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A LOOK AT IMMIGRANT YOUTH: PROSPECTS AND PROMISING PRACTICES

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Introduction

The United States is facing an unprecedented challenge in serving immigrant youth. Today's immigrants arrive from widely diverse source countries, and are increasingly likely to resettle in nontraditional states and in rural communities, areas that often have the least experience and/or infrastructure to help students learn English and adapt to their new schools and neighborhoods. With immigration levels sustained at well over one million arrivals per year, immigrant students are entering public schools in record numbers. This has tremendous implications for program development, curricula, and funding.

Immigrants and language minority students (i.e., English learners) are among the fastest growing populations in U.S. public schools. The Urban Institute finds that the share of children enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade that is composed of children of immigrants (including both foreign-born children and U.S.-born children with foreign-born parents) more than tripled from 6 to 20 percent between 1970 and 2000. By 2015, if current immigration levels continue, children of immigrants will constitute 30 percent of the nation's school population.

The number of students lacking English proficiency has also increased dramatically. Enrollment in 2000-2001 was 4.6 million or about 10 percent of total school enrollment (pre-K through 12th grade), an increase of 105 percent over 1990-1991. The top five languages spoken by limited English proficient (LEP) students in 2000-2001 were Spanish (79%), Vietnamese (2%), Hmong (1.6%), Cantonese (1%) and Korean (1%).¹ As of 2002-2003, approximately 5 million LEP students were enrolled in grades pre-K through 12, nearly double the 2.7 million in 1992-1993.²

Most children of immigrants fare well, but immigrant teens can face unique challenges related to language proficiency, cultural and social adaptation and poverty. Newly arriving immigrant teenagers have a very limited time to learn English, study the required material for high stakes tests, and catch up to their native English speaking peers before graduation.³ Consequently, dropout rates are significantly higher for immigrants and for LEP youth. On the other hand, immigrant youth who have mastered English often experience family role-reversal, when they are called on as translators or interpreters for family interactions with the outside world. Finally, one in four poor children lives in an immigrant family. Their parents often

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work multiple jobs or shift work to support their families, which drains the time available to supervise their children or assist with their homework or school activities.

This paper outlines the demographics of LEP and immigrant youth and some of the challenges facing them and institutions that serve them, including new requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act for assessments, staffing and parental involvement. The report also identifies some creative programmatic responses to serve LEP and immigrant children and their parents through newcomer schools, parent outreach and training, and after school programs.

About Immigrant and LEP Youth

One in five children in the United States is an immigrant or has immigrant parents. The number of children of immigrants in the United States tripled from 6 to 20 percent between 1970 and 2000. (Three-fourths of these children are U.S.-born with immigrant parents, while one-fourth are foreign-born.) By 2015, the Urban Institute estimates, children of immigrants will constitute 30 percent of the nation's school population, if the current high levels of immigration – over 1 million per year – are sustained. (For state by state LEP and immigrant enrollment, see table 1.)

Forty percent of foreign-born immigrant children and 20 percent of U.S. born children of immigrants are limited English proficient (“LEP”). Ninety percent of LEP students are children of immigrants, and the remaining 10 percent are the children of natives. English proficiency varies by country of origin, with Mexican and other Hispanic children twice as likely to be LEP as Asians and other non-Hispanic groups. Hispanics comprise 56 percent of immigrant children, but 75 percent of LEP. Asians comprise 22 percent of the immigrant population, but only 13 percent of the LEP population.⁴

Immigrant children attend schools that are not just racially and ethnically segregated but also linguistically isolated. In many parts of the United States, persistent neighborhood-level racial and ethnic segregation is reflected in segregated schools, since school attendance is largely neighborhood-based. Most LEP students are Latinos, and many Latino students are LEP. As a result, the linguistic segregation of LEP students closely resembles the residential and school segregation of Latinos. On the other hand, African American and non-Hispanic white children are unlikely to go to schools with large numbers of LEP students, because racial and ethnic segregation separates them from Latinos. In fact, over one-half of all LEP students attend schools where more than 30 percent of students are LEP. By contrast, over half of non-LEP students attend schools where less than 1 percent of students are LEP.⁵

Dropout Rates

Most immigrant youth seem to fare as well as their peers in U.S.-born families in terms of physical and mental health and avoidance of high risk behaviors, and the vast majority attend school. However, they are more likely to be behind grade and not to graduate.⁶

Immigrant teens in some ethnic groups suffer a dropout rate much higher than the national average. One way to count the dropout rate is to include all individuals who are not enrolled in high school and who lack a high school credential, known as the “status dropout rate”. This measure includes all dropouts regardless of when they last attended school and individuals who may never have attended school in the United States. For example, Hispanic youth aged 16-24 had a status dropout rate of 27 percent, compared to 11 percent for black non-Hispanic, 7 percent for white non-Hispanic and 4

Table 1. PreK-12 LEP and Immigrant Enrollment, by State, 2000-2001, and Change in Enrollment from 1999-2000

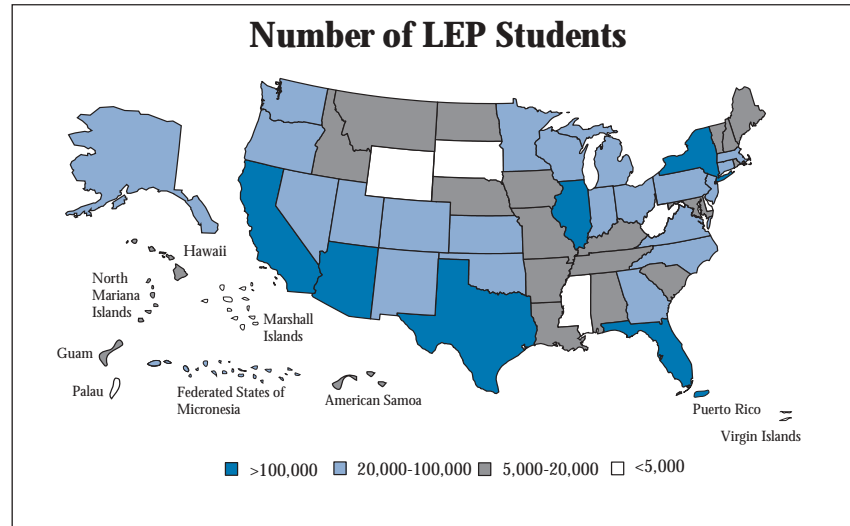
Jurisdiction	Total Enrollment 2000-01 *	LEP Enrollment 2000-01	% LEP 2000-01	Immigrant Enrollment 2000-01	% Immigrant 2000-01	LEP Enrollment 1999-2000	% LEP Change from 1999-2000
USA	47,665,483	4,584,946	9.6%	1,127,172	2.4%	4,416,580	3.8%
States + DC	46,941,935	3,908,095	8.3%	1,092,644	2.3%	3,730,966	4.7%
Alabama	740,176	6,877	0.9%	4,464	0.6%	7,260	-5.3%
Alaska	133,356	20,057	15.0%	1,302	1.0%	19,721	1.7%
** Arizona	875,659	135,248	15.4%	31,503	3.6%	125,311	7.9%
Arkansas	449,959	10,599	2.4%	1,764	0.4%	9,102	16.4%
** California	6,050,895	1,511,646	25.0%	205,421	3.4%	1,480,527	2.1%
Colorado	724,508	59,018	8.1%	18,006	2.5%	60,031	-1.7%
Connecticut	562,179	20,629	3.7%	13,185	2.3%	20,190	2.2%
Delaware	114,676	2,371	2.1%	1,327	1.2%	2,284	3.8%
District of Columbia	68,925	5,554	8.1%	2,711	3.9%	5,177	7.3%
** Florida	2,379,701	254,517	10.7%	173,412	7.3%	235,181	8.2%
Georgia	1,444,937	64,949	4.5%	30,503	2.1%	30,491	113.0%
** Hawaii	183,520	12,897	7.0%	2,201	1.2%	12,879	0.1%
** Idaho	242,943	20,968	8.6%	4,482	1.8%	17,732	18.2%
Illinois	2,048,792	140,528	6.9%	60,554	3.0%	143,855	-2.3%
Indiana	989,225	17,193	1.7%	7,146	0.7%	13,079	31.5%
Iowa	495,080	11,436	2.3%	5,759	1.2%	10,120	13.0%
Kansas	470,610	16,088	3.4%	10,725	2.3%	18,672	-13.8%
Kentucky	665,850	6,017	0.9%	1,195	0.2%	4,847	24.1%
Louisiana	743,089	7,268	1.0%	4,684	0.6%	6,906	5.2%
Maine	207,037	2,737	1.3%	942	0.5%	2,748	-0.4%
Maryland	852,920	23,891	2.8%	11,246	1.3%	20,855	14.6%
Massachusetts	975,150	44,747	4.6%	21,796	2.2%	45,065	-0.7%
** Michigan	1,717,381	47,252	2.8%	10,309	0.6%	44,471	6.3%
** Minnesota	845,040	45,012	5.3%	13,889	1.6%	45,640	-1.4%
Mississippi	497,871	3,225	0.6%	2,119	0.4%	1,799	79.3%
Missouri	912,744	11,535	1.3%	6,913	0.8%	10,238	12.7%
** Montana	154,338	7,567	4.9%	170	0.1%	4,016	88.4%
Nebraska	286,199	10,301	3.6%	6,244	2.2%	9,144	12.7%
Nevada	340,706	40,131	11.8%	7,059	2.1%	40,469	-0.8%
New Hampshire	208,461	2,727	1.3%	1,981	1.0%	2,471	10.4%
New Jersey	1,240,602	52,890	4.3%	53,783	4.3%	49,847	6.1%
New Mexico	320,306	63,755	19.9%	8,794	2.7%	76,661	-16.8%
New York	2,882,188	239,097	8.3%	118,563	4.1%	228,730	4.5%
North Carolina	1,293,638	52,835	4.1%	27,156	2.1%	41,667	26.8%
** North Dakota	108,500	8,874	8.2%	668	0.6%	8,324	6.6%
Ohio	1,835,049	19,868	1.1%	12,120	0.7%	16,841	18.0%
Oklahoma	623,110	43,670	7.0%	7,873	1.3%	38,823	12.5%
** Oregon	545,545	47,382	8.7%	8,948	1.6%	43,845	8.1%
Pennsylvania	1,814,311	31,353	1.7%	13,085	0.7%	28,540	9.9%
** Rhode Island	156,292	10,161	6.5%	4,986	3.2%	10,245	-0.8%
** South Carolina	660,071	7,004	1.1%	7,031	1.1%	5,577	25.6%
South Dakota	128,603	5,883	4.6%	484	0.4%	5,495	7.1%
Tennessee	909,388	12,475	1.4%	7,777	0.9%	11,039	13.0%
Texas	4,059,619	570,022	14.0%	96,225	2.4%	554,949	2.7%
** Utah	475,269	44,030	9.3%	16,899	3.6%	41,306	6.6%
Vermont	102,049	997	1.0%	574	0.6%	936	6.5%
Virginia	1,144,915	37,385	3.3%	15,914	1.4%	31,675	18.0%
Washington	1,004,770	58,455	5.8%	21,416	2.1%	55,709	4.9%
West Virginia	286,367	1,139	0.4%	-	-	1,039	9.6%
Wisconsin	879,476	35,312	4.0%	6,855	0.8%	27,184	29.9%
Wyoming	89,940	2,523	2.8%	481	0.5%	2,253	12.0%
Outlying Areas	723,548	676,851	93.5%	17,264	2.4%	685,614	-1.3%
** Guam	31,903	19,523	61.2%	-	-	13,971	39.7%
Marshall Islands ***	12,183	12,183	100.0%	-	-	12,183	0.0%
Micronesia ***	32,802	32,802	100.0%	-	-	32,802	0.0%
N. Mariana Islands	10,004	9,992	99.9%	2,602	26.0%	9,351	0.0%
Palau ***	3,065	3,065	100.0%	-	-	3,065	0.0%
Puerto Rico	612,725	598,063	97.6%	14,662	2.4%	613,019	-2.4%
Virgin Islands ***	20,866	1,223	5.9%	-	-	1,223	0.0%

* Total Enrollment data from *Public School Student, Staff, and Graduate Counts by State, School Year 2000-01*, NCES (2002)

** Includes K-12 data only (Pre-K either not available or not reported).

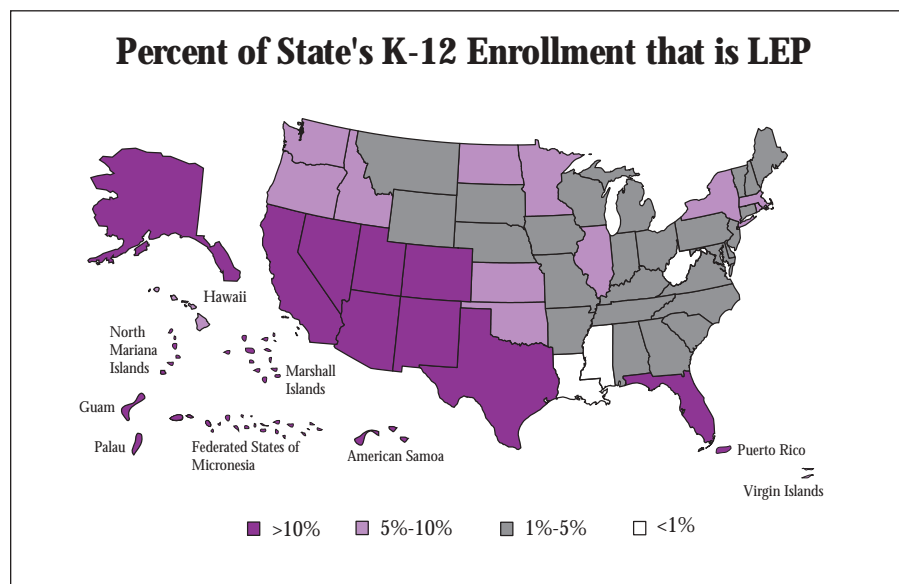
*** Figures are from 1999-2000. Jurisdictions did not respond to 2000-2001 SEA Survey.

- A dash [-] indicates that data was either missing or not available.

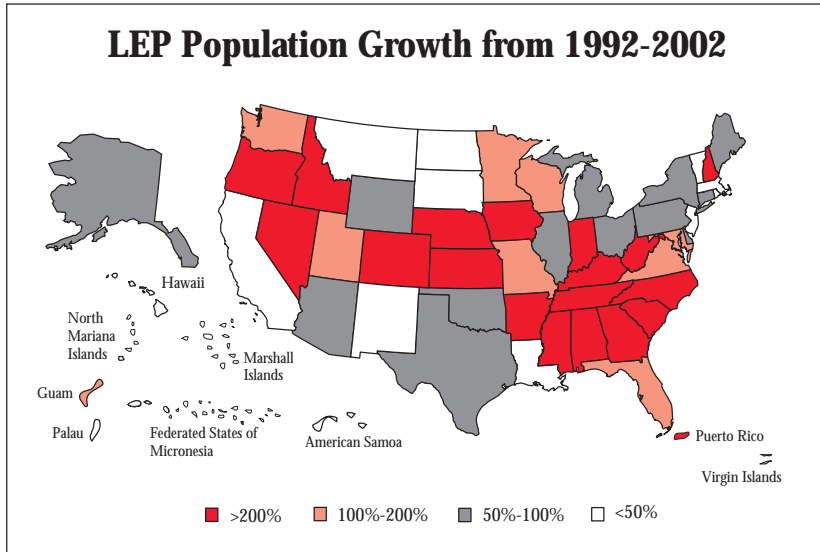


percent for Asian/Pacific Islander youth.⁷ The high dropout rate among Hispanics is due in part to the high dropout rates of Hispanic immigrants. More than one-half of Hispanic immigrants have never enrolled in a U.S. school, but are counted as dropouts if they did not complete high school in their country of origin.⁸

The aggregate dropout rate is a poor indicator of U.S. secondary school performance, says Richard Fry of the Pew Hispanic Center. Of 530,000 Hispanic high school dropouts, 175,000 were likely never enrolled in U.S. schools. Counting only Hispanic teens that have been enrolled in U.S. schools, the



dropout rate for Hispanic 16-to-19 year olds is about 15 percent, approximately twice the non-Hispanic white dropout rate. He states that it is critical to distinguish between recent immigrants and those who have been educated in U.S. schools for the design of appropriate interventions. For example, most dropouts that have never been in U.S. schools have very limited spoken English abilities; while most Hispanic dropouts educated in U.S. schools have English fluency by age 16.⁹



Dropout rates for Hispanic immigrant youth also differ by country of origin, and rates are distorted by including U.S.-educated immigrant youth. For example, about 40 percent of 16-to-19 year olds who emigrated from Mexico are dropouts. For Mexican immigrants educated in U.S. schools, the rate is 20 percent. For Central American immigrant youth overall, the dropout rate is 25 percent, compared to 7 percent for U.S.-educated Central American immigrant youth. For South American immigrant youth, the rate is only 13 percent, and 12 percent for U.S.-educated South American youth.¹⁰

LEP children are twice as likely as their English-speaking counterparts to drop out of school. About 23 percent of LEP children age 16-24 were not enrolled in school and did not have a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 13 percent of those who speak English. LEP students who stay in school have similar attendance and grades to their English speaking peers, but as a whole score lower on standardized tests and are less likely to finish high school.¹¹

Immigrant Parents and the Family Dynamic

One of the reasons their children have difficulty in school is that immigrant parents often lack English proficiency themselves and have less education than U.S.-born parents. For example, four out of five LEP children who are foreign-born live in families where the parents are also considered limited-English proficient. For foreign-born children who are not LEP, about half live in families where the parents are limited-English proficient.

Immigrant families often experience family role-reversal: as the children learn English faster than their parents, they are called on to become translators and interpreters for family interactions with the outside world. Immigrant teens find their growing independence creates family tensions, with parents feeling their child is becoming “too Americanized”, and children feeling frustrated by living in two cultural worlds, old and new.

According to the journal *The Future of Children*, immigrant families have many strengths. For example, immigrant families are healthy, and they are more likely to have two parents in the home with at least one working parent, an extended family, and a cohesive community of immigrants from the

same country of origin. However, children in these families also often have parents who have not graduated from high school, are not proficient in English, and work in low wage jobs with fewer benefits.¹² Recommendations to strengthen immigrant families include parent support groups and family literacy programs so parents will be able to help with homework, encourage their children to be involved in after-school activities, get involved in the PTA, understand how to apply for health insurance, and help fill out college applications.

Federal Funds

States have some assistance from the federal government in educating immigrant and LEP students. The main sources of federal education funding have been the bilingual education and the emergency immigrant education programs.

The Bilingual Education Act (BEA), Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), was created in 1968 as a supplemental source of funding for English learners. Funds were distributed through competitive grants to school districts. In FY2001, the funding level was \$296 million, supporting 1000 projects nationwide.¹³ Average funding under the BEA was approximately \$328 per LEP student served.¹⁴

The Emergency Immigrant Education Program (EIEP) was created in 1984 to assist local education agencies receiving a large number of new immigrant students. The formula grants to states were based on the LEP student population and on recent immigrant students. In 2001, the funding level was \$150 million and served 800,000 students, or approximately \$173 per LEP student.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) consolidated the bilingual and immigrant education programs into a single formula grant program to states for English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement in Title III (H.R. 1, P.L. 107-110.) As under the EIEP, formula grants to states are based on the LEP population (80 percent) and the number of recent immigrant students in the state (20 percent). (See box for definitions of LEP and immigrant students.)

States must distribute 95 percent of Title III funds to school districts, and may reserve five percent for state activities (such as professional development to meet certification and licensing standards for training LEP students). States must use up to 15 percent of the 95 percent funds for districts with significant increases in immigrant students. This funding may be used for activities such as family literacy and parent outreach; personnel; tutorials, mentoring and counseling; materials, software and technologies; instructional services and other educational services needed by LEP and immigrant students; English language instruction; professional development for teachers and staff; and administrative costs. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, the FY2003 Title III State Formula grants were \$403.4 million (\$322.7 million for LEP and \$80.7 million for immigrants; see table 2.)¹⁵ Dividing the formula grants by the census LEP population and immigrant student population, the per pupil allocation was \$78.65 per LEP student and \$76.48 per immigrant student. The FY2005 appropriations increased the Title III budget to \$676 million.

Immigrant and LEP students are often low-income and therefore eligible for Title I of NCLB, which targets high poverty schools. Title I provides funds to raise student achievement through school wide programs or targeted services for low-achieving students. Title I is very flexible and funds a great

Table 2.



No Child Left Behind FY 2003 Title III State Formula Grants

Total allotment for formula grants: **\$403,350,000**

LEP allotment (80%): **\$322,680,000**

Immigrant allotment (20%): **\$80,670,000**

State	Census 2000 LEP population, age 5-17	LEP funding	Immigrant student population	Immigrant funding	Total	Final funding (adjusted for state minimum) *
ALABAMA	12,187	\$1,120,156	2,408	\$183,769	\$1,303,925	\$1,298,044
ALASKA	6,126	\$563,065	1,302	\$99,363	\$662,429	\$659,441
ARIZONA	108,738	\$9,994,549	31,503	\$2,404,183	\$12,398,732	\$12,342,805
ARKANSAS	11,660	\$1,071,718	1,764	\$134,621	\$1,206,339	\$1,200,898
CALIFORNIA	1,111,387	\$102,152,073	205,201	\$15,660,119	\$117,812,193	\$117,280,776
COLORADO	45,866	\$4,215,730	14,156	\$1,080,329	\$5,296,059	\$5,272,170
CONNECTICUT	31,705	\$2,914,135	13,185	\$1,006,226	\$3,920,361	\$3,902,678
DELAWARE	4,877	\$448,265	1,328	\$101,348	\$549,612	\$547,133
FLORIDA	179,109	\$16,462,632	114,989	\$8,775,500	\$25,238,133	\$25,124,291
GEORGIA	62,289	\$5,725,234	30,503	\$2,327,867	\$8,053,101	\$8,016,776
HAWAII	13,585	\$1,248,652	4,678	\$357,006	\$1,605,659	\$1,598,416
IDAHO	8,812	\$809,947	4,492	\$342,811	\$1,152,758	\$1,147,558
ILLINOIS	165,553	\$15,216,646	61,117	\$4,664,205	\$19,880,851	\$19,791,174
INDIANA	26,562	\$2,441,421	9,757	\$744,615	\$3,186,036	\$3,171,665
IOWA	13,632	\$1,252,972	6,255	\$477,357	\$1,730,329	\$1,722,524
KANSAS	17,992	\$1,653,717	10,725	\$818,489	\$2,472,207	\$2,461,055
KENTUCKY	10,896	\$1,001,495	4,832	\$368,759	\$1,370,254	\$1,364,074
LOUISIANA	15,265	\$1,403,068	4,378	\$334,111	\$1,737,179	\$1,729,343
MAINE	2,503	\$230,061	1,090	\$83,184	\$313,245	\$500,000
MARYLAND	34,318	\$3,154,306	11,246	\$858,250	\$4,012,556	\$3,994,456
MASSACHUSETTS	60,631	\$5,572,840	21,395	\$1,632,781	\$7,205,621	\$7,173,119
MICHIGAN	48,542	\$4,461,692	10,309	\$786,742	\$5,248,433	\$5,224,759
MINNESOTA	37,703	\$3,465,435	13,899	\$1,060,716	\$4,526,151	\$4,505,735
MISSISSIPPI	7,168	\$658,840	2,119	\$161,714	\$820,553	\$816,852
MISSOURI	19,607	\$1,802,159	6,193	\$472,625	\$2,274,784	\$2,264,523
MONTANA	2,673	\$245,686	171	\$13,050	\$258,736	\$500,000

Table 2. No Child Left Behind FY 2003 Title III State Formula Grants, continued

NEBRASKA	11,013	\$1,012,249	6,249	\$476,899	\$1,489,148	\$1,482,431
NEVADA	34,337	\$3,156,053	7,059	\$538,715	\$3,694,767	\$3,678,101
NEW HAMPSHIRE	3,443	\$316,460	1,981	\$151,182	\$467,642	\$500,000
NEW JERSEY	99,993	\$9,190,761	53,783	\$4,104,503	\$13,295,264	\$13,235,293
NEW MEXICO	38,436	\$3,532,808	8,794	\$671,123	\$4,203,931	\$4,184,968
NEW YORK	303,212	\$27,869,441	119,448	\$9,115,794	\$36,985,235	\$36,818,405
NORTH CAROLINA	50,797	\$4,668,958	27,149	\$2,071,903	\$6,740,861	\$6,710,455
NORTH DAKOTA	1,512	\$138,974	895	\$68,303	\$207,277	\$500,000
OHIO	43,675	\$4,014,346	12,427	\$948,379	\$4,962,725	\$4,940,339
OKLAHOMA	18,067	\$1,660,611	7,873	\$600,836	\$2,261,447	\$2,251,246
OREGON	34,654	\$3,185,189	10,000	\$763,160	\$3,948,349	\$3,930,539
PENNSYLVANIA	63,638	\$5,849,226	14,321	\$1,092,921	\$6,942,147	\$6,910,833
RHODE ISLAND	12,170	\$1,118,594	3,449	\$263,214	\$1,381,808	\$1,375,575
PUERTO RICO	609,733	\$1,613,400	3,077	\$403,350	\$2,016,750	\$2,016,750
SOUTH CAROLINA	14,915	\$1,370,898	7,039	\$537,188	\$1,908,086	\$1,899,479
SOUTH DAKOTA	3,590	\$329,971	484	\$36,937	\$366,908	\$500,000
TENNESSEE	18,069	\$1,660,795	7,777	\$593,510	\$2,254,304	\$2,244,136
TEXAS	516,819	\$47,502,924	106,673	\$8,140,857	\$55,643,781	\$55,392,788
UTAH	18,171	\$1,670,170	16,899	\$1,289,664	\$2,959,834	\$2,946,483
VERMONT	1,435	\$131,897	574	\$43,805	\$175,702	\$500,000
VIRGINIA	43,377	\$3,986,955	16,941	\$1,292,869	\$5,279,825	\$5,256,009
WASHINGTON	59,677	\$5,485,154	22,760	\$1,736,952	\$7,222,107	\$7,189,530
WEST VIRGINIA	2,495	\$229,326	135	\$10,303	\$239,628	\$500,000
WISCONSIN	34,285	\$3,151,273	6,855	\$523,146	\$3,674,419	\$3,657,845
WYOMING	1,443	\$132,632	496	\$37,853	\$170,485	\$500,000
WASHINGTON DC	4,509	\$414,440	2,711	\$206,893	\$621,333	\$618,530
Total 50 States & DC	4,102,851	322,680,000	1,054,844	80,670,000	\$403,350,000	\$403,350,000
* Adjusted for State Minimum Final - this column shows the final amount funded for each state. This computation is based on the Census 2000 LEP counts (80%) and the state-submitted Immigrant counts (20%) and then adjusted for the statutory minimum of \$500,000.00.						

variety of applications. Activities include reading and math instruction, extended day, extended year and summer programs. This program is funded at \$12.3 billion and reaches 15 million students in public and private schools (about \$820 per student). Most of the students served are in grades 1

Defining Immigrant Students and Limited English Proficient (LEP)

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English are described as limited English proficient, or “LEP”, although some states and local school districts use “English Language Learner” or ELL instead.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act defines immigrant and LEP as follows, for purposes of calculating state formula grants. Immigrant students are defined as individuals aged three to 21 who were not born in the United States and who have attended U.S. schools for less than three years. LEP individuals are defined as those aged three to 21; enrolled or preparing to enroll in elementary or secondary school; who were not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing or understanding English may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the state’s proficiency level of achievement on state assessments, the ability to achieve success in classrooms where the instruction is in English, or the opportunity to participate fully in society.

through 6 (65 percent), with another 12 percent in preschool and kindergarten programs. Thus, only 23 percent of students served are in grades 6-12.

The U.S. Department of Education’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program was reauthorized under Title IV, Part B, of the No Child Left Behind Act. The program provides tutorial services and academic enrichment activities designed to help students meet local and state academic standards. Other programs include youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, technology education programs, art, music and recreation programs, counseling and character education. In 2002, this program, funded at \$1 billion, supported more than 7,000 after-school programs and served more than 1 million children. However, it is difficult to assess whether this program is reaching immigrant and LEP students. A 2004 national evaluation of the program identified only two sites with sufficient Hispanic students to be included in the analysis; no other refugee or immigrant subgroups were identified.

Finally, there is a small program to assist refugee children. The Refugee Children School Impact Grant Program in the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides for some of the costs of educating refugee children. ORR granted \$15 million to education departments in 42 states for school districts with significant numbers of refugee children. ORR identified approximately 380,000 school age refugee children (ages 5-18) in FY2001. The program funds activities for refugee children age 5 to 18 to support their effective integration and education. Activities have included English as a Second Language instruction, after-school tutorials, after-school and/or summer clubs and activities. Other permitted activities include cognitive enrichment programs to bridge the gap between refugee students’ intellectual ability and the elements of school and curriculum that are culture-based; parental outreach programs; interpreter services; salaries for teachers and aides; and bilingual/bicultural counselors.¹⁶

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) added new requirements for schools in math and reading assessments, annual improvement in student performance on assessments, highly-qualified teachers and paraprofessionals, and parental involvement, posing additional challenges for schools

with large numbers of immigrants and limited English proficient students.

Standardized testing in reading, math and science is at the core of NCLB. Schools must demonstrate progress each year so that all children and subgroups of racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged, disabled and LEP are proficient in math and reading, as measured on standardized tests, by 2014. Schools must test limited English proficient students and report their scores separately. After three years, LEP students must be tested in English for reading and language arts. Schools may test students for reading and language arts in their native languages for their first three years, and there is no limit on the number of years LEP children may be tested in their native language for math and science. Schools may use alternative tests in English and allow accommodations such as dictionaries or extra time. However, even with native language tests or accommodations, schools with large numbers of LEP students may still find it difficult to demonstrate the adequate yearly progress required by the law, since advanced proficiency in a second language typically takes five to seven years.

One major challenge under NCLB is that as students gain English proficiency, they exit the LEP subgroup. Thus, the most proficient students exit each year, and new LEP students enter each year. Historically, when LEP students have improved their language skills, they have been removed from the LEP category and are no longer tracked, making it impossible to demonstrate progress, says Deborah Short of the Center for Applied Linguistics. Many districts now, however, have begun to monitor students who have exited from ESL or bilingual programs for one or two years, and districts can now count the test scores of these students in the LEP subgroup. Even with this flexibility, the LEP subgroup is still a fluid group of students, which by definition includes groups of students who will have more difficulty passing standardized English tests. In contrast, the other subgroups mandated by the law – racial and ethnic groups, low-income students, and the disabled – are either permanent or far more stable than the LEP group. The LEP classification may vary among states, since they are permitted by NCLB to define LEP narrowly – students receiving direct, daily LEP services – or broadly – students receiving direct services and students being monitored for their English proficiency.

The share of students passing tests in reading, math and science must increase over time, until 100 percent proficiency is reached in 2014. Schools that do not meet targets for performance on these tests for any subgroup of significant size (including LEPs) are subject to an escalating series of interventions. Schools not meeting these targets – in other words, not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP)– for two years in a row must allow parents to transfer their children to another school, at the district's expense. Schools not meeting AYP for three years in a row must provide supplemental programs (after school tutoring, for instance) to all low-income students, again at the district's expense. More intensive interventions, such as restructuring or possibly closing down and reopening as a charter school, are required after further failure to meet AYP.

In addition to requiring that schools meet AYP for LEP students on standardized reading, math and science tests, NCLB also requires states to show improvement in the performance of LEP students on English language proficiency tests.

NCLB includes tough new teacher qualification requirements. ESL and bilingual teachers must get additional certification to meet the “highly qualified” staff requirements by 2006, which costs time and money, while wages are often low. Taken in combination with the chronic shortage of teachers, particularly in hard-to-serve schools in urban areas and schools with a high percentage of LEP students, this requirement may exacerbate the challenges that schools face in their ability to attract and retain certified bilingual teachers. The degree of support that teachers and districts receive (for example, from universities and teaching colleges) will be important to their success in meeting these new qualification

requirements.

NCLB also has very strong parental involvement requirements. Parents must be notified about school progress, language of instruction and goals, requiring new forms of outreach through translated materials and interpreters or bilingual teachers and administrators. Since information necessarily varies from district to district and school to school, providing these materials will be a challenge in terms of funding and obtaining qualified interpreters. Technical assistance from the federal government, states, and community based organizations may help schools and districts implement these requirements.

Promising Practices

There are a number of areas of creative programming, both in and out of school, for immigrant and non-English speaking children, such as newcomer high schools, parent outreach and training, and after school programs.

Newcomer Programs

Newcomer programs are short-term programs for recently-arrived immigrant students to address limited English proficiency, low literacy and limited schooling. These programs are usually limited to 6-18 months to bridge gaps in students' academic backgrounds and integrate them quickly into the regular school program. In addition to English language training, literacy, and academic content, most programs offer cross-cultural orientation to help students become familiar with the school system and community. Other services for students include health care, mental health, career counseling and tutoring. Programs sometimes serve families, as well, providing not only outreach specific to the school, but also adult ESL, orientation to the community, and help with accessing social services, health care, housing and employment. Schools often partner with the community to serve parents and families.¹⁷

A study of 115 newcomer programs for middle and high school, conducted recently by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Applied Linguistics, provides a more complete picture on these initiatives, most of which were created in the 1990s. Students in the programs range from 10 to 26 years of age, representing 90 countries and more than 60 languages. The most common language groups are Spanish (in 95 percent of the programs), followed by Vietnamese, Somali, Mandarin, Filipino, Russian, Haitian Creole, Polish, Punjabi, Hindi, and Bengali. In all 115 programs, at least one staff is bilingual. All programs have either certified ESL teachers or certified bilingual teachers.

Most programs are in urban areas (76 percent), 20 are in suburban areas, and only eight are in rural areas. Most programs are housed in the school and about one-fifth of the programs are at a separate location. Some are full-day programs with content area courses and English language instruction, while others are half-day and integrated with regular school classes. Six are full-length four year programs for high school students, offered to students with limited formal schooling, over-age status, or other risks of not attaining graduation.

For example, Liberty High School in New York City is a one-year program for 9th grade, providing a set of transitional bilingual, native language literacy or ESL courses for newly-arrived immigrant students. The program serves 500 students (aged 14-20) from 40 countries, speaking 22 languages. Content instruction (math, science, social studies) is provided through instruction in English or through

the native language (i.e., Spanish, Polish, or Cantonese.) Students who are at least 17 years old can join the Business Academy and gain business skills and internships. The program receives funding from state and city education funds and the federal Title I and Title VII programs.

The LEAP English Academy in St Paul was created to serve older immigrant and refugee LEP students who entered schools after age 15, and were aging out or dropping out. The program is offered to students who had been in the United States less than 2 years and unlikely to graduate from a traditional high school. The 240 students come from 16 countries, and speak 19 different languages. Most are 18, 19, and 20 years old. The 4-year program helps students improve English proficiency, get their diploma, and prepare for vocational training, college or work. Bilingual tutoring is available in Somali, Hmong, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Lao, and Vietnamese. The program is supported primarily by state funds. Data collected by LEAP staff show the students pass state minimum competency tests and graduate sooner than similar students in other high schools.

The CAL report¹⁸ found that students achieved language and academic improvement in these programs, using pre- and post-test scores, federal Title VII reports and staff reports. It is difficult to gauge success for these programs, however, because few studies evaluate newcomer programs. Evaluation is complicated by the fact that school districts didn't tag newcomer students distinctly in their accountability databases so their progress could be tracked in the program and after they had exited. This made comparison with other English language learners, who had not been in the newcomer program, impossible. CAL recommends that in the future, evaluations be conducted to help policymakers assess the effectiveness of these programs, and assist administrators in comparing academic progress in different program models and tailoring designs for different groups of newcomers.

Helping Immigrant and LEP Parents

One innovative way to address the linguistic and cultural barriers faced by immigrant families with teenagers is combining English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction with social support, addressing topics such as dating norms, dangers of gang involvement, and postsecondary education opportunities. However, in contrast to programs for preschool children, few programs target immigrant families with adolescent children. One example is Asian Community Teen's Youth Voice Radio, which broadcasts parenting advice from the youth perspective.¹⁹

Another successful program – Avance, based in Texas –serves predominantly low-income Latino families through parent education, early childhood development, literacy, and English language acquisition. Despite the fact that 91 percent of the parents in the program are high school dropouts, 94 percent of their children complete high school, 43 percent attend college, and half of the parents continue their education.²⁰ Avance started as a preschool and school readiness program but has also been successful in improving parent outcomes. Avance is funded by federal, state, county and city governments, United Way, foundations and corporations and serves more than 13,000 parents and children annually.

Another approach is to help parents overcome language barriers, cultural conceptions of the role of teachers, and lack of familiarity with the public school system. For example, Montgomery County, Maryland created a parents' guide called "Navigating the System" in English, Spanish, French, Korean, and Chinese, with Vietnamese coming soon. Topics include enrollment, graduation requirements, opportunities for parent involvement, instruction, specialized programs, school safety and security, and services for students and parents. The guide is posted online at <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/parents/guide/>.

After School Programs

Activities for youth after regular school hours have become increasingly important for helping them improve academic achievement, stay in school, and avoid risky behaviors such as pregnancy and substance abuse. Hispanic and African American students are less likely to be involved in out-of-school activities than Asian American and white students. For example, urban youth are more likely to participate in neighborhood-based programs than school-based programs. However, it is not clear whether participation is related to the availability of school versus resources or the interests of the youth.²¹

The programs highlighted below exemplify approaches for serving refugee and immigrant youth.

Refugees

The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides some funds for school districts heavily affected by refugee arrivals. One such program is in Wisconsin, home to the third largest Hmong population in the U.S. (43,000), after California and Minnesota. ORR funded a 5-year grant for an after school program for youth that increased participation in class and improved grades and standardized test scores. The program provides after school academic and English language tutoring, and trains refugee students to become bilingual early childhood teachers. In addition, the program provides training on school governance and educational programs to refugee parents, 99 percent of whom had no formal education. Recruitment efforts for the parent training used the telephone rather than written materials to communicate, as well as home visits and radio ads. The program also developed a training program for all teachers to gain skills to teach limited-English proficient students.

The Bosnian and African Refugee Youth Services (BARY) program in Oregon aims to improve educational experience and provide recreational opportunities, behavioral counseling, life skills training, and cultural enhancement opportunities for Bosnian and African refugee youth. The program is limited to youth ages 12 – 18 years old who have been in the United States for less than five years. Activities include creating videos, writing, kickboxing, tutoring and games. The after school program works with schools to measure progress in indicators such as attendance, class participation, academic scores, parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences, and parent reports of students' progress. Funding is provided by the Oregon Refugee Program.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention

The Pathways/Senderos Center in New Britain, Connecticut serves a limited-English proficient Latino population in grades 6-12. Although small, the program has been particularly effective in reducing pregnancy, keeping kids in school, and promoting higher education. In 12 years, every participant has graduated high school; 50 percent have gone on to higher education, and only two have become pregnant.

According to RoseAnne Bilodeau, director of the program at Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention agency, they have been successful because it is a co-ed program with comprehensive, holistic, long term services based in the neighborhood. It is a year-round program, 5 days a week, serving 50 youth and their families. The program model includes six integrated components: academic support; career preparation; family life and sex education; recreation/lifetime sports; health care; and self-esteem enhancement. They maintain a strong partnership with the school to monitor progress in academics, attendance, and social interaction, with weekly reports from middle school and biweekly reports from high school. They also maintain a strong connection to parents and families with monthly parent meetings. Funding is provided primarily by the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), with some Community Development Block Grant, workforce development, and private foun-

dation grants. DSS is also contracting with a research firm to conduct short and long term impact evaluations.

Conclusion

The programs described above represent a sampling of the creative programs developed to help immigrant and refugee students succeed academically and socially and stay in school. Other schools are expanding instruction time, reorganizing the school day, and focusing on teen literacy, holding promise for LEPs, immigrant students and other student populations. Parent support groups, family literacy programs and parent outreach programs are also effective in helping teens succeed, as well as supporting the family's integration and adaptation.

More promising practices and ideas were recently identified in a 2004 pilot study of state education agencies.²² In order to help immigrant students with low levels of schooling, low literacy, and cultural and communication barriers, and to help schools respond to a shortage of certified bilingual and ESL teachers and a shortage of materials for parents, the report suggests:

- School-based community centers to support assimilation of immigrant families, through English as a Second Language (ESL), parent workshops, computer training, translations, and referrals.
- Newcomer programs that provide intensive language development and academic and cultural orientation.
- Collaborations between educators, religious, and medical personnel with religious and cultural leaders in the community to plan programs for immigrant families.
- A five-year high school plan for immigrant students arriving too late to complete requirements in four years, or who need additional English language training.
- Specialists to assist teachers, for example, in literacy, special education, and ESL.
- Team teaching between general and special educators and ESL teachers.
- Alternative certification programs for immigrants who were teachers in their countries of origin.

Program evaluations in this area are still rare. Researchers say demonstration projects serving immigrant and LEP students need better evaluations, better data collection and better monitoring of LEP students' needs and their progress in learning English. For example, Deborah Short notes that there are not yet any long term evaluations to consider comparative advantages and disadvantages of the approaches used by newcomer schools. But some school districts have adjusted their accountability databases to track the progress of their newcomer students and follow their educational attainment after they have made the transition to the regular high school program.

Communities with large numbers of immigrant and LEP children often face a mismatch between the needs of immigrant middle and high school students and the limited resources available to serve them. Additional funding is needed, targeted to immigrant students in nontraditional resettlement areas. Funding is particularly important for immigrant children arriving in their teen years and for high schools that serve LEP populations with low literacy. Schools are challenged by the low academic achievement and school completion rates of some immigrant students, but there is an extremely limited knowledge base on how to best educate LEP and immigrant students. In addition, families with mixed immigration status (some legal, some refugee, some unauthorized) complicates family well-being and may interfere with the development of positive interactions with school administrators and

teachers. Demonstration projects focused on these populations, with strong evaluation components, could be useful in identifying promising practices and help policymakers concerned with helping these students succeed.²³

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