Nationwide, nearly 4,700,000 English learners are enrolled in public schools.

Rapid growth in English language learner enrollment nationwide

English language learner enrollment in U.S. public schools

Nearly 1 in 10 U.S. public school students is an English learner

9.8% Participating in English language learner programs
90.2% Not participating in English language learner programs

2010-11 School Year

Nearly 1 in 3 students in California is an English learner, compared to just 1 in 100 in West Virginia.
Sample data suggest that most English learners are in elementary grades – but substantial numbers are in upper grades, too.
In a sample of urban districts, 2 in 3 English learners are found in elementary schools.

Note: Data includes only the 36 urban districts that reported information on English learner enrollment by grade span.

Most English learners were born in the United States.
Most school-aged English learners were born in the United States

Birthplace of school-aged Limited English Proficient children

- 74% Born in the U.S.
- 26% Not Born in the U.S.

Far more secondary-grade ELLs were born outside of the U.S. – but in both elementary and secondary schools, most are native born

Nativity and Generation of English Language Learners, by grade span (2000)

Note: First-generation students were born outside of the U.S., second-generation students were born in the U.S. but have parents who were born outside the U.S.; and third-generation students were born in the U.S. and have parents who were born in the U.S.

Most U.S.-born English learners are of Hispanic descent.
Of school-aged English learners born in the U.S., almost 70% are of Hispanic origin.

But *within* racial and ethnic groups, Asian students are actually most likely to be struggling to speak English.
About 1 in 6 Asian children struggles to speak English

Are English learners achieving at high levels in key grades and subjects?
No!

English learners lag far behind non-English learners in both reading and math.
4th Grade Reading: Nationwide, English learners over twice as likely to show below basic skills

Grade 4 Reading – By English Learner Status
(National Public 2013)

8th Grade Math:
More than 2/3 of English learners have skills below the basic level

Grade 8 Math – By English Learner Status
(National Public 2013)

And there’s been little improvement in performance in the past decade.
Stagnant scores for English learners; widening gaps with non-ELLs

National Public – Grade 4 NAEP Reading

Average Scale Score

2003 2005 2007 2009 2011 2013

English Language Learner Not English Language Learner

Little change in percentage of English learners with below basic reading skills

Grade 4 Reading – English Learners (National Public)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No change in percentage of ELLs with proficient or advanced reading skills

Grade 4 Reading – English Learners (National Public)


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English learners scores rising slightly – but gaps widening

National Public – Grade 8 NAEP Math

Slight decline in the percentage of English learners with below basic math skills

Grade 8 Math – English Learners (National Public)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No change in percentage of ELLs with proficient or advanced math skills

Grade 8 Math – English Learners (National Public)

Differences among the states?

People naturally want to use NAEP to understand how states compare to each other with respect to educating English learners to high levels.
And states do vary widely in terms of both performance and improvement over time.
Wide variation in average English learner performance by state

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2013)

## NAEP Grade 4 Reading – English Language Learners

States with the Biggest Gains in Mean Scale Scores (2003 – 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: On average, mean scale scores in reading for English learners increased by 1 point from 2003 to 2013.
Scale Scores by State – English Learners

Grade 8 – NAEP Math (2013)

NAEP Grade 8 Math – English Language Learners

States with the Biggest Gains in Mean Scale Scores (2003 – 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, state comparisons must be made with *extreme caution*.
Some states exclude many English learners from the assessment because school authorities determine that these students can’t fairly be assessed.
Wide variation in exclusion rates

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2013)

And others assess large proportions with accommodations – like providing students with bilingual test booklets or with additional time to take the assessment.
Some states provide most ELLs with accommodations; others do so for few ELLs

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2013)

Still others assess most English learners without accommodations – that is, under the same conditions as native English speakers.
Some states – like CA – assess most ELLs without accommodations on NAEP; others – like FL – assess few this way

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2013)

As a result, states look very different in terms of how – and whether – English learners are assessed.
Wide variations between states in how English learners are assessed on NAEP

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2013)

Take, for example, the three states with the highest 4th grade reading performance for English learners on NAEP.
English learners in Maryland, South Carolina, and Ohio have very similar performance.
English learners demonstrate similar reading performance in MD, SC, and OH

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Average Scale Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But these states are very different in *how* they assess English learners.
MD excludes most of its English learners; OH assesses most with accommodations; and SC assesses most without accommodations

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2013)

The patterns are much the same—though less pronounced—in 8th grade math.
Some variation in states’ exclusion rates.
NAEP exclusion rates for English learners vary widely across states

Grade 8 – NAEP Math (2013)

Wide differences in the proportion of English learners assessed with accommodations.
Some states, like NY, assess many ELLs with accommodations; others, like CA, don’t.
And wide variation in terms of assessing students without accommodation.
Some states assess many ELLs without accommodations on NAEP; others assess few this way

Grade 8 – NAEP Math (2013)

Add it all together, and states again look very different in how they treat their English learners.
Wide variations between states in how English learners are assessed on NAEP

Grade 8 – NAEP Math (2013)

In the three states with the highest math performance for English learners, performance looks similar.
Similar math performance for English learners in SC, AR, and KS

Grade 8 – NAEP Math (2013)

But we again see big differences in *how* English learners are assessed.
AR assesses most of its English learners with accommodations; KS and SC assess most without accommodations

Grade 8 – NAEP Math (2013)

So, before comparing state performance on NAEP, it’s crucial to understand how state assessment policies differ.
Performance in High School and Thereafter?
Graduation rates can be challenging to compare across states.
Even though states are now supposed to be using the cohort graduation rate, some have been doing so longer than others.

And we know that state reporting of cohort graduation rates gets better each year.
However, there are wide differences in terms of how well states do at graduating their English learners in four years.

That’s according to states’ own reporting.
Wide variation in 4-year cohort graduation rates for English learners

Class of 2012

In general, students who are not native English speakers perform slightly below native English speakers in reading and writing on the SAT – but slightly above native speakers in math.
However, we don’t know how many non-native English speakers take the SAT – or who these students are.
Higher reading and writing, lower math scores for native English speakers

Mean Score by First Language Learned

Bottom Line: English Learners

• Perform significantly below other students in both reading and math; gaps flat or growing;
• Complete fewer academic and advanced academic courses in high school;
• Considerably less likely to graduate from high school;
• Less likely to be “college ready” upon graduation, except in math.
Does it have to be this way?
Across the country, there are schools that are doing a much better job than schools serving the same kinds of kids.
Some are in states and districts that have historically served large numbers of English learners...
Dr. Carlos J. Finlay Elementary School
Miami-Dade, Florida

- 511 students in grades PK – 5
- 98% Latino
- 87% Low Income
- 57% English Language Learners

Note: Data are for 2012-2013 school year. Source: Florida Department of Education
Outperforming the State at Finlay Elementary

English Learners – Grade 3 (2013)

Math
- Finlay: 63%
- Florida: 33%

Reading
- Finlay: 40%
- Florida: 18%

Source: Florida Department of Education
Halle Hewetson Elementary School
Las Vegas, NV

• 962 students in grades PK – 5
  – 85% Latino
  – 7% African American
• 100% Low Income
• 71% Limited English Proficient

Note: Data are for 2010-2011 school year
Source: Nevada Department of Education
High Performance at Halle Hewetson Elementary

Grade 4 (2013)

Percentage Meets or Exceeds Standards

- **Math**
  - English Learner: 89%
  - Not English Learner: 86%

- **Reading**
  - English Learner: 71%
  - Not English Learner: 79% (77% for Nevada)

Source: Nevada Department of Education
Exceeding Standards at Halle Hewetson Elementary

English Learners – Grade 3 Math (2013)

- Exceeds Standards: Halle Hewetson 44%, Nevada 23%
- Meets Standards: Halle Hewetson 33%, Nevada 36%
- Approaches Standards: Halle Hewetson 18%, Nevada 29%
- Emergent/Developing: Halle Hewetson 5%, Nevada 12%

Source: Nevada Department of Education
Imperial High School
Imperial, CA

- 1,024 students in grades 9 – 12
  - 77% Latino
  - 18% White
- 43% Low Income
- 32% Limited English Proficient

Note: Data are for 2012-13 school year. LEP counts are based on the NCLB definition.
Source: California Department of Education
Outperforming the state at Imperial High School

Base API – English Learners

Note: English learners are defined as those currently identified as and English learner based on the results of the California English Language Development Test, or a reclassified fluent-English-proficient student who has not scored at the proficient level or above on the CST or CMA in English Language Arts three times after being reclassified. In 2012, 237 students were included in Imperial’s English learner subgroup for the API, representing about 33% of students included in the school’s API. In 2007 and 2008, API for English learners was not reported for Imperial High School. California data reflect English learners in grades 9-12 only.

Source: California Department of Education
Others are in states and districts that have experienced rapid growth in their English learner population...
De Queen Elementary School
De Queen, Arkansas

- 555 students in grades 3 – 5
- 67% Latino
- 27% White
- 77% Low Income
- 59% Limited English Proficient

Source: Arkansas Department of Education
Exceeding the State at De Queen Elementary

Limited English Proficient Students (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Arkansas Department of Education
Advanced performance at De Queen Elementary
Limited English Proficient Students (2013)

Source: Arkansas Department of Education
Exceeding Standards at De Queen Elementary

English Learners – Grade 3 Math (2013)

- **De Queen**:
  - Advanced: 81%
  - Proficient: 17%
  - Below Basic: 3%

- **Arkansas**:
  - Advanced: 48%
  - Proficient: 34%
  - Below Basic: 2%

Source: Arkansas Department of Education
Exceeding Standards at De Queen Elementary

English Learners – Grade 5 Literacy (2013)

De Queen Arkansas

Percentage of Students

- Advanced
- Proficient
- Basic
- Below Basic

Source: Arkansas Department of Education
These schools differ dramatically in their size, location, and the students they serve.

But when it comes to educating ELs, they have certain things in common.
• Emphasis on vocabulary and writing
  • “We focus a lot on **academic vocabulary**...even if they can communicate with their peers, they need to be able to participate in the classroom.” – Principal, Laurel Street Elementary School (Compton, CA)
  • “We find vocabulary they may not know to help them understand the story – pictures, **kid-friendly explanations**...” – Principal, De Queen Elementary School (De Queen, AR)
  • “We have a comprehensive approach to **writing that begins in kindergarten**. How to incorporate academic language, how to structure writing, how to flow from sections, how to engage the reader. Now we’re shifting from narrative into expository and persuasive writing under Common Core.” – Principal, Laurel Street Elementary School (Compton, CA)
• Extra time and additional supports
  • “For low-level ELL students, experts came in to help students. They pulled some students out before or after school to give additional language sessions for a chance to develop more.” – Principal, Halle Hewetson Elementary School (Las Vegas, NV)
  • “Extended time really helped.” – Principal, Graham Road Elementary School (Falls Church, VA)
  • “In their regular classroom, they receive regular support. They have additional time, a Spanish-English dictionary. We coordinate with classroom teachers.” – Principal, De Queen Elementary School (De Queen, AR)
  • “We specifically target our ELLs at the beginning of the year...they get the first wave of tutoring.” – Principal, Laurel Street Elementary School (Compton, CA)
These elements are in addition to what other successful schools are also doing:

- Clear/shared focus
- High standards and expectations for students and teachers
- Collaboration
- Aligned curriculum and assessments
- Careful monitoring of student performance
So, what is getting in the way?

Do English learners have adequate opportunities to learn?
Quality Teachers?

The most critical resource of all
Truth is, we don’t know nearly enough.

While most teachers will, at some point, have English learners in their classroom, not all are prepared...

• The National Council on Teaching Quality says that 3 in 4 elementary education programs fail to adequately instruct teaching candidates on early reading strategies for ELLs.

• And only 1 in 20 elementary education program adequately covers both early reading strategies for ELLs and the five essential components of effective reading instruction generally.

• Only about 1 in 4 teachers have participated in professional development on teaching LEP or ELL students in the past year.

• In 2010, 33 states reported providing some professional development for mainstream teachers of English learners.
  • These opportunities ranged from invitations to participate in state professional development for EL teachers to collaborating with universities to offer appropriate coursework.
Adequate Funding?

Because English learners are often concentrated in high-poverty and high-minority districts, they’re likely to be found in states and districts with lower per pupil spending.
### Funding Gaps *Between States*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-Poverty versus Low-Poverty States</td>
<td>$-2,278 per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Minority versus Low-Minority States</td>
<td>$-2,330 per student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Funding Gaps Between Districts: National inequities in state and local revenue per student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Per student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-Poverty versus Low-Poverty Districts</td>
<td>$773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Minority versus Low-Minority Districts</td>
<td>$1,122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And, in fact, English learners are concentrated in states with lower per pupil spending.
States with the largest concentrations of English learners are among the lowest-spending states.

Source:
Course-taking opportunities?
Few students are still categorized as English learners by the time they graduate from high school.

Only 2% of graduates in the High School Transcript Study are classified as ELLs.
But these students differ notably from non-ELL graduates.
They earn fewer credits overall...
By high school graduation, English learners have accumulated fewer credits.

Graduates in the Class of 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Core Credits</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>14.36</td>
<td>26.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not an English Learner</td>
<td>15.99</td>
<td>27.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fewer credits in most core subjects...
By the time they graduate, ELLs have earned fewer credits in nearly all subjects.

Graduates in the Class of 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>English Learner</th>
<th>Not an English Learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And fewer credits in high-level courses.
By graduation, English learners have also earned far fewer credits in high-level courses.

Graduates in the Class of 2009

Moving Forward:
Key Questions States Need to Answer about English Learners

• Who are my EL’s? How many; what languages and what levels? How long in US schools?

• Where are they? Numbers growing?

• Do they have adequate opportunities to learn? How do you know?

• How are they performing?

• What do reclassification rates look like? What happens post reclassification?
EL experts have identified at least distinct four categories of English learners in the secondary grades:

- High school students who arrive in the U.S. **proficient in their native language** but with limited or no English skills
- High school students who were born in the U.S. or who arrived as young children – who **have been educated in U.S. schools** but continue to be designated as ELLs
- Students who arrive in the U.S. in the middle school years with **limited literacy in their native language**
- High school students who arrive in the U.S. with **limited literacy in their native language**, limited exposure to academic skills, and little or **no proficiency in English**
Policy issues states need to consider regarding English Learners?

• Criteria for identification and reclassification;
• Standards and assessments, including ELP exams;
• Supports for ELs and their teachers;
• Weighting EL subgroup performance in accountability;
• Teacher preparation and certification;
• Communication with parents and families.

Source:
One final thought

Data on generations and language generally encouraging, but...
Far more secondary-grade ELLs were born outside of the U.S. – but in both elementary and secondary schools, most are native born.

Nativity and Generation of English Language Learners, by grade span (2000)

Note: First-generation students were born outside of the U.S., second-generation students were born in the U.S. but have parents who were born outside the U.S.; and third-generation students were born in the U.S. and have parents who were born in the U.S.

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