Major Demographics and Schooling Trends for English Language Learners and Their Teachers

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Introduction

English Language Learners (ELLs) are one of the largest groups of students in the United States, and they are also the fastest growing subpopulation. Sadly, although their needs are great due to their linguistic and cultural diversity, and their potential contributions to American society are just as great, due precisely to that linguistic and cultural diversity, they are the least well-served by our PK-12 public schools of any group, including special education students. Part of this lack of high quality services is due to a lack of resources, primarily a severe shortage of bilingual teachers and administrators, but it is also partly due to a lack of commitment to solving the problems currently encountered in our educational systems. Policy-makers such as legislators and school board members, educators in our public schools and in our teacher preparation colleges, parents and other citizens in the general population stubbornly adhere to myths about immigrants, ELL students, and bilingual and ESL programs that often lead to benign neglect at best and at worst to vehement attacks.

The data for this report is from a wide variety of sources including the 2000 Census, the US Department of Education, the National Center for Education Statistics, and professional books and journals. An effort was made to find both the most recent and credible sources of data, and often, for simplicity's sake, just one set of figures is presented if more than one was available. Figures were in most cases rounded as it is much easier to understand and interpret "over 5 million" than "5,203,485." And data were presented that relate specifically to English language learners rather than to minority students or to immigrants in general, although the latter kinds of data are indirectly related to ELLs and much more plentiful. For example, when examining issues of the under-representation of ELLs in gifted and talented (GT) programs, data on the representation of minority students, specifically African American and Hispanic students, were abundant, but figures for ELLs were sparse. So, although almost all ELLs are minority students, primarily Hispanics, the figures that prove the under-representation of minority students in GT programs were not reported, but rather only those figures that show the under-representation of ELLs in gifted and talented programs.

The report begins with the basics, how many ELLs there are, where they are, and how fast they are growing as a population—at furiously fast paces—and how they are moving into new areas of the country. The great diversity among ELLs with regard to languages spoken, countries of origin, race/ethnicity, and immigration status will be discussed. Data on which grade levels ELLs are in and numbers of ELLs receiving bilingual or ESL services are then presented followed by data on disproportionate representation in special programs. ELLs tend to be under-

represented in GT programs while they are inclined to be over-represented in special education programs. The last section presents data on two important kinds of program resources, namely program funding and teacher qualifications, noting significant inadequacy in both areas. The paper concludes with a summary of all the data presented and a discussion of major implications for the field of bilingual education.

Over five million ELLs

The most recent data available from the US Department of Education indicates that there are over 5 million ELLs enrolled in American schools. Based on data collected in 2003-2004 from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Pacific territories, the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA, 2005) reported that there were 5,013,539 ELLs enrolled in PK-12 public schools. For comparison purposes, this represented over 10% of the total enrollment of 48,616,090 students. Also for comparison purposes, for the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 6.5 million students, or 13.4% of all students, were classified as special education students (NCES, 2005).

Regional concentrations

Historically speaking, ELLs have primarily resided in the states where immigrants first enter the US, that is, states in the Southwest, Northeast, and Florida, home of many Cuban refugees since the 1950s. These areas still have high ELL populations, with six states and Puerto Rico reporting an enrollment of over 100,000.

Table I States and Territories with Over 100,000 ELLs	
State/Territory	ELLs
California	1,598,535
Texas	660,707
Puerto Rico	612,121
Florida	282,066
New York	191,992
Illinois	161,700
Arizona	144,145
Source: NCELA (2005)	

A few states are relatively small, but still have a large proportion of ELL students. There are five states, some large, some small, and Puerto Rico, which report high ELL student densities of at least 15%.

Table II States and Territories with Over 15% ELLs	
State/Territory	% ELL
Puerto Rico	99.9%
California	25.4%
New Mexico	16.9%
Alaska	16.3%
Texas	15.3%
Nevada	15.2%
Source: NCELA (2005)	

Great growth

Historically speaking, for decades the ELL student population has been growing much faster than the general student population.

This dramatic growth continues and in addition ELLs have moved into parts of the country, "the heartland," where they have rarely been seen up until now.

Overall growth in the ELL population nation-wide has been at least seven times as fast as that for all students. The same data source (NCELA, 2005) reported a 65% increase in ELLs in the US from 1993-94 to 2003-2004, i.e. in the last decade, and a 147% increase (more than double) from the 1989-90 figures, i.e. compared to 14 years ago. During the same time periods, the total school enrollment increased 7% from 1993-94 and 20% from 1989-90.

The states experiencing the most explosive growth in recent years are not the ones where ELLs have historically been in the past. Four of the five states that showed the higher percent increase during the last ten years are all located in the Southeast and the fifth, Indiana, is in the Midwest.

Table III
States with the Highest Growth Rates in ELLs

State	% Growth
South Carolina	522%
North Carolina	471%
Tennessee	448%
Indiana	438%
Georgia	398%

Source: NCELA (2005)

As a result of this overall growth and the *diaspora* into new areas of the country, ELLs are now in all states and territories with 72% reporting enrollments of at least 10,000 ELLs. Only 8 states

reported less than 5,000 ELLs and even these states, no matter how small, reported at least 1,000 ELLs.

Table IV States with Less Than 5,000 ELLs	
State	ELLs
Mississippi	4,681
Delaware	4,246
South Dakota	3,433
Wyoming	3,429
Maine	3,179
New Hampshire	2,755
West Virginia	1,594
Vermont	1,017
Source: NCELA, 2005	

A general consideration to keep in mind in looking at these figures is that probably the number of ELLs is undercounted in most states. The identification of ELLs begins with home language surveys, which ask parents what primary languages are spoken in the home. Many linguistically diverse parents will complete the surveys inaccurately, reporting that only English is spoken at home, because they believe that bilingual and ESL programs will harm their children or because someone (neighbors, principals, teachers) has influenced them to think so. In addition, most districts put intense pressure on teachers and students to move out of bilingual and ESL programs as quickly as possible, resulting in too early exits for many, perhaps most, students.

Diversity and homogeneity

American English Language Learners are a reflection of the incredible diversity present not only in the United States, but also in the world as a whole. They vary by country of origin, native language(s) spoken, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The overwhelming majority, however, were born in the US and come from low-income, Spanish-speaking, Latino families.

Language diversity

The great diversity among ELLs is best seen by looking at the languages spoken by them. Based on a survey done by the Office of English Language Acquisition for the 2000-2001 school year, Kindler (2002) found that ELL students speak over 460 languages. Prominent among them are languages originating from East Asia, the Mid-East, Europe, islands in the Pacific, and Native-American tribes.

The great majority, 79%, speak Spanish, which, based on the 5 million total ELLs cited earlier, translates to approximately 4 million Spanish speakers. Asian languages are the next most common, with 2% of ELLs speaking Vietnamese, 1.6% speaking Hmong (an ethnic group from the mountain areas of Southeast Asia), 1% speaking Cantonese (a major dialect among the Chinese), and 1% speaking Korean.

See Table V for other languages with over 10,000 ELL speakers (rounded to the nearest thousand).

Table V
Languages, Excluding Spanish, Spoken by over 10,000 ELLs

Language Group	Language	No of Speakers
Asian	Tagalog (Philippines)	34,000
	Khmer (Cambodia)	27,000
	Mandarin (China)	22,000
	Lao	16,000
	Chinese (dialect/language not specified)	15,000
	Japanese	15,000
European	Haitian Creole (a French-based pidgin)	42,000
	Russian	37,000
	Portuguese	28,000
	Polish	12,000
	French	11,000
Mid-Eastern	Arabic	41,000
	Urdu (Pakistan)	19,000
	Serbo-Croatian	17,000
	Punjabi (India)	13,000
	Armenian	13,000
	Hindi (India)	11,000
Native-American	Navajo	27,000
	Native-American (unspecified)	10,000
Pacific Islander	Chuukese (Micronesia)	15,000
	Marshallese (Marshall Islands)	14,000
	Chamorro (Guam and Northern Marianas)	14,000

Source: Kindler (2002)

Ethnicity and national origin

That 79% of ELLs speak Spanish means that the overwhelming majority of ELLs are Hispanic. There is great diversity among Latino ELLs, however, in terms of both country of origin and ethnicity. In 2000, of the 32.8 million Latinos living in the US, 66% were of Mexican origin, 15% were Central and South American, 9% were Puerto Rican, 4% Cuban, and 6% were "other Hispanic" (Díaz-Rico, 2004). The Urban Institute reports on the most common countries of origin for the children of immigrants by race/ethnicity (Capps, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwantoro, 2005). Among the top ten countries of origin for ELL students, six or 60%, including the top 3, are Spanish-speaking Latin American nations. The Urban Institute figures show that the origins of Hispanic children of immigrants as measured in the 2000 census were 60% from Mexico, 9% from Puerto Rico, 5% from El Salvador, 4% from the Dominican Republic, 2% from Guatemala, and 2% from Cuba.

The Urban Institute (Capps et al., 2005) gives us additional information on the races and countries of origin of the children of immigrants who are not Hispanic. The most common countries of origin for African American immigrants – Jamaica, Nigeria, Trinidad/Tobago, and Guyana – are English-speaking. The exception is Haiti, which, with 42, 000 Haitian Creole speakers, is the sixth largest language group among ELL students. Among children of Asian immigrants, the most common countries of origin are Vietnam, the Philippines, India, China, and Korea, in that order. The children of non-Hispanic European American immigrants are the second largest group after the children of

Hispanic immigrants, but most come from English-speaking countries (England and Canada) or have a high percentage of English speakers among their numbers. No data on the countries of origin for the fairly large number of Russian, Portuguese, Polish, and French speakers reported by NCELA among ELL students was found, although it can be assumed that Russia, Portugal, Poland, and France are the countries of origin for some. Brazil is a possible source of Portuguese-speaking immigrants while Canada and other former French colonies such as Algeria are likely origins for French-speaking newcomers.

Native-born and immigrant ELLs

A common myth is that most ELLs are foreign-born immigrants, the majority of whom are undocumented. In actuality, about three-fourths of ELLs were born in the US and only 10 to 15% appear to be illegal immigrants.

Kindler (2002) states that the states reported 1,127,172 immigrant students in PK-12 for the 2000-2001 school year. Even if all these immigrant students were ELLs, this represents less than 25% of the ELLs in PK-12. Capps, in looking at US data from the 2000 census, calculated that only 24% of immigrant students in grades PK-5 were first-generation immigrants born in other countries and only 44% of secondary students in grades 6-12. This fact is based on a variety of factors. First there are the many ELLs who are born into culturally and linguistically diverse families that are US citizens such as Native-Americans, Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and Pacific Islanders. Some of these families have been in the US for decades or even hundreds of years

such as many American Indians, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican Americans. They live in long established communities, such as the Four Corners area belonging to the Navajo and the Rio Grande Valley area on the Texas/Mexico border, in which they are in the overwhelming majority such that their language and culture are the dominant ones in the area. Another key factor is that many immigrants are young and have their children after they arrive in the US. As a result, three fourths of the children of immigrants are US-born (Capps, 2001).

Among the estimated 1.1 million ELLs who are foreign-born immigrants, it is impossible to know how many have legal versus illegal immigration status. In addition to the general logistical difficulties of trying to identify and count illegal immigrants, the 1982 US Supreme Court decision, *Plyler vs. Doe*, prohibits schools from denying undocumented students a free public education and from requiring students or parents to document their immigration status. This includes requiring them to provide social security numbers or other forms of identification that can be used to establish immigration status. With the understanding that counting illegal immigrants is especially problematic, it is noted that Capps (2005) estimates that approximately half of the foreign-born immigrant students are undocumented aliens. This would mean that somewhere around 10 to 13% of ELLs are undocumented.

Parental socioeconomic status

Approximately twice as many ELL students come from low-income families as do English proficient students. Capps (2005) reports that 68% of elementary ELLs were in families that were on

free or reduced lunch status as compared to 36% of English speakers, and at the secondary level 60% as compared to 32%. These percentages can also be compared to those of European American, non-Hispanic students who had poverty rates in 2000 of 26% at the elementary level and 22% at the secondary level.

The 2000 Census also revealed that the parents of limited English proficient children had lower levels of educational attainment than English proficient children as shown both by a lack of high school degrees as well as not even reaching the ninth grade of school. Table VI summarizes the figures that compare the parents of ELLs to those of English proficient students for the above three socioeconomic status indicators.

Table VI
Socioeconomic Status of the Parents of ELLs
Compared to the Parents of English Proficient Students

	Elementary Level		Secondary Level	
	ELLs	English Speakers	ELLs	English Speakers
Low-income	68%	36%	60%	32%
No HS degree	48%	11%	35%	9%
Did not reach 9th grade	25%	2%	26%	4%

Source: Capps et al (2005)

Also of note are the high poverty rates and low educational attainment levels of the parents of young Hispanic children in grades PK-5. Hispanic children show the lowest socio-economic status indicators, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status, followed by African American children, then European

American, then Asian American (American Indians were not included in this analysis as they are not immigrants).

Table VII
Socioeconomic Status of the Parents of Hispanic Children in PK - 5

Citizenship Status	Low Income	No HS Degree
Foreign-Born	76%	59%
Born in US to Immigrants	66%	40%
Born to US Citizens	51%	6%

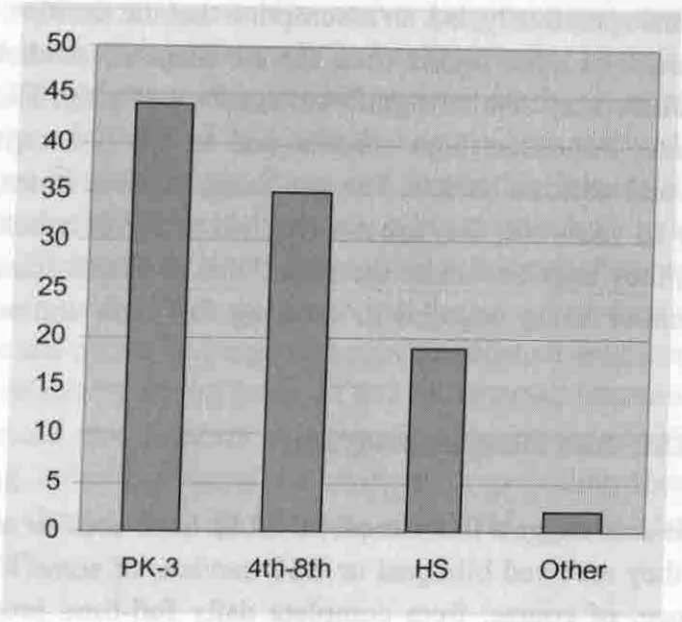
Source: Capps et al (2005)

More ELLs in elementary schools

The number of ELLs steadily declines as they move up the grades, a clear indicator that many are exited from bilingual and ESL programs every year. Whether all of these students are ready to transition into full English-only mainstream classrooms is a key question for bilingual education policy makers, but policy issues aside, the pattern is clear.

Sixty-seven percent of the 4.6 million ELLs reported by the Office of English Language Acquisition (NCELA, 2002) were in grades PK-6 and 31% in grades 7-12. Two percent were classified as "ungraded, other, and not specified." Another breakdown shows over 44% in the primary grades (PK-3), although this number is probably underestimated as some state education agencies did not report prekindergarten enrollments. Over a third (35%) were in the middle grades (4-8), and 19% were enrolled at the high school level. Figure 1 shows the progression across the grades of ELLs in terms of percentages.

Figure 1
Percentage of ELLs at Primary, Middle, and High School Levels



Source: NCELA (2002)

Unfortunately, the lower numbers at the high school level are also due to high drop out rates as well as exiting from the programs as students move up the grades. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2004) found that 27 percent of Hispanic 16- through 24-year-olds were not enrolled and had not completed high school in 2001. Even higher than the rate for all Hispanic students was the rate of 43% for Hispanics born outside the US. It is assumed that almost all of these Hispanic immigrants are ELLs. More recently, Johnson (2005) reported that the high school

attrition rate for Texas was 48% for Hispanic students for the 2004-2005 school year. His analysis did not look at Hispanic immigrants specifically, but an assumption that the attrition rate for them would be even higher than for all Hispanic students is in order. There may also be significant numbers of older ELLs who never enter American high schools and so are not captured in dropout and attrition studies. For one thing, in most states, if they are over 16 years old, they are not required to enroll in school. For another, they may be "under the radar" due to illegal immigration status and/or being engaged in working full time and so not in school.

More ESL than bilingual programs

The data suggest that almost all ELLs have been in schools in which they received bilingual or ESL services of some kind. This can range, of course, from complete daily full-time programs to being pulled out of a regular classroom once a week for an hour by an ESL teacher. Reporting on data for 1993-94, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1997) states that only 3% of LEP students were not receiving any special language services of any kind. The same report stated that 85% of schools had ESL programs and 36% had bilingual programs. Since these two percentages add up to more than 100%, many schools either enrolled their ELLs in both kinds of programs, or, a more likely situation, based on parent choice or on the language spoken by the child, enrolled some ELLs in bilingual programs and others in ESL programs within the same school.

Another source of data from the 2000-2001 school year (Kindler, 2002) reported that 22.7% of ELLs received instruction that incorporated the child's native language and that 53.9% received instruction exclusively in English. Rather puzzling is that the language of instruction was not reported for the unusually large percentage of 23.4% of ELLs, including no data received on this topic from Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Pacific Islands. Like the data from the 1997 report, however, it is not clear how to interpret the term "instruction incorporates native language" in terms of quantity or quality. Does this mean that the school teaches children to read in the native language and provides content area instruction in L1, a relatively strong usage of native language instruction? Or does it mean that teachers occasionally use L1 for clarification, translating individual terms for students or providing them with bilingual dictionaries, a weaker usage of native language instruction?

Current disproportionate representation data

Although state and national legislation now require fair, nondiscriminatory identification of students for both kinds of special programs, disproportionate representation continue for both. Current statistical evidence shows mixed results for special education programs and clear results of under-representation for GT programs.

Hopstock and Stephenson (2003) did an analysis of the limited English proficient student data collected from school districts for the Office of Civil Rights. The nation-wide percentage of LEP students eligible for special education services was 7.9%.

Compared to the previously cited figure of 13.4% of all students eligible for special education services (NCES, 2005), this would seem to indicate a clear pattern of under-representation in special education, but examination of the data by states shows a wide range of figures, from a high of 17.3% in North Dakota to a low of 0.7% in West Virginia. Ten years earlier, Henderson, Abbot, and Strang (1993) reported similar national disparities among the states with a high of 26.5% in Massachusetts to lows of under 1% in Colorado, Maryland, and North Carolina. Taking the data down to the next level looking at districts, Robertson, Kushner, Starks and Drescher (1995) found that some Texas districts had five times the rate of ELLs in special education as other districts in Texas.

Additional data from Hopstock and Stephenson (2003) suggest that under-representation rather than over-representation may be the more common situation at the present time. Table VIII compares the percentage of all students and LEP students by disability categories:

Table VIII
Percentage of Students in Special Education by Disability Category

Disability Category	Percentage of All Students	Percentage of All LEP Students
Mild retardation	0.9%	0.3%
Moderate retardation	0.3%	0.2%
Severe retardation	0.1%	0.2%
Emotional disturbance	0.9%	0.2%
Learning disabled	6.1%	4.7%
Developmental delay	0.2%	0.1%

Source: Hopstock & Stephenson (2003)

Firm conclusions as to either over-representation or under-representation of ELLs in special education at the national level cannot be made because of the great variety among reporting agencies. It would appear that many states, districts, and most probably schools are over-identifying these students for services and many others are under-identifying them. The causes for both scenarios can only be speculated on. Causes for under-identification appear to stem from school districts' fears that they will be cited for discriminating against minority students and ELLs by placing too many in special education programs. In attempting to avoid this, school districts may over-compensate, issuing formal and informal edicts that few or no diverse students can be referred for services. They may also make the process so difficult and cumbersome that teachers and other school staff routinely avoid it. Finally, a lack of staff resources, specifically a severe shortage of bilingual diagnosticians, makes complying with the law problematic at best.

The data for ELL participation in GT and other programs that target high ability students are much clearer than the data for special education programs. Hopstock and Stephenson (2003) found that 1.4% of LEP students were enrolled in GT programs as compared to 6.4% of all students. The under-representation was highest at the middle school level (1.6% versus 9.2%), next highest at the high school level (1.7% versus 7.8%), and lowest at the elementary level (1.3% versus 4.8%). These rates as a whole reveal that ELLs are approximately five times less likely to be in GT programs as are all students. The same study reported that for ELLs who were seniors in high school, 1.0% were enrolled in advanced placement (AP) math courses and 0.8% in AP science

courses. For all high school seniors from the reporting schools, 3.2% were enrolled in AP math and science courses.

State, local, and federal funding

Although opponents of bilingual programs often argue that the programs are prohibitively expensive, the actual figures suggest that in most places the programs are seriously under-funded. Schools receive their operating funds from local, state, and federal sources. In 2001-02, the 50 states and the District of Columbia spent an average of $7,734 per student (Cohen & Johnson, 2004). Almost 43% were from local funds, 49% from state funds, and 8% from federal funds. Local funds are frequently based on property taxes. As the majority of ELLs are from low-income families and often live in low-income neighborhoods, many live in school districts which find it difficult, if not impossible, to adequately fund their schools without assistance. Bilingual and ESL programs have traditionally relied on outside funding from states and federal agencies to meet their extra costs and to lessen the funding gap.

Prior to the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2002, federal funding for innovative bilingual education programs was awarded through a competitive grant process under Title VII of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act.* Since then, each state has received funds based on LEP student counts which they then distribute to school districts. Over 110 billion dollars were distributed by the US Department of Education in 2005 for all the educational programs that it funds. A slight increase is proposed for 2006 to 116 billion dollars. By contrast, 676 million dollars were awarded in 2005 to school districts with ELL students and the

same amount is proposed for 2006. This translates to approximately $133 per student (NABE, 2005). Another comparison can be seen by observing that there has been a 36% increase in the total federal educational budget since 2002 and a 2% increase in the funding for ELLs.

We can also look at special state funding provided to districts with ELL students to fund their programs. The Education Commission of the States randomly surveyed ten states to determine how they funded their ELL programs (ECS, 2002). The results for selected states who responded are in Table IX.

Table IX
Funding for ELLs Provided As Reported by Selected States

State	Funding per Student	Total Funding Rounded to nearest million
California	$ 100	$ 53 million
Florida	$ 905	*$ 23 million
Maryland	$1,350	$ 30 million
New York	$1,102	$ 53 million
Texas	$ 776	$ 71 million
New Jersey	$ 240	*$120 million

Source: ECS (2002)
*These figures were estimated

Teacher shortages

Multiple sources reveal a profound shortage of bilingual and ESL teachers in the nation. In greatest demand are bilingual teachers at the elementary level and teachers for students in urban

areas. In 1994, the General Accounting Office reported a shortage of 175,000 bilingual teachers at the national level (GAO, 1994). In their survey of large city school districts and colleges of education, the Urban Teacher Collaborative (2000) found that 72.5% reported an immediate shortage of bilingual teachers and 67.5% cited an immediate shortage of ESL teachers. More recent data collected from Texas school districts for the 2001-2002 school year found that the districts were unable to fill 26% of open secondary bilingual/ESL positions throughout the school year and reported a shortage of 2,906 teachers in the elementary bilingual/ESL area (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Palmer, Arizpe, Irby, et al., 2003). The American Association for Employment in Education in their wide-scale survey of US teacher preparation institutions (AAEE, 2002) calculated an average demand of 3.96 for ESL teachers (on a 5 point scale) and of 4.10 for bilingual teachers, exceeded only by the demands calculated for math teachers (4.28), physics teachers (4.26), chemistry teachers (4.20), and special education teachers (ranging from 4.59 to 4.19 depending on the specialization area).

Summary and implications

This document has presented facts and figures about English language learners, their schools and educational programs, and the teachers who serve them. Perhaps in the environment of the current education reform efforts which are largely data-driven, both advocates for and opponents of bilingual education can calmly examine the numbers and come to reasoned, fair decisions about how best to address the issues before us, issues which no amount of denial or wishful thinking will make go away.

Table X provides a concise summary of the facts and figures presented in the complete report. Following the table the facts are summarized and relevant implications of the data and recommendations for educators and policy makers are stated.

Table X Key Facts and Figures for ELL Students
Total numbers nation-wide (includes 50 states, DC, and territories): Over 5 million ELLs
Growth: 7 times faster than all students, averaging around 10% annually Greatest growth areas: Southeastern and Midwestern states
Total number of languages: Over 460 spoken Most common language: ~ 4 million Spanish speakers, 79% of the total Other major language groups: East Asian, Mid-Eastern, European, Pacific Islander, American Indian
Top ten countries of origin (in order): 1. Mexico, 2. Puerto Rico, 3. El Salvador, 4. Vietnam, 5. Dominican Republic, 6. Guatemala, 7. Haiti, 8. Korea, 9. Philippines, 10. Cuba
Country of origin: 76% born in the US, 24% foreign-born In US legally: 87 to 90% citizens or legal immigrants, 10 to 13% undocumented immigrants

Family income levels: Poverty rate of 68%, 2 times as high as for English-speaking peers Parents with no high school degree: 45%, almost 5 times as high as for English-speaking peers Parents < 9th grade: 25%, over 10 times as high as for English-speaking peers
Elementary vs. secondary: 67% in PK-6, 31% in grades 7-12
ELL services: 85 to 97% of ELLs receiving some kind of ELL services In bilingual or ESL programs: 85% of schools ESL programs, 36% bilingual programs
In special education: 7.9% vs. 13.4% for all students, individual states from 0.7% to 17.3% In GT programs: 1.4 % vs. 6.4% for all students, almost 5 times lower
Per capita funding from state sources: High of $1350 in Maryland to low of $100 in California, compare to $7,734 expenditure per student for all students Federal funding: $676 million, $133 per student, a 2% increase since NCLB passed in 2002
Teacher shortages: 175,000 bilingual teachers needed

Implications and recommendations

- Representing over 10% of all students in PK-12, ELLs are a population which should not be ignored. Our country needs to give immediate serious, sustained, and substantial attention to addressing their needs. This would include educators in all parts of the country, teacher preparation institutions, legislators and policy makers, and state and federal education agencies.
- As four out of five ELLs speak Spanish, bilingual services should be provided to Spanish speakers whenever possible. Fortunately, as one of the top three languages spoken in the world and in the Western hemisphere, there are many print and web resources easily available to support this and many Spanish speakers already within our national borders.
- Bilingual services are the preferred mode for the speakers of other languages as well, but schools may not be able to provide them due to a lack of resources. In such cases, programs that provide day-long regular access to trained, certified ESL teachers and/or to sheltered content area teachers should be implemented.
- If tomorrow morning Americans managed somehow to completely close the borders to illegal immigrants through immigration reform as currently proposed by many policy makers and legislators, there would still be a large and fast growing population of ELLs in the US. In other words, the challenge is never going to just disappear.

- In addition, most ELLs are citizens or legal residents, which means they have as much right to a free and equitable public education as anyone else. Almost all will remain in the US their entire lives. They need to become productive contributors to our economy and to our democratic way of life. This can only be accomplished through providing them with a high-quality education that helps close the current achievement gap.
- The families of ELLs will often struggle with the daily demands of life in poverty. Parents may have to work two jobs and will not be able to provide their children with many material things like books, computers, and family vacations which can facilitate academic learning. Schools should give considerable attention to addressing needs that arise due to poverty.
- The families of ELLs will need assistance in learning to navigate the PK-12 educational pipeline in our American schools. Most parents want their children to be more successful in life than they were, so this means they want them to graduate from high school and preferably go to college, but low-income, uneducated parents usually do not know how to go about doing this (Robledo-Montecel, Gallagher, Montemayor, Villareal, Adame-Reyna, & Supik, 1993). Teachers and counselors should maintain high expectations for ELL students. Information on how to better prepare for a college education as well as how to secure funding through scholarships should be made available.

- Schools need to work in partnership with families. Regular, bilingual communication between school and parents and meetings in which translators are provided should be the norm. Family literacy, homework assistance, and after school programs are other ways schools can play crucial roles in improving school-home relationships.
- Critics who say that ELL students stay in bilingual and ESL programs "too long" are not aware of the facts. Students routinely leave the programs as they go up the grades, as the numbers clearly indicate. Immigrant children continue to enter our schools at all grade levels, so as students move out of the programs they are often replaced by recent immigrants. Schools should be recognized for their efforts on behalf of ELLs, and educators should concentrate on how to improve bilingual and ESL programs rather than trying to dismantle them.
- Although the numbers are smaller than for elementary school, a substantial number of ELL students enter American schools at the secondary level. In addition to facing a more challenging curriculum in a language they don't understand, secondary students have fewer years left in which to catch up to their English-speaking peers. This occurs at an age in which they are trying to establish their cultural and social identities. Secondary programs should be provided more resources for their ELLs, including training for regular content area teachers in the delivery of sheltered instruction, additional bilingual and ESL staff, and additional instructional materials. Schools should also consider providing bilingual programs instead of just ESL

programs at the secondary level as they have been shown to more quickly and effectively facilitate both English language acquisition and content area learning (Ovando, Collier, & Combs, 2006).

- As public schools seem to be doing a fairly decent job providing services to most ELLs, they should now focus on insuring that those services are of sufficient quantity and quality to make a real difference. As long as ESL services are more prevalent than bilingual services, academic achievement will not be maximized for ELLs. Policy makers should support as much as possible the provision of an adequate quantity as well as quality of services.
- All districts should look at the representation of ELLs in their special education and GT programs. If they find significant over- or under-representation, they should examine their policies and procedures for special programs referrals, ensuring that they comply with the principles of valid dual language assessment and avoiding both linguistic and cultural bias. Above all, they should make sure that neither formal nor informal policies discourage nor prohibit referral of ELLs to either kind of program. They may also need to recruit bilingual diagnosticians for their staffs.
- All teachers need training on the identification and referral processes for ELL students for both special education and GT programs. This training should become a regular part of all teacher preparation programs and be provided by districts to inservice teachers. The focus of the training should be on valid dual language assessment and

could strengthen their classroom instructional programs as they learn how to use authentic assessment methods to make decisions about what and how to teach.

- Additional resources should be allocated by states and the federal government to school districts, teacher preparation institutions, researchers, and those seeking bilingual or ESL pre-service or inservice training. This would include additional funding for bilingual and ESL teacher scholarships, inservice teacher training, research studies to identify best practices, and bilingual and teacher recruitment initiatives.
- All teachers should acquire basic knowledge of ESL methods and techniques and understand the principles and purposes of culturally responsive teaching. This training, like the training recommended on dual language assessment, should become a regular part of all teacher preparation programs and be provided by districts to inservice teachers.

Conclusion

English language learners currently constitute over 10% of the total school population, and they are in classrooms in every part of the nation. Their numbers grow year after year, but the achievement gap between them and their English-speaking peers never lessens. Teachers, university professors, parents, and policy makers need to work together to better meet their needs. Providing long-term, quality bilingual programs to more of the 79% of ELLs who are Spanish speakers would help significantly. Wherever

possible, bilingual services should also be provided for non-Spanish-speaking ELLs. ESL instruction within both bilingual and ESL programs should also be improved. Finally, all teachers and administrators, including those who speak only English, should learn more about how to assess and modify instruction for ELLs.

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