



School Funding Interim Commission

69th Montana Legislature

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PANEL DISCUSSION

English Learners

Wednesday February 11, 2026

Room 317, State Capitol

Introductory overview of the English Learners landscape in Montana:

- Katie Bloodgood OPI Policy Director & Deputy Chief of Staff
- Krystal Smith OPI Education Innovation Manager

Panelists:

- Casey Bertram Superintendent, Bozeman Public Schools
- Kaitlyn Hess Data and Federal Programs Administrator, Helena School District
- Bianka Rock Above Apsalooke (Crow) District Indian Education Director & Families in Transition Coordinator, Hardin K12 School District
- Violet Sinclair-Boggs Test Coordinator and Title III Student Support, Browning Public Schools

Discussion Prompts:

- What's the current landscape of English Language Learners in your district and/or across the state?
- What are the tools in your toolbox? Talk about what your school/district is doing, what works, what are the challenges?

Terminology:

- EL / ELL = English Learner / English Language Learner
- MLEL = MultiLingual English Learner
- SEA = State Educational Agency
- SLIFE = Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education
- Title III = [Title III, Part A](#) is a federal formula grant to SEAs for [English Language Acquisition](#). This program is designed to improve the education of English Learner (EL) children and youth by helping them learn English and meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards. The program also provides enhanced instructional opportunities for immigrant children and youth. Funds are distributed to states based on a formula that takes into account the number of immigrant and EL students in each state.
- WIDA = suite of summative English language proficiency assessments. [WIDA ACCESS](#) is given annually to English learners in kindergarten through grade 12 in WIDA Consortium member states to monitor students' progress in learning academic English.