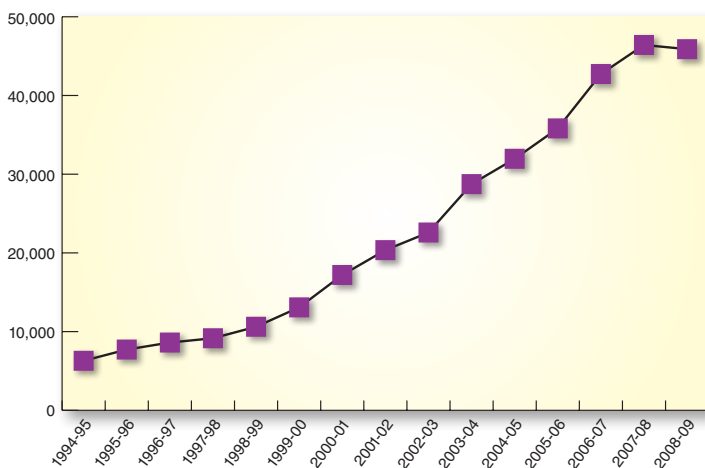


Learning Language: Increasing Hoosier Children's English Literacy

Growth in the ELL Population

Over the past nine years the number of English Language Learner (ELL) students in Indiana schools has more than doubled, growing from 17,194 in 2001 to 45,885 in 2009. Comparatively, in 1995 there were only 6,293 Hoosier ELL students. Indiana is one of 20 states in which the population of ELLs doubled in the decade between 1995 and 2005.

**Number of Limited English Speaking Students
in Indiana Public Schools, 2009**



**THERE ARE MULTIPLE TERMS
FOR NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS,
INCLUDING:**

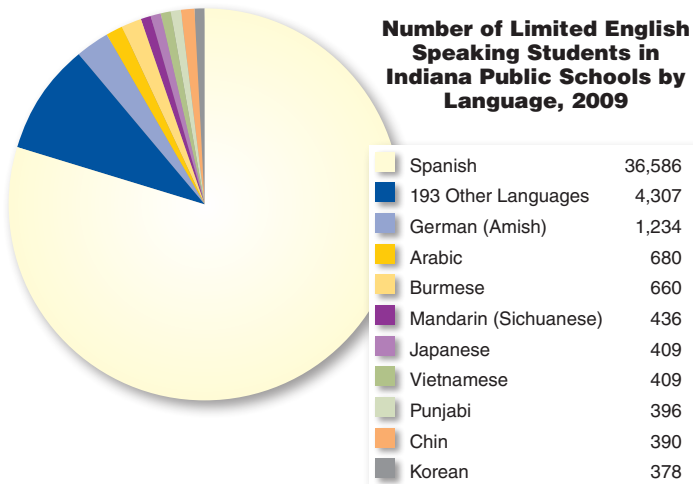
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL):
used mainly in the U.S. to describe non-native English speaking K-12 students.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL):
increasingly refers to a program of instruction designed to support the ELL.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP):
refers to ELLs who lack sufficient mastery of English to excel in an English-language classroom or meet state education standards.

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL):
a program of English instruction for non-native-English-speakers in a country where English is not the primary language.





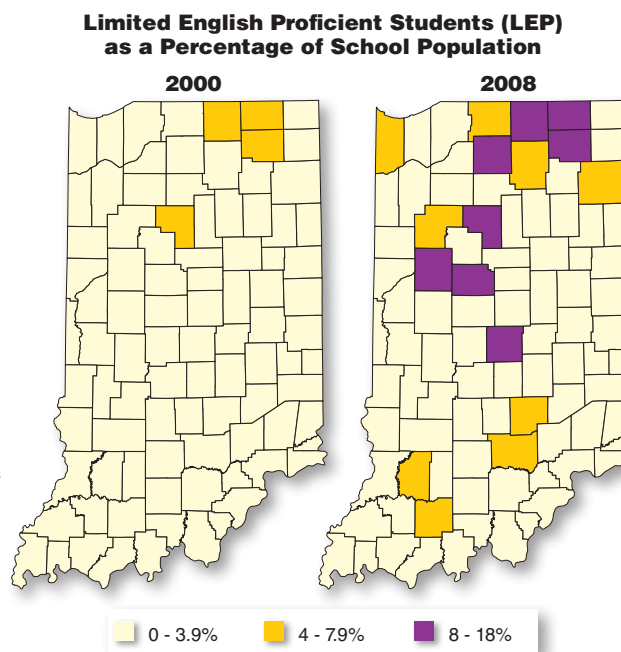
Languages Spoken by ELLs

Spanish speaking students represent a sizable majority of the ELL public school population (almost 80%).¹ However, there are more than 200 other languages spoken by ELL students. The second largest language group in Indiana is Amish German at nearly 3% of the ELL population.

Indiana's Burmese/Chin population (combined) also nearly doubled recently, increasing from 580 students in 2008 to 1,050 in 2009. Fort Wayne is now home to the largest population of Burmese refugees in the U.S.²

Concentration

Today 4% of all Hoosier students are English language learners. Yet, as shown in the maps, in eight Indiana counties more than 1 in 12 students (over 8%) are ELLs. The biggest



challenge is in the small number of school districts where one third of students are learning English.³

The current concentration of ELL students in relatively few Indiana communities allows for a focused effort on implementing research-based methods to meet their academic needs. However, improving outcomes for these students is a state-wide endeavor. Researchers predict that the number of English language learners across the nation will increase in coming years, not only in areas where these populations already exist, but in new communities within each state.⁴

Two Keys: Vocabulary and Teacher Preparation

Children who enter kindergarten as English language learners bring with them a vocabulary of 5,000 fewer English words than their native English-speaking peers⁵ and it takes them four to seven years of learning English to catch up with fluent English speakers.⁶ The language barrier and associated needs create other challenges as well. For instance, language instruction often pulls ELL students out of the regular classroom, which results in less exposure to other subjects, such as math and science.

Though Indiana has instituted standards for teachers regarding ELL instruction, it is one of 47 states that do not have state requirements for all teachers to demonstrate competence in ELL instruction.⁷ Research from the National Center for Education Statistics shows that 27% of teachers feel "very well prepared" to teach students with limited English proficiency (LEP). However, the majority of teachers (60%) feel only "somewhat" or "moderately" well-prepared to teach LEP students and 12% feel "not prepared at all."⁸

² Indiana Education Insight. March 3, 2009.

³ Indiana Accountability System for Academic Progress. (2009) Indiana Department of Education. <http://www.doe.in.gov/data/>

⁴ Fry, R. (2007) The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of U.S. Public Schools. Pew Hispanic Center.

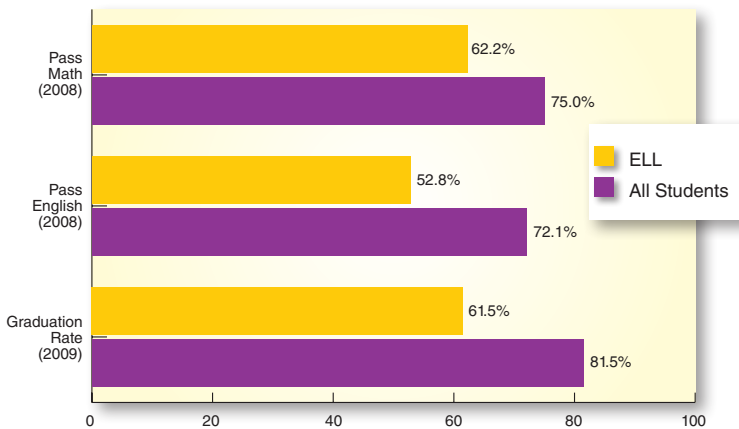
⁵ Center for American Progress (2008) A Race Against the Clock: The Value of Expanded Learning Time for English Language Learners. Melissa Lazain.

⁶ Kenji Hakuta, "How Long Does It Take English Learners to Attain Proficiency" (2000). *University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute. Policy Reports.* <http://repositories.cdlib.org/lmri/pr/hakuta>

⁷ Ed Week. (2009) Quality Counts. Portrait of a Population: How English-Language Learners are Putting Schools to the Test.

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2001). *Teacher Preparation and Professional Development: 2000* (NCES 2001-088).

Pass Rates of Limited English Speaking Students in Indiana Public Schools vs. Graduation Rates



In Indiana, ELL students attain significantly lower test scores and graduation rates than the general school population. For instance, nearly half of ELL students do not pass the state’s ISTEP test (53% pass language and 62% pass math) and only 62% graduate on time (2009).⁹ This lack of academic achievement represents one of many significant challenges these students face in their new Indiana home.

Immigration and English Language

Beyond the classroom, 8%, or 1 in 13 Hoosier children, live with at least one immigrant parent. The language skills of a child’s parents have important implications for that child’s early education. Many children of ELL parents experience challenges associated with low parent education, low family earnings, and poverty.¹⁰

Research also indicates that food insecurity among immigrants is higher for children whose parents have limited

English proficiency than those whose parents are English proficient.¹¹ Immigrants who speak English fluently may earn 17% more than those who do not, after adjusting for socioeconomic factors such as education and work experience.¹² In 1999, only 26% of refugees who did not speak English were employed, compared with 77% of those who spoke English well or fluently.¹³

Among immigrants who come to the United States as children, English acquisition rates are high and with each generation born in the U.S., English language acquisition increases.¹⁴ By the second generation, more than 90% of individuals speak English.¹⁵ In Indiana, more than two-fifths of children in immigrant families speak English very well and speak another language at home. With formal training in both English and their native language, many children in immigrant families are well-positioned to become fluent bilingual speakers, writers and readers.¹⁶

What to expect when working with ELLs

Attending School: Current law allows for all children to enroll in school, regardless of immigration or refugee status. Students with limited English proficiency may receive educational opportunities equal to their peers as well as appropriate levels of English language development (a minimum of one hour daily is recommended by the state of Indiana).¹⁷

Testing ELLs: Each year, LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students receive an English literacy test; results are used to place students in classes and will inform each student’s individual learning plan.¹⁸ In their first year in a U.S. school, LEP students are not required to take the English/ Language Arts section of the ISTEP+; they are required to complete the math, science and social studies segments. After

⁹ Indiana Accountability System for Academic Progress. (2009) Indiana Department of Education. <http://www.doe.in.gov/data/>

¹⁰ Center for Social and Demographic Analysis (2009) Children in Immigrant Families in Indiana. www.aecf.org

¹¹ Child Trends Research Brief (2009) Young Children in Immigrant Families Face Higher Risk of Food Insecurity.

¹² Gonzalez, Libertad, Nonparametric Bounds on the Returns to Language Skills (March 2004). IZA Discussion Paper No. 1098. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=527122>

¹³ <http://www.cbpp.org/archiveSite/3-18-03tanf.pdf>

¹⁴ Alba, R. (2005) Bilingualism Persists, But English Still Dominates. Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research, State University of New York at Albany

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Center for Social and Demographic Analysis (2009) Children in Immigrant Families in Indiana. www.aecf.org

¹⁷ Indiana Department of Education. Tips for selecting ESL curricular materials www.doe.in.us/englishlanguagelearning

¹⁸ Ibid.

their first year, all students, including LEPs are required to participate fully in ISTEP+ testing.

However, test results for English language learners may not fully reflect these students' knowledge or capabilities. ELLs may be more literate in their primary language than in English, and tests in English may include cultural and historical knowledge that is unfamiliar to ELLs.¹⁹

English Proficiency: Proficiency in English consists of the following five language domains: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and comprehension.²¹ A student speaking English fluently has not necessarily mastered all five domains.²² To help increase their English skills:

- Give students plenty of opportunities to speak, read and write. It is natural for newcomers to initially listen more than they talk, but remember that they must practice speaking in order to improve.²³
- Have peers help. Pair ELL students with teammates who are more proficient in English to help support their vocabulary development.²⁴
- Tell parents of ELL students exactly (give them names) who is willing and able to help them navigate school, government and social service systems. Be a resource for parents of ELLs; providing a written list of resources may not meet their needs.²⁵
- Even highly proficient ELL students have smaller vocabu-

HOW MUCH NATIVE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION? NO CONSENSUS

According to the Institute of Education Sciences' What Works Clearing House, some experts conclude that students are best served by having some reading instruction in their native language. Others suggest that students should receive thorough reading instruction simultaneously in both English and their native language, while still others believe that the results are inconclusive.²⁰

larities than native speakers. It is important to expose ELLs to age-appropriate vocabulary. Speak slowly and use pictures and examples to help ELLs make lasting connections with English vocabulary words.²⁶

After-School Programs: After school programs have a positive effect on English language acquisition.²⁷

Preliminary research on English language learner performance shows that ELLs who participate in after school programs retain English fluency at a higher rate than those who do not participate in after school programs (75% compared to 60%).²⁸ A similar study revealed that 23% of English language learners in an after-school program were reclassified as fluent in English, compared to 7% of their peers who did not participate in an after-school program.²⁹ What Latino parents say about

after-school programs:³⁰

- After-School program providers and Latino parents consider programs that promote linguistic and cultural values to be most effective with Latino youth.
- Programs that promote a balanced approach between academic support and enrichment will resonate most with Latino families.
- In addition to mandatory homework time, reading, and academic support, Latino parents said the following were the benefits of after-school programs: "They help my child become a better person"; "My child is safe"; and "My child is not home eating and watching television."

¹⁹ Center on Education Policy. (2010) State Test Score Trends Through 2007-08, Part 6: Has Progress Been Made in Raising Achievement for English Language Learners?

²⁰ National Center of Education Sciences. (2007) Effective Literacy and English Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades. U.S. Department of Education.

²¹ Indiana Department of Education. Office of English Language Learning and Migrant Education. www.doe.in.gov/englishlanguagelearning

²² National Council of Teachers of English (2008) English Language Learners: A Policy Research Brief

²³ American Teacher (2010) What to do when English language learners join your classroom. www.colorincolorado.org

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Indiana Department of Education. Language Minority Parents/School Partnership. www.doe.in.gov/englishlanguagelearning

²⁶ American Teacher (2010) <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/download/pdf/PictureBasedELL.pdf>.

²⁷ Olson, Lori. The Secondary School Leadership For English Learner Success Leadership Development Series. California Tomorrow, 2005.

²⁸ John W. Gardner Center. Exploring the Relationship between After-School Programs and English Language Acquisition. 2008.

²⁹ Newhouse, Corey. After School Programs in the Central Valley Benefit Children and Youth: Evaluation Results from the 2006-2007 School Year. Rep. Central Valley After School Foundation, 2008.

³⁰ National Council of La Raza (2008) Latino Engagement in After-School Programs.

Resources

The following resources may be helpful for individuals currently working with one or more ELL youth:

- A bilingual Web site for families and educators of English language learners designed to help children read and succeed: www.colorincolorado.org
- Peer assisted learning strategies from the U.S. Department of Education: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/WWC_PALS_071607.pdf
- A bilingual multi-media toolkit for from The National Council of La Raza and Scholastic: <http://www.leeyseras.net/>
- Latino family Engagement in After-School Programs from the National Council of La Raza: http://www.nclr.org/index.php/publications/latino_family_engagement_in_after-school_programs/
- Indiana Department of Education's Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education: www.doe.in.gov/englishlanguagelearning
- Resources on working with refugee populations from the Indiana Department of Education: <http://www.doe.in.gov/lmmp/refugeegrant.html>
- Parenting for Academic Success: Teacher's Resource Manual from the National Center for Family Literacy and the Delta Publishing Company: <http://www.deltapublishing.com/>
- Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services: <http://www.brycs.org/publications/index.cfm>
- A toolkit for working with newcomer parents: http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/raisingchildreninnewcountry_web.pdf
- Resources on involving parents of ELLs from the Indiana Department of Education: <http://www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/parentinvolvement.html>
- Bibliographies on resources about English Language Learners and other youth development issues: www.iyi.org/library



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