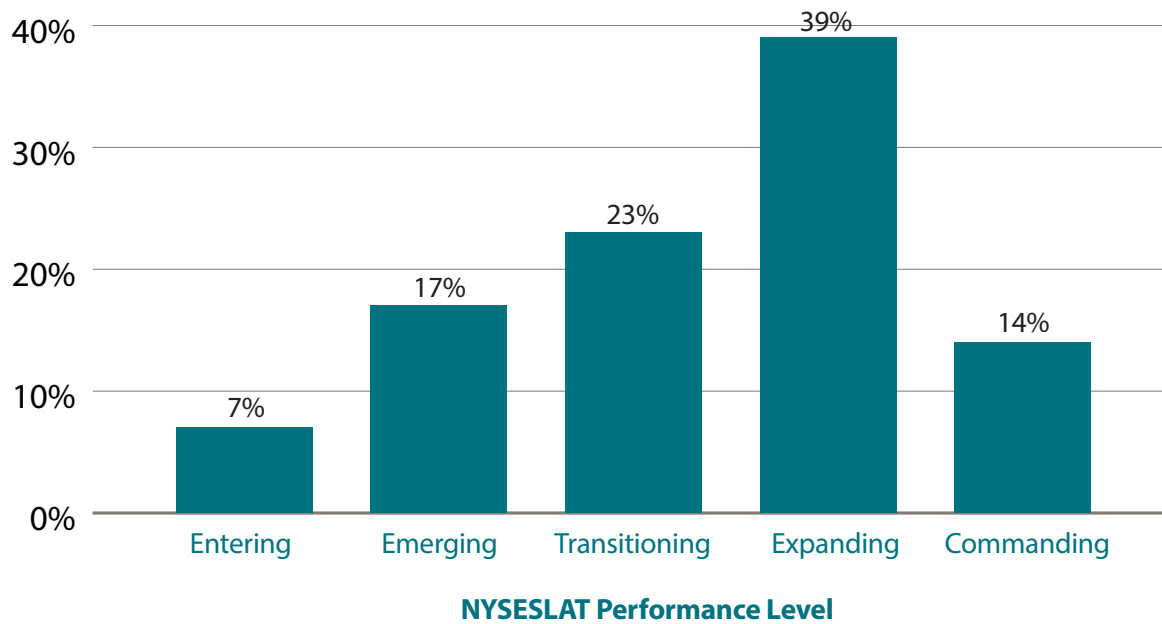
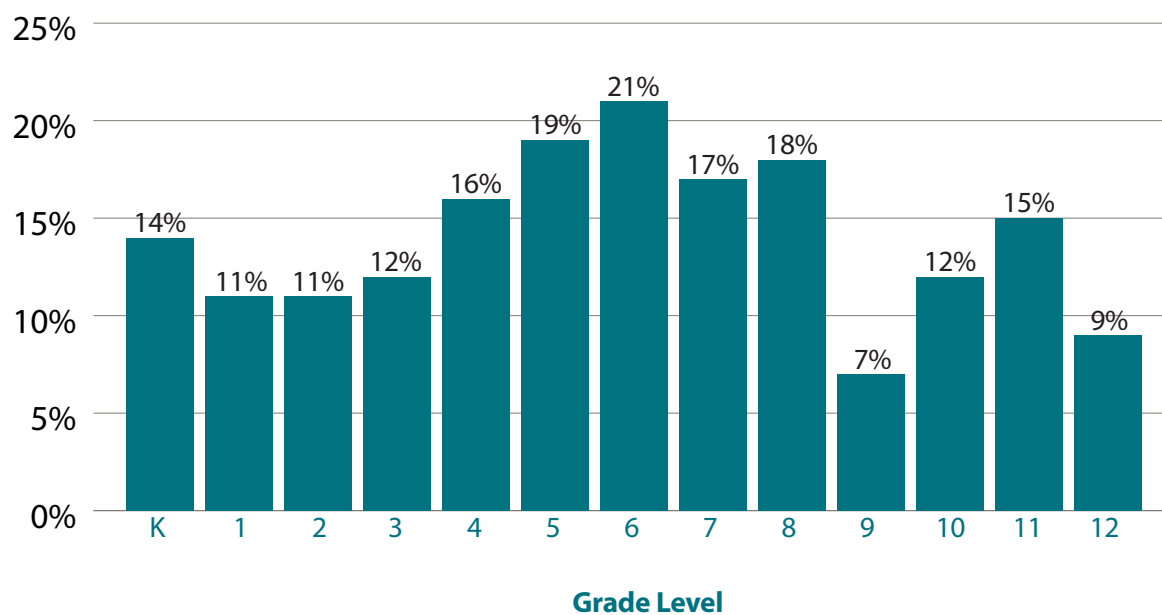


Figure 3. 2025 NYSESLAT, Percent of Multilingual Learners Proficient in the English Language, by Grade



Language proficiency rises in the early grades—but stalls and declines by middle and high school. In 2025, proficiency rates increased steadily through elementary school, peaking at 21% in the sixth grade, before dropping to 17% in the seventh grade and falling further to just 7% by ninth grade. These rates do not recover; in many districts, proficiency remains in the single digits through 12th grade.

This pattern matches national trends: language development accelerates in grades 1 to 5, slows sharply in middle school and stagnates in high school¹³. Some of this decline reflects expected dynamics—current multilingual learners become proficient and exit the testing pool and enrollment shifts, with newly arrived students entering in middle and high school often needing at least five years to reach proficiency. National studies suggest that about 50% of ELLs/MLLs reach proficiency in four to five years¹⁴. In New York City, a study found 52% of students who entered kindergarten reached proficiency within four years, by the end of third grade; and 75% by the end of fifth grade¹⁵.

These findings underscore the need to track progress over time—not just snapshots. Without cohort-based data from the State, we cannot determine whether systems are helping students reach language proficiency sufficiently to support strong literacy outcomes in English.

A Growing Disconnect Between Language Proficiency and Literacy Outcomes

The relationship between English language proficiency and literacy outcomes raises more questions than answers. From elementary to middle school, literacy proficiency declines while language proficiency inches up. In high school, the disconnect is stark: 37% of ELLs/MLLs are proficient on the ELA Regents but only 15% of 11th graders and 9% of 12th graders are proficient in English on the NYSESLAT.

The discrepancy between ELA Regents and NYSESLAT performance might be attributed to:

- Low participation rates on the NYSESLAT among high school students with higher English proficiency;
- The ELA assessment measures content knowledge, not just literacy, allowing multilingual learners to demonstrate conceptual understanding even with lower levels of English language proficiency;
- Based on assessment rubric criteria, multilingual learners need to reach a higher bar in language skills on the NYSESLAT than they have to on the ELA Regents.

The result is a disconnect between language growth and literacy outcomes. Modest gains in English proficiency are not translating into stronger literacy outcomes—and students struggling with literacy see limited progress on the reading and writing measures on the English proficiency exam.

Some lag in literacy proficiency is expected as students are learning to read and write in a new language. But the data point to a deeper problem: too many multilingual learners are graduating without proficiency in either English language development or literacy. Our school systems are not developing their language proficiency at a pace required to meet the literacy demands of high school and postsecondary opportunities.

Table 7. NYS Multilingual Learner Language and English Language Arts Proficiency (2024-25)

Grade	% Proficient: ELA (Levels 3 & 4)	% Proficient: NYSESLAT (Commanding)	
3	22%	12%	
4	16%	16%	
5	14%	19%	
6	7%	21%	
7	5%	17%	
8	5%	18%	
High School	37%	11th Grade: 15%	12th Grade: 9%

Recommendations for Strengthening Multilingual Learner Literacy Systems

A complex set of factors are at play and the solutions needed to disrupt such poor outcomes requires system-level action and planning. To assess how well our systems are working for multilingual learners, we need clearer benchmarks for expected English language and literacy growth. Like other states, New York lacks defined expectations for what *literacy* proficiency and progress should look like for multilingual learners, by grade level, subgroup, and years of English language instruction. New York also lacks systemwide measures of home language literacy and proficiency. Transparent data would show how schools and districts are performing relative to statewide averages—and where they are falling short—across grades and assessments. While districts can access their own data, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has not published a “New York State Multilingual Learner/English Language Learner (MLL/ELL) Data Report” since 2019¹⁶. These critical gaps in transparency make it difficult to evaluate progress or target support where it is most needed.

State accountability systems should use multiple indicators to assess a district’s capacity to improve multilingual learners’ literacy achievement. New York State needs strong systems with coherent, coordinated practices. This would shift the state from relying on local district efforts and isolated actions of an individual teacher—leaving outcomes to chance—toward intentional, system-wide improvement at scale. A stronger data and assessment system to both monitor and disrupt current language and literacy outcomes requires action at every level of the system. The following recommendations are a starting place, first and foremost to change how we collect and use our multilingual learner data.

State-Level Actions to Improve Data Transparency and Accountability for Multilingual Learner

- **Disaggregated multilingual learner data:** State assessment data should be accessible to the public annually with disaggregated numbers for all multilingual learner subgroups—such as former ELLs, SIFE, multilingual learners with disabilities, and Long Term ELLs—to enable deeper analysis. Language proficiency data need to be disaggregated to see differences in oral language versus reading and writing, where students show the least amount of progress.
- **Reporting enrollment and proficiency patterns:** The state should publicly report shifts in the multilingual learner student population, such as new enrollment or students exiting ELL/MLL status over the years, to provide context for changes in language and literacy proficiency rates.
- **Student trajectory profiles:** The state needs benchmarks for expected growth, not just in English language proficiency but also for literacy proficiency, that are aligned to when students enter our schools, and differentiated for subgroups such as former ELLs, SIFE, Long Term ELLs, and multilingual learners with disabilities.
- **Training educators for data literacy:** As New York prepares to transition to [WIDA ACCESS](#) for the annual English language proficiency assessment (in lieu of the NYSESLAT) and implements new graduation measures through the Portrait of a Graduate, all educators must be trained on multilingual learner data literacy.
- **Multilingual assessments:** The state needs Native Language Arts and Home Language Literacy assessments in the top languages spoken in our state, to understand literacy in home languages. This would round out the picture of biliteracy for multilingual learners. The state should increase utilization of the Multilingual Literacy Screener and also reduce barriers for schools and districts to implement the Seal of Biliteracy so that greater numbers of multilingual learners can showcase their unique biliteracy skills.

District-Level Actions to Strengthen Multilingual Learner Literacy Systems:

- **Growth measures:** Districts need to look at language and literacy growth to determine whether multilingual learners are making expected gains in literacy proficiency based on progress in English language development. Districts can identify gaps and targeted interventions in schools to align with expected growth outcomes.
- **Disaggregated ELA proficiency data:** Districts need to further analyze ELA proficiency scores for multilingual learners by ELL/MLL subgroup, years of service, by program model, and breakdown specific skill areas where students have unmet needs in literacy. Such analyses would provide greater insight to inform program design, curriculum implementation, and multi-tiered systems of support.
- **Disaggregated screener and diagnostic data:** Districts need to review data from literacy screeners and diagnostics for all grade levels, disaggregated by multilingual learner subgroups such as long term ELL, former ELL, SIFE, and newcomers, in order to provide more targeted literacy supports.
- **Data for system improvement:** Districts should use language and literacy outcomes across grade levels to understand inconsistencies across schools and grade levels and provide targeted training and system improvement planning based on school-level data. Districts and schools should develop strategies to mitigate drops in language and literacy proficiency rates in the sixth and 11th grades by monitoring progress to proficiency over time and providing targeted language and literacy support across content areas in secondary schools.

School-Level Practices to Support Multilingual Learner Literacy Development:

- **Bilingual literacy screening and diagnostics:** Schools should use a literacy screener with both English and home language counterparts to understand literacy progress and proficiency in both languages. Schools can also utilize the Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener in 19 languages.
- **Formative indicators:** Schools should monitor oral language and reading fluency measures with data from formative assessments, and reading and writing diagnostics, to identify where students need additional support.
- **Training for School Administrators:** School-based leaders need training to interpret the full range of language and literacy data for multilingual learners and develop systematic responses in scheduling, hiring, professional development, curriculum and instruction.

The data is clear—New York’s current approach to language and literacy education for multilingual learners is not working. Celebrating multilingualism is not enough—we need results. Policy must ensure that multilingual learners graduate as strong readers and writers in both English and their home language. New York has the talent and resources to get this right. Now it is on leaders to build systems that leverage students’ linguistic and cultural assets to deliver results.

To find out more about New York’s literacy policies that address the needs of multilingual learners, see [EdTrust-New York’s multilingual learner literacy series](#).

Data Notes

All data on state assessments from the 2024-25 school year are from the state databases found at <https://data.nysed.gov>. The analysis provided in this report relies only on these publicly available data at the state level, which do not provide subgroup or cohort level data for the language and literacy outcomes of multilingual learners. New York City data can be found at <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/test-results>. Additional data was provided to Ed Trust NY by the Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener.

Endnotes

- ¹ New York State Education Department, [The New York State Seal of Biliteracy Annual Report \(2023-24\)](#). Accessed March 16, 2026.
- ² Johnson, A. (2022). [Achievement and Growth for English Learners](#). Educational Policy, 37(4), 1044-1069. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048211049419>.
- ³ Short, D., & Fitzsimmons, S. (2007). Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English language learners — A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York. Washington, DC:Alliance for Excellent Education.
- ⁴ Zhang, X. and Winke, P. (2025), [Time to Proficiency in Young English Learners and Factors That Affect Progress](#). TESOL J, 59: 695-729. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3340>.
- ⁵ Yamashita, J., Shiotsu, T. & Kusanagi, (2014). Predictors of second language reading comprehension ability: a longitudinal study with learners from grade 9 to 11 in an English as a foreign language context. *Reading and Writing* 37, 2733–2758. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-023-10494-4>.
- ⁶ Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) are multilingual learners who have attended school in the U.S. for fewer than 12 months, and are two or more years below grade level in home language literacy and/or math due to inconsistent or interrupted schooling prior to their arrival.
- ⁷ Hiebert, E. H. (2022). When Students Perform at the Below Basic Level on the NAEP: What Does It Mean and What Can Educators Do? *The Reading Teacher*, 75, 631–639. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2082>.
- ⁸ Wang, Zuowei, John Sabatini, Tenaha O'Reilly, and Jonathan Weeks. (2019). "Decoding and Reading Comprehension: A Test of the Decoding Threshold Hypothesis." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 111 (3): 387–401.; Wang, Z., O'Reilly, T., & Sutherland, R. (2024). Replicating decoding threshold in ReadBasix®: Impact on reading skills development (Research Memorandum No. RM-24-06). ETS.
- ⁹ One exception to this trend is in 2022 in Grade 6 when the ELL/MLL ELA proficiency rate was 16%. The Grade 7 proficiency rate that same year was 8%.
- ¹⁰ Zimmerman, A. (2026, March 9). [NYC 2025 graduation rates dip, with steeper drops for students with disabilities and English learners](#). Chalkbeat.
- ¹¹ The reclassification rate for ELLs/MLLs is likely higher than 14% when accounting for achievement on ELA state exams, but the data are not currently available on [NYSED Data Site](#). The most recent reclassification rate [reported by NYSED](#) was 36.5% in 2018.
- ¹² Harvard Graduate School of Education, "[The Language for School Reading: Core Academic Language Skills \(CALS\)](#)," Language for Learning, accessed May 15, 2026,
- ¹³ Poole, G. A., & Sahakyan, N. (2024). [Examining English Learner Testing, Proficiency, and Growth: Continued Trends since the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). (WIDA Research Report No. RR-2024-1). Wisconsin Center for Education Research.
- ¹⁴ Zhang, X. and Winke, P. (2025). [Time to Proficiency in Young English Learners and Factors That Affect Progress](#). TESOL J, 59: 695-729. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3340>;
- ¹⁵ Kieffer, M. J. & Parker, C. E. (2016). Patterns of English learner student reclassification in New York City public schools (REL 2017–200). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands.
- ¹⁶ New York State Department of Education. (2019). [New York State Multilingual Learner/ English Language Learner \(MLL/ELL\) Data Report](#). Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages.