

Supporting English Learner Students

Recruitment and Retention Super Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Who are English Learner Students?

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act defines English Learners (EL) as:

1. a secondary school student who is an English learner, as defined in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.
2. an adult or an out-of-school youth who has limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and-
 - ✓ whose native language is a language other than English; or
 - ✓ who lives in a family environment or community in which a language other than English is the dominant language.³

This document provides strategies to assist in successfully recruiting members of the EL population into Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Effective recruitment of English Learners depends on three important components:

- Coordination with key stakeholders - especially the ethnic communities and organizations that serve these populations.
- Accessible recruitment materials - information about support services must be made available in multiple languages so it can be understood by EL students and their families.
- Awareness of current immigration legislation - immigration status issues may affect your student population. Keeping current on legislative changes will support an environment that is both accessible and responsive to those with undocumented immigration status.

Did You Know?

In fiscal year 2018, 116,866 Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in Illinois community colleges making Latinos the largest category of minority students in the state. During the same year, Hispanic/Latino students also had the highest representation among minorities in CTE and accounted for 16.5 percent of the population. African American students had the second largest CTE program enrollment at 11.8 percent, followed by Asian American students at 3.9 percent.

Recruitment Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

English learners encounter many barriers due to lack of awareness and cultural sensitivity, inconsistent referral systems, and the lack of challenging, relevant coursework. These barriers are complex and can be overcome by engaging learners, their families, and community in providing support. Educators should work to provide a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere and offer curricula that is challenging and provides opportunities for real-world applications.

- Engage community leaders, human service agencies, administrators, educational entities and organizations in the recruitment process.
- Disseminate information in multiple languages using local papers, websites, and student organizations with a presence in non-English speaking communities. Be sure your information is represented in all communication vehicles used by the college.
- Offer assistance with admission, registration, financial aid and any other issues for students who may have increased difficulty navigating the enrollment process due to language barriers or unfamiliar cultural context.
- Include images of diverse individuals engaging in CTE programs and activities in recruitment content whenever possible. Ensure that any needed releases (especially for minors) have been secured.
- Quotes from English Learner participants and personal testimonials can also be very effective.
- Determine high traffic areas within the community to market programs and services.
 - ✓ Consider organizations where individuals who could qualify as EL and/or other special populations might seek assistance.
 - ✓ Ask employers who may hire large numbers of individuals who qualify as EL if you can distribute marketing materials at their location.
- Revise school policies to be supportive of undocumented immigrants.
 - ✓ Release an official statement showing your support for undocumented students.
 - ✓ Ensure enrollment forms make it clear that a Social Security Number is not required.
 - ✓ Ensure online enrollment forms include clear instructions for nulling Social Security Number field.



Retention Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

English Learners face complex barriers that must be addressed with a comprehensive support system that goes beyond academic support. These students have a better chance of completing programs when they participate in a comprehensive program that includes developmental guidance and counseling that build on academic support. Successful retention strategies focus on three areas: advising, classroom strategies, and support services.

Advising

- Implement an intensive and organized program to deter potential dropout prior to entry into CTE programs (e.g., orientation and peer mentoring).
- Consider peer mentoring options like a cohort within a class or a study group facilitated by a bilingual individual.
- Ensure learners are included in career development activities and work-based learning options such as community service, job shadowing, school-based enterprises, youth apprenticeships, and paid work experiences.
- Provide training related to current immigration law and its legal status to ensure advisors understand the protections it provides and its limitations.
- Provide parents with information about opportunities, the career development process, and give them ideas of ways they can help their child complete the tasks that are part of the process. English Learners are often unaware of the range of postsecondary and career opportunities available to them. Transition support that helps students learn and understand appropriate workplace behavior and employer expectations should be a part of the support services offered.
- Provide information about support services for other special populations in multiple languages. English learners have unique barriers but are entitled to other support services that help them overcome barriers not related to their lack of English proficiency.



Retention Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

Classroom

- Provide a wide array of instructional approaches to meet the needs of English Learners. Embed abstract concepts in real, concrete situations.
- Use teaching strategies that reinforce learners' strengths and affirm cultural backgrounds.
- Use approaches that are culturally sensitive and relevant.
- Consider various learning styles; use auditory in combination with visual and kinesthetic approaches.
- Consider the communication styles of learners, being sensitive to the importance of silence and nonverbal communication.

Support Services

- Utilize informal support systems such as churches, student organizations, ethnic clubs, and family associations.
- Recognize dependent roles and family dynamics and inform EL students of full range of support services not just those related to their status.
- Support student organizations/clubs for undocumented students.
- Create a safe space for English Learners and undocumented students and make it visible.
- Create partnerships with local health and legal clinics and undocumented immigrant support and advocacy groups to cover gaps in services your school does not or cannot provide.

Sources:

¹ Illinois Community College Board. Research and Policy Studies. Fiscal Year 2018 Illinois Community College System Selected Programs and Services for Underrepresented Groups. By ICCB. Springfield, 2020.

² Kopriva, Rebecca., Jessica E. Emick, Carlos Porfirio Hipoloto-Delgado, and Catherine A. Cameron. "Do Proper Accommodation Assignments Make a Difference? Examining the Impact of Improved Decision Making on Scores for English Language Learners." Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice 26.3 (2007): 11-20. Web.

³ Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act H.R.2353, 115th Cong., (2018) (enacted). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2353/text?r=2>.