



COALITION OF  
ASIAN AMERICAN LEADERS



Minnesota  
Education Equity  
Partnership

Advancing Race Equity & Excellence

## PRESS RELEASE

### For more information please contact:

Aara Johnson, Program Director (763) 744-6724 mobile | [ajohnson@mneep.org](mailto:ajohnson@mneep.org)

KaYing Yang, Policy Director (808) 492-3630 mobile | [kaying@caalmn.org](mailto:kaying@caalmn.org)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Minnesota's Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan Needs to be More Ambitious for English Learners

St. Paul, Minnesota – The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) released its [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Minnesota state plan](#) on August 1st and will allow a 30 day public comment period. The Coalition of Asian American Leaders ([CAAL](#)) and Minnesota Education Equity Partnership ([MnEEP](#)) [compared the State plan to recommendations](#) they offered earlier this year in their [policy brief](#).

MnEEP and CAAL are pleased to see that students are awarded points for English language proficiency based on how close they reach the annual target according to their initial grade and language levels, and that there are extended trajectories toward proficiency for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). Additionally CAAL and MnEEP support MDE's plan to have recently arrived English Learners (ELs) gradually included in their school's accountability system from their first year, and that reclassified ELs will be counted for four years.

Concerns remain about the plan include the lack of ambition in setting trajectories toward proficiency for older ELs, the lack of transparency for schools not identified for support but still needing it, and the lack of transparency in disaggregated reporting of reclassified ELs. Furthermore, MDE's plan as is does not include concrete strategies for strong and responsive community engagement, which CAAL and MnEEP believe is the foundation to ensuring parents more effectively advocate for their children's education and themselves.

MnEEP and CAAL formed the **Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network**, which brought a variety of stakeholders, including teachers, parents and education experts to focus attention on how Minnesota should design its state education plan to meet the new requirements of ESSA. Under ESSA, MDE must develop multiple new standards for ensuring quality education for English Learners in order to be in compliance with federal government requirements.

Bo Thao-Urabe, CAAL's Network Director states, "We are happy to see ESSA's focus on English Learners, who make up some of the largest student growth populations in Minnesota's school districts. We urge community members to respond to the state plan and participate in the MDE's regional meetings. For



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too long, parents and students have felt stigmatized when placed in EL programs. This is an opportunity for them to offer insights and innovative ideas to strengthen programs that serve their children to succeed academically.”

The Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network’s [policy brief](#) provides important background information about Minnesota’s English Learners (ELs), and the state’s alignment with the federal ESSA Law. It also provides seven recommendations on what is needed to achieve high academic outcomes for ELs:

1. Implement strong and culturally responsive family engagement to meet evolving and diverse educational needs
2. Provide academic native language curriculum and courses to support rigorous literacy development
3. Use a robust and multidimensional calculation of growth toward English language proficiency
4. Develop consistent, objective criteria and school practices for EL program entry and exit
5. Use baseline data from recently arrived ELs to establish and maintain high academic standards
6. Prioritize support for early development of dual language learners
7. Strategically strengthen professional development and programs to support ELs in low-performing schools

“It is important to have authentic voices for determining public policy that works well for the people,” shared Carlos Mariani Rosa, MnEEP Executive Director.

Mariani Rosa further adds, “We are pleased to support emerging multilingual learners to shape laws that help them to achieve high levels of academic proficiency in Minnesota.”

To download the [policy brief](#), please visit [mneep.org](http://mneep.org) or [caalmn.org](http://caalmn.org).

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**Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL, [www.caalmn.org](http://www.caalmn.org))** is a network of multi-sector, multi-ethnic and multi-generational leaders who actively harnesses our collective power to improve the lives of community in Minnesota. Towards this mission, CAAL connects leaders, creates spaces for learning, and builds powerful community-centered agendas on the shared priorities of education and economics. We believe that our diversity is our asset, and building cohesion and unity among and across communities to be powerful ensures our multi-racial, multi-cultural democracy works for its entire people. CAAL deploys the following strategies to make meaningful impact for community.

- CAAL **weaves relationships** together across our community’s complex identities so that leaders maximize their knowledge, resources and experiences to get things done together for greater progress.



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- On the community's shared priorities of education and economics, CAAL leaders **develop shared analysis and action agendas** based on research, lived experiences and power building of the most impacted community members in order to influence and inform systems.
- Lastly, CAAL **uplifts and supports the brilliance of Minnesota's diverse Asian populations** to lead inside and outside of our communities so that Minnesota's leadership in all systems reflects its population.

**Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MnEEP, [www.mneep.org](http://www.mneep.org))** uses a race equity lens to transform educational institutions, organizations, and leaders to ensure that students of color and American Indian students achieve full academic and leadership success. We envision a just society in which an equitable educational ecosystem ensures all students achieve their full potential. Achieving this vision would mean that race is no longer a predictor of educational success. MnEEP utilizes research, policy development, and community empowerment models to build strong networks of communities of color, American Indian communities and education system leaders for systems, structural and cultural shifts in education.

MnEEP focuses on five big, bold goals:

- **Big Bold Goal 1:** Minnesota school systems are culturally responsive in their policies and approaches to education.
- **Big Bold Goal 2:** Minnesota school climates foster positive student engagement to eliminate discipline gaps by race and support students of color and American Indian students for academic and leadership success.
- **Big Bold Goal 3:** Minnesota educators reflect student demographics.
- **Big Bold Goal 4:** Minnesota schools utilize heritage and home language to support academic excellence for English Language Learners and the multilingualism of all students.
- **Big Bold Goal 5:** Minnesota institutions of higher education will support student achievement by providing greater access and equity to students of color and American Indian students, with a focus on financial aid.