

MEETING THE NEEDS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS AND OTHER DIVERSE LEARNERS

America's schools are responsible for meeting the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population, and ESEA programs must provide a wide range of resources and support to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in college and in a career. ESEA includes programs that help schools meet the special educational needs of children working to learn the English language, students with disabilities, Native American students, homeless students, the children of migrant workers, and neglected or delinquent students. In addition, the federal government has a responsibility to provide assistance to certain high-need regions and areas, including rural districts and districts that are affected by federal property and activities.

In each of these areas, the Administration's ESEA reauthorization proposal will continue and strengthen the federal commitment to serving all students, and improve each program to ensure that funds are used more effectively to meet the needs of the students they serve.

OUR APPROACH

- ▶ Improving programs for English Learners and encouraging innovative programs and practices to support English Learners' success and build the knowledge base about what works.
- ▶ Maintaining and strengthening formula grant programs for Native American students, homeless students, migrant students, and neglected or delinquent students; as well as for districts that are in rural areas or that are affected by federal property and activities.
- ▶ Meeting the needs of students with disabilities throughout ESEA and through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

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ENGLISH LEARNER EDUCATION

OUR APPROACH

- ▶ **Strengthen programs for English Learners** by requiring states to put in place certain key conditions for reform.
- ▶ **Focus on developing promising practices and scaling up effective practices** for improving the instruction of English Learners and for preparing and developing effective teachers of English Learners, through competitive grants, research, and graduate fellowships.

English Learners (ELs) are the fastest-growing student population within the U.S.

Approximately 4.7 million, or 10 percent, of the nation's students in grades K–12 were classified as ELs in 2007–08 (U.S. Department of Education, forthcoming). This is an increase of approximately 60 percent since the late 1990s, while the size of the total student population remained unchanged (Batalova et al., 2006). Although southwestern states have the highest proportions of ELs, more than half of all states reported EL proportions of at least 5 percent of their K–12 enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, forthcoming). The fastest growth has taken place in parts of the country that have had relatively less prior experience serving ELs in the education system. For example, the K–12 EL populations in Nebraska and North Carolina rose by 301 and 372 percent, respectively, from 1996 to 2006 (Batalova et al., 2006; The Working Group on ELL Policy, 2009). Despite the growth in the EL population, as of early 2009, 10 states did not provide any state-level funds dedicated to the education of ELs (Education Week, 2009). Approximately 35 percent of ELs were born outside of the U.S. (Education Week, 2009), and some English Learners have experienced significant interruptions in their formal education.

A large achievement gap exists between ELs and their non-EL classmates. For example, on the National Assessment of Educational

Progress (NAEP), only 6 percent of fourth-grade EL students scored at or above proficiency in reading compared to 36 percent of non-ELs in 2009 (NCES, 2009b). In 2009, 12 percent of fourth-grade ELs scored at or above proficiency in mathematics compared with 41 percent of non-EL students (NCES, 2009a). In addition, ELs are much more likely to score below the Basic level: In 2009, 72 percent of eighth-grade ELs scored below Basic in mathematics compared to 26 percent of non-ELs, and, in 2009, more than two-thirds of ELs scored below Basic in reading (74 percent) compared to 22 percent of non-ELs (NCES, 2009a and 2009b).

States need to adopt and develop college- and career-ready standards for their EL populations and need their EL assessments to provide valid and reliable measures of a student's English proficiency level. Once states adopt college- and career-ready academic content standards, they will need to revise their current English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards to link them to these new content standards. This will ensure that the standards address the English skills students need to learn academic content. States then will have to align their ELP assessments with these new ELP standards. Currently, ELP assessments are not peer-reviewed, and some states still have ELP assessments that are not completely aligned with their ELP standards. Once states have better alignment between ELP standards and

assessments, they then also will need to do more to examine possible patterns of differential performance on the ELP assessments in order to ensure that the assessments do not unfairly discriminate against certain subgroups within the larger EL population (Abedi, 2008).

While there are certain practices that have been shown to benefit ELs, more research and evaluation is needed on the types of language instruction educational programs (LIEPs) that are most effective for ELs. The National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth found that it is critical that teachers modify instruction for EL students in order to address their specific language needs (August and Shanahan, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008). Research also has identified other practices that benefit ELs, such as peer-assisted learning opportunities during which EL students work in structured pair activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). However, additional research is needed on effective instruction of English to EL students and appropriate interventions for EL students who are not acquiring English language proficiency after many years of participation in an LIEP.

Districts and schools need to strengthen the ability of classroom teachers to effectively address the needs of English Learners.

Research indicates that regular classroom teachers must modify instruction for English Learners, but many current and prospective teachers do not receive adequate training in teaching ELs. Only Arizona, California, Florida, and New York require all prospective teachers to demonstrate competence in teaching ELs (Ballantyne et al., 2008). Most teachers in LIEPs experience some professional development focused on working with ELs, but only a small percentage participate in significant professional development over a typical school year. For example, during the 2006–07 school year, 70 percent of teachers who taught the core academic subjects at the elementary level or English and mathematics at the secondary level, and who worked in LIEPs, participated in at least one hour of professional development on instructional strategies for teaching ELs, but only 12 percent participated in more than 24 hours of such professional development over that school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Likewise, only 35 percent of elementary teachers and secondary math and English teachers who

Saint Paul Public School District

St. Paul, Minnesota

Over the past few decades, the Saint Paul Public School District has worked to align its EL programs and services to the core values represented by the district’s mission—language proficiency, strong foundations, community engagement, and collaborative success (e-mail communication with H. Bernal, March 11, 2010).

In the late 1990s, EL programs in Saint Paul began to move away from the “pull-out” model for EL services toward a content-based model. The content-based programs promote students’ mastery of academic content while they become proficient in English as subject areas are integrated with language objectives. Pull-out programs focus solely on developing students’ English language proficiency.

As EL programs moved from pull-out to instructional collaboration models, the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) classes that served newcomer students were transitioned to the Language Academy program. The TESOL classes were comprised of English Learners taught by an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. The curriculum was focused on English language development rather than on content areas, such as math or science. EL students in TESOL classes had few opportunities to interact with English speakers, and did not always have access to the same school services (gym, library, etc.) as

other students. The implementation of the Language Academy model started in 1999 and addressed what the TESOL classes lacked. In Language Academy classrooms, students interact with both native English-speaking peers and fellow English Learners. Students develop English proficiency through studying content areas. They are taught by both a licensed ESL teacher and a licensed content-area teacher. Through the program, students are fully integrated into the school community.

The transition towards instructional collaboration is evident in many levels of EL programs. General education and EL teachers work collaboratively to address the needs of students in the elementary and secondary schools. The concept of teaching language through content has spread throughout the Saint Paul school district in all levels of EL service. The focus has shifted away from teaching students English toward language proficiency and overall academic growth.

In addition to changing how EL services are delivered, the district has significantly expanded its dual language programs over the past five years. Five elementary schools now have a Spanish dual language program, and one elementary school started the first Hmong dual language program in the nation. These dual language programs are successful in producing bilingual students who are bicultural and biliterate. Research has shown that students who are literate in their first language are more successful in attaining their second language. Students in the dual language programs have shown great success in becoming fluent in their native language and in English.

To complement their academic EL programs, the district also has developed cultural components and parent outreach efforts for EL students and families. To support the language and academic achievements of EL students, the EL department has designed professional development opportunities for district staff. Presentations are offered on languages, cultures, and histories of major EL student populations. Resources and workshops for embedding Hmong, Latino, and Somali cultures into the social studies curriculum also are offered annually. Parent advisory committees for the Hmong, Latino, and Somali families meet regularly. Parents also can participate in classes that teach basic English skills and how to navigate through the school system. All of these cultural and community components continue to grow and positively influence the experiences and achievements of students and parents.

Results

From 2002 to 2005, the percentage of EL students in the district who were proficient on the Minnesota's third-grade reading test increased from 30 percent to 52 percent. In 2005, the district's students outperformed the state cohort by 6 percentage points.

From 2003 to 2009, EL students in Saint Paul Public Schools have consistently outperformed EL students statewide on a variety of tests. In the Council of the Great City Schools' *Succeeding with English Language Learners* report (2009), the district was listed as having made among the best gains of the Great City Schools districts in closing the achievement gap between EL and non-EL students (Horwitz, et al., 2009).

were not specifically working in LIEPs but who may have had EL students in their classes participated in at least one hour of professional development on instructional strategies for teaching ELs (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

In addition to the lack of training on strategies for teaching English Learners, states and districts report a shortage of teachers of English as a Second Language

(ESL) who are qualified to teach in LIEPs (Education Week, 2009; US Department of Education, 2009). In 2006–07, 35 percent of school districts reported difficulty recruiting highly-qualified ESL teachers. Nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of large districts and half of all urban districts reported such problems (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

States project that 56,000 new ESL teachers will be needed across the nation within the next five

years, but only 11 states offer incentives for teachers to earn an ESL teaching license (Education Week, 2009).

Many states and districts do not have data systems to track ELs over time, and most do not maintain some key background variables on their EL students, making it difficult to use data to improve instruction (NET3, 2010).

Tracking EL students longitudinally is vital because each student's EL designation and achievement levels in reading and mathematics change as he or she improves proficiency in English (The Working Group on ELL Policy, 2009). Disaggregating performance data by "years in program," "former ELs," and "students with interrupted formal education" allows states and districts to determine the effectiveness of programs for all ELs. However, only 22 states and the District of Columbia (out of 41 states and the District of Columbia with available data) have data systems that could enable them to track former ELs beyond the two years of monitoring required under current Title III of ESEA (NET3,

2010). As of early 2010, of the 22 states that have been interviewed for the ongoing National Evaluation of Title III, only one reported that it can directly identify ELs whose formal education was interrupted (NET3, 2010).

Finally, there are tremendous inconsistencies within many states in the identification and classification of ELs that affect the validity, accuracy, and comparability of outcome data for the EL subgroup (The Work Group on ELL Policy, 2009). States use the ESEA definition of a "limited English proficient" student, but they vary in their use of specific criteria and procedures to formally identify students as ELs and to determine when students should no longer be designated as ELs. For example, at least 20 states allow districts to use some amount of local discretion in initially identifying students as ELs, and at least 12 states allow districts some flexibility in establishing the criteria used to determine when students are no longer designated as ELs (NET3, 2010).

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DIVERSE LEARNERS

Migrant Student Education; Homeless Children and Youths Education; Neglected and Delinquent Children and Youths Education; Indian Student Education; Native Hawaiian Student Education and Alaska Native Student Education; Rural Education; Impact Aid

OUR APPROACH

- ▶ **Continuing our commitment** to programs that target historically underserved students or that provide funding for districts that are rural or impacted by federal activities.
- ▶ **Adjusting formulas for homeless and migrant programs** so that funds reach the students they are meant to serve.
- ▶ **Better support for rural and high-need students.** Put in place appropriate strategies to support rural and other high-need districts.
- ▶ **Focusing more on student outcomes** for transparency purposes.
- ▶ **Other minor changes** to address long-standing community concerns or implementation challenges.

Migrant Student Education

Migrant students face unique and significant challenges in school as a result of their mobility, poverty, and often limited English proficiency. Given their mobility, there is no single state or school district that has responsibility for migrant students. Program data indicate that in the 2007–08 school year, 487,000 migrant students aged 3–21 were identified for funding from the federal program serving migrant students. Federally-supported services were provided to 268,000 students aged 0–22 during the regular 2007–08 school year and 165,000 students during the summer (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a).

Under current law, student enrollment data used to allocate migrant education funding is based on increasingly outdated data. The full-time equivalencies (FTEs) used to generate each state’s base allocation amount reflect child-count data collected in 2000–01 and FTE adjustment factors generated in 1994 (the FTE adjustment factors transform the counts into FTEs). Even though states have reported

significant shifts in migrant populations over the last nine years, the Department no longer has a mechanism in place to update FTE counts and adjust state allocations accordingly (U.S. Department of Education, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Homeless Children and Youths Education

Homeless children and youths face significant barriers in enrolling and succeeding in school. Frequent moves from school to school are a significant barrier to academic success. Several factors complicate homeless students’ accrual of credits toward their graduation. Schools are slow to transfer academic and other records and often have course requirements that are inconsistent with each other. Both are significant obstacles for homeless students. In addition, school staff often are not aware of homeless students’ needs, and homeless students have difficulty gaining access to special services such as special education and gifted and talented programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The current formula for the program serving

homeless students allocates money based on the Title I, Part A, formula, rather than on counts of homeless children in a state. The Title I, Part A, formula uses a combination of formulas and factors to set allocations, which generally track poverty rates but go to over 90 percent of districts (Riddle, 2009). The allocations may correlate roughly to the number of homeless students in a state or district, but the formula was not designed to reflect the number of homeless students who will need services.

Neglected and Delinquent Children and Youths Education

Youths served through the Neglected and Delinquent Children and Youths Education program face significant educational challenges, but in recent years have shown increases in their academic achievement.

Students served by the current Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk are typically three years behind in grade level and often lack job skills. The program serves 132,000 neglected and delinquent youths in state institutions, developing skills that will assist them upon their release (U.S. Department of Education, 2010b). Two-thirds (66 percent) of the students enrolled in a neglected and delinquent youth education program for over 90 or more consecutive calendar days showed improvement in their reading or mathematics performance in 2007–08. In addition, increasing proportions of these students are earning high school course credits (Bardack et al., 2009).

Locally operated institutions for neglected and delinquent students do not always receive needed funds. Funds under the Local Agency Program are not sent directly to the locally operated institutions that serve neglected and delinquent students. School districts receive funds from the state for the Local Agency Program based on counts of students in locally

operated institutions. But the districts are not required to provide these funds to the actual institutions that serve students. Districts may instead operate their own programs, meaning that the students who generate funds may not receive any educational services as a result of these funds.

Indian Student Education

While the achievement of American Indian students has shown some progress, achievement gaps persist. Among fourth-graders, 49 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives scored at the Basic or above level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading in 2007, compared with 78 percent of White students. Patterns among eighth-graders were similar (Lee et al., 2007). Moreover, American Indians and Alaska Natives are less likely to take advanced coursework or attend high schools offering advanced coursework, although the proportion of American Indians and Alaska Natives completing a core academic program increased from 3 percent in 1982 to 36 percent in 2005 (DeVoe and Darling-Churchill, 2008).

Native language and cultural programs in schools are associated with improved academic performance and a variety of other important benefits. As of 2006, about 20 percent of Native children ages 5–17 spoke a language other than English at home, and 3 percent spoke English with difficulty (DeVoe and Darling-Churchill, 2008). When the school values and incorporates students' native languages in the curriculum, there is increased student self-esteem, less anxiety, and greater student belief in their own capabilities (Hakuta, 2001). In addition, young language speakers participate in tribal ceremonies and public events, thereby contributing vitality to their communities. Family participation and intergenerational connections are built for a lifetime and create positive networks that build Native communities (Kipp,

2000). On an individual basis, Native students develop stronger identities, knowledge of their tribal cultures and their individual role in and deep appreciation for that culture (Peacock and Day, 1999). Increasing the numbers of tribes eligible to apply for federal funds—replacing the local educational agency (LEA) as the grant recipient—would result in increased communication and coordination between the tribe and LEA and would allow the tribe to focus additional resources on Indian students to address their unique educational and culturally related academic needs. In 2009, the Department of Education funded 21 tribes in place of 43 LEAs that did not apply for funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a).

Native Hawaiian Student Education and Alaska Native Student Education

Gaps exist in the academic performance of Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native students compared to other students in their respective states. In 2009, 45 percent of Native Hawaiian students demonstrated proficiency in reading, and 26 percent were proficient in math, compared with 62 percent and 42 percent, respectively, of the general Hawaiian student population. Similarly, 57 percent of Alaska Natives met the proficient level on the state's fourth-grade reading assessment, compared with 78 percent of all fourth-graders in the state, based on the 2009 Alaska assessment. Similar gaps were found among eighth-grade Alaska Native students and their in-state peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a). In addition, the high school dropout rate among Alaska Natives of 8.5 percent in 2007–08 was higher than the 5.3 percent statewide rate (U.S. Department of Education, 2010 and State of Alaska, 2010). Alaska's vast geography and the remote locations in which many Alaska Native students reside contribute to the challenges in serving Alaska Native students (U.S. Department

of Education, 2010a).

Rural Education

Rural districts serve one-fifth of the nation's students (Schneider, 2006). They face unique structural, human capital, capacity, and resource constraints that affect their ability to provide the best education for their students.

Even after adjusting for geographic cost differences, rural public school teachers earned less, on average, in 2003–04 than teachers in other locations. Rural schools report difficulty finding teachers to teach English as a Second Language and they are much less likely to offer Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses than schools in cities or suburbs (Provasnik et al., 2007). Rural superintendents often do not have the capacity to apply and compete for competitive grants without technical assistance (Rural Education Issues Group, 2009).

Flexibility will allow rural districts to identify the most serious problems facing schools and students and determine how to solve them.

The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) includes two separate programs: the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) Program and the Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) Program. Currently, rural districts that are eligible for SRSA are also eligible to exercise flexibility (called REAP Flex) in using funds received under certain other federal education programs. In FY 2005, more than half of eligible SRSA districts participated in REAP Flex. The flexibility was most often used to provide additional funds for services under Title I, Part A. Districts also commonly used REAP Flex to focus on programs related to innovation, educational technology, teacher quality, and safe and drug-free schools and communities. Districts focused their efforts on targeting low-performing student subgroups and raising reading and math

outcomes through improvements in technology and teacher quality (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Updating the method used to identify rural districts will lead to better targeting of funds.

The revised National Center for Education Statistics locale codes reflect that different types of rural districts face unique challenges. Unlike the previous locale codes that differentiated towns and rural areas on the basis of population size, the new typology classifies towns and rural areas according to their proximity to larger urban cores. This method considers potential spatial relationships and acknowledges the likely interaction between urban cores based on their relative locations. The explicit distance indicators offer the opportunity to identify and differentiate rural schools and school systems in relatively remote areas, from those that may be located just outside an urban core (National Center

for Education Statistics, 2010).

Impact Aid

The nation's 930,000 students residing on federal lands (military and civilian) and Indian lands or whose parents work on federal property represent an additional expense for local school districts responsible for educating them, as these lands are exempt from local property taxes—a primary revenue source for school districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Impact Aid provides significant formula grant support designed to compensate districts for the expense of educating federally connected children and for the presence in their districts of tax-exempt federal property or other property removed from the tax rolls by the federal government.

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