

English As a Second Language (ESL)

Evaluation Report

February 1999

MONITORING AND EVALUATION SERVICES

INFORMATION
FOR



DECISION-MAKING

ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report on the English as a Second Language program in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) provides descriptive information about the program, teachers, and students. Data were obtained through surveys, classroom observations, and face-to-face interviews. The following summarizes the major findings of the study:

- 1) Some ambiguity now exists in the goal statement relative to content area skills. In part this is a consequence of increased measures of accountability under the Standards of Learning.
- 2) Limited English Proficient (LEP) students enrolled in the ACPS represent 66 countries and speak 45 languages. Spanish speaking students make up the majority (63%) of the LEP population. Thirty-seven percent of the LEP students are born in the United States.
- 3) The highest percentage of LEP students in the ACPS are enrolled in the primary grades. Mt. Vernon Elementary serves the highest percentage of LEP students enrolled in the elementary grades and Francis C. Hammond Middle Schools serves the highest secondary percentage.
- 4) The tested LEP students perform much lower than the division average on the three major standardized tests the division administers (Stanford 9, Literacy Passport, and the ACPS Criterion-Referenced Tests). Some LEP students, because of failing to pass the Literacy Passport Tests, did not receive a regular high school diploma.
- 5) Even though parents of LEP students have high educational expectations for their children, many do not speak English well enough to help or to participate in school activities. This places a greater burden on the schools and the community.
- 6) The current structure of the ESL program is a five-level model. Clear and specific placement/exit criteria seem to be lacking. The program delivery model of sheltered instruction and pull-out instruction needs to be examined for timeliness and appropriateness. Given the increasing number of LEP students being served in the ACPS, the current method of instruction may be hampered by the setting for such learning.
- 7) There is some variation in resource allocation across schools. Some schools reported not having enough teachers, instructional time, and instructional materials for students. According to ESL teachers, the ESL program is a low priority to the system.
- 8) The ESL program relies on funds from external sources to maintain existing services. Some of the external funds provide for instructional personnel, textbooks, and materials to promote the education of LEP students.
- 8) The ESL center should play a more active role in teachers' professional development, recruitment, establishment of ESL curricula, as well as in developing exit-placement criteria. There is a felt need for professional development opportunities for ESL teachers.
- 9) Most ESL teachers are well prepared for their classes and employ innovative methods. The quality of instruction, however, varies across the division.

The report concludes with twenty-two recommendations covering the ESL program goals, organization, resources, and overall effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

As the nation's population of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) increases and becomes more diversified, schools and teachers face great challenges. Yet, it is the responsibility of schools to offer high-quality instruction to LEP students, and to provide them an educational setting to meet their special needs (Code of Virginia, 22.1-212.1). Those students who do not understand English are certain to be excluded from meaningful educational activities in the regular classroom.

In a landmark case, *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the Supreme Court ruled that schools must provide students who speak and write little English an education that meets their language needs. School districts must take steps to overcome educational barriers faced by non-English speakers. However, the Court did not spell out how to do this. Schools across the country have developed different programs, such as bilingual, immersion, and English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs, to meet the needs of LEP students.

Before LEP students can be served by a school system, they must first be identified. The federal definition of limited English proficiency refers to an individual who "was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant . . ." or "who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individuals the opportunity to learn" (Title VII. Sec 7501.8).

Many states define LEP based on a combination of a non-English language background, and/or difficulty with speaking, reading, writing and understanding English. They also use a home language survey to identify LEP students. Other factors used by states to identify LEP students include grade reports, native language proficiency assessment, referral, norm-referenced test and criterion-referenced test scores. The subjective criteria used by many states include teacher observations and parental information. Many states use multiple criteria to identify LEP students (Macias and Kelly, 1996).

In this report, the term "LEP students" refers to those students who were not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English or who have sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language. Students enrolled in the ACPS and receiving services from the English as a Second Language (ESL) program are referred to as ESL students. The common criteria used to determine if limited English proficient students require ESL services are the home language survey, parent information, referral, mathematics tests, Language Assessment Scales (a norm-referenced test in English language), writing in native language and report cards.

Many LEP students are poor. Some have suffered the traumas of war, economic or political deprivation, and all of them must learn a new language and the customs of a new country. Compared to early European immigrants, the newcomers are from more diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

LEP students often have difficulty understanding school curricula without additional assistance. Many immigrant children are concentrated in a few large cities (New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, and the surrounding area of Washington, D.C.). In Northern Virginia, Alexandria City, and Arlington and Fairfax counties have large numbers of LEP students.

Background on the Education of Limited English Proficient Students

Native Language and Second Language Acquisition

A large body of research indicates that cognitive and academic development in a native language has positive effects on second language learning. Cognitive academic skills can be transferred across languages. When students are well educated in their native language, they can develop a linguistic proficiency strongly related to development in their English proficiency. However, if a certain literacy "threshold" is not reached in the first language, students may experience academic difficulties in their second language.

It is recommended that parents should interact with their children in the language with which they are most familiar to help students develop cognitive skills (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1991; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Native language development is essential to academic achievement in English. LEP students entering schools with higher levels of academic and cognitive skills in their first language obtain the greatest gain, but they still may need 5-7 years to compete on an equal footing with native-English speaking students (Collier, 1994). Those without native language proficiency have limited cognitive skills to transfer to English learning and they are at a severe disadvantage.

In many American educational studies, a family's social-economic-status (SES) is one of the most important variables in students' academic performance. More recent studies on LEP students show students' previous educational background being more important than family SES in LEP student achievement. Immigrant children, from countries where they have experienced war or a disrupted education, are in most need of instructional and emotional support in order to make up for their missed education.

Some LEP students come from countries which stress an authoritarian style within a school. For children who used to play a subordinate role, entering into a setting where there is a degree of academic and physical freedom can create confusion. In some countries, students were exposed to fairly standardized curricula nationwide and uniformity in pedagogy. To them, the variety of options available in most American school systems seems puzzling. If their previous school experiences emphasize memorization of information, students may feel uncomfortable in a classroom which emphasizes problem-solving or open-ended activities.

It is a great challenge to teach academic subjects to LEP students with limited academic preparation. Students of all ages and from all language groups can face this problem. However, the issue is most pronounced among older children from war-torn areas who are of junior high to high school ages.

Age and Second Language Learning

LEP students need to learn science, mathematics, social sciences and other subjects in addition to English, so as not to fall far behind their English-speaking peers in these content areas. Language instruction should be integrated with content instruction, which provides motivation and a cognitive basis, makes language learning meaningful, and promotes critical thinking skills.

With the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment in place, content instruction will play a more important role for LEP students. On one hand, they have to learn to use English as a social or educational tool. On the other, they have to master the content of school curricula in a language they have not yet mastered. Teachers face the same challenge, namely, how to teach the English language and how to teach subject curricula through English which LEP students may not fully understand.

According to the Bilingual Educational Curriculum, as long as first language cognitive development is continued through age 12 (the age by which first language acquisition is largely achieved), it does not make much difference in long-term academic achievement when one starts to learn a second language. “Older children (ages 8-12) who have had several years of first language schooling are the most efficient acquirers of second language cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). When childrens’ first language development is discontinued before it is completed, they may experience negative cognitive effects in their development of a second language.

Comparative research indicates that many students who lack proficiency in their first language are at great risk. They must not only cope with discontinuity or conflicts between home and school cultures, with a curriculum for which they are unprepared, and with many problems their families face while striving to survive, but also cope with prejudice.

Many ACPS elementary ESL students were born in the United States. In some cases, they live in an environment with limited opportunities to develop language proficiency in their first language. They are at a greater disadvantage when they attempt to learn a second language. Many Spanish-speaking U.S.-born elementary students in the ACPS fall into this group. The same is true for students whose education is disrupted before they fully develop cognitive academic language proficiency in their first language. High school ESL students are also a high-risk group because they have limited time to catch up before graduation.

To learn a second language such as English, a student needs to be actively engaged in meaningful interaction with proficient speakers of English. Meaningful and authentic interaction can assist language development. It is essential to have native English speakers working together with ESL students in a setting that encourages natural and meaningful interaction. Such interaction helps students to stretch beyond their own limits. Frequent and meaningful interaction is a key component in the language learning process (Wong Fillmore, 1991). A student should be an active party in acquiring a second language.

Culture can offer another powerful explanation of difference between LEP student groups. Different groups perceive the world from very different perspectives. Culture is defined as the tradition, language, and daily experiences at the home or in the community, through which members of a group create shared meanings. Some classroom teachers fail to consider the extent to which second language learning is influenced by the beliefs and practice of a student’s native culture. Research suggests that when language learners are not alienated from their own cultural values, their experiences with failure are not as damaging (Cummins, 1991).

Cultural differences can present challenges as well as opportunities for schools. To maximize learning opportunities, school staff should gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their schools. Thus,

teachers working with children and families who live outside the mainstream of American life need to recognize these differences and respond to them appropriately. Behavior that may appear eccentric or judged negatively in one culture may be appropriate in another. Lacking sensitivity to cultural difference, teachers may misinterpret the behaviors of LEP students (Browman, 1992).

Sometimes, when a child's social, cultural and linguistic background is different from what is expected in school, they may be considered "deficient or deviant." Studies in brain physiology support the notion of downshifting: when a learner feels threatened and stressed, it becomes difficult for them to process information. Therefore, the affective domain should be incorporated in teachers' strategies in helping LEP students. The ESL classes should provide a forum for students to make mistakes in usage and pronunciation that they might be unwilling to make in a regular classroom. Because of their ability in English, many ESL students show fear or embarrassment when interacting with native English speakers. Language is best learned in a non-anxious environment.

Academic Achievement of LEP Students

Academic achievement in a second language is related to several factors: students' length of residence in the new country, their age upon arrival, and the command of their first language as well as other factors common to all students. A synthesis of published research (Collier, 1987) provides four generalizations on academic achievement in a second language:

1. Immigrants arriving at ages 8 to 12, with at least 2 years of the first language in their home country, take 5 to 7 years to reach the level of average performance by native speakers on the second language standardized tests in reading, social studies, and science when they are schooled exclusively in the secondary language after arrival in the host country. Their performance may reach national norms in as little as 2 years in mathematics .
2. Young arrivals with no schooling in their first language in either their home countries or the host country may take ever longer to reach the level of average performance by native speakers on second language standardized tests; possibly as long as 7 to 10 years in reading, social sciences, and sciences .
3. Adolescents who arrive with no second language exposure and who are not able to continue academic work in their first language while they are acquiring their second language do not have enough time left in high school to make up the lost years of academic instruction. Without special assistance, these students may never reach the 50th NCE (normal curve equivalents) or may drop out before completing high school. This is true for both adolescents with a good academic background and for those whose schooling has been limited or interrupted.
4. Consistent, uninterrupted cognitive academic development in all subjects throughout students' schooling is more important than the number of hours of second language instruction for successful academic achievement in a second language.

Assessment of LEP Students

The assessment of LEP students should include the following major components: identification, placement, diagnosis for programs such as special education, movement within the ESL program, and exit evaluation. Assessment instruments may take many forms and multiple forms of assessment are essential in evaluating ESL students' performance (e.g., students' portfolio, teacher-made assessment, criterion-referenced tests, and norm-referenced tests). It is inappropriate to use standardized test scores (such as percentile rank, NCE) as the only criteria for ESL level promotion and exit. According to Vecchio and Guerrero (1995), there are five commonly used and commercially available standardized English language proficiency tests.

1. Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL) by CHECpoint Systems, Inc. 1979
2. Bilingual Syntax Measure I and II (BSM) by Psychological Corporation 1975
3. Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) by Ballard and Tighe Publishers 1978
4. Language Assessment Scales (LAS) by CTB McMillan McGraw-Hill 1978
5. Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey by Riverside Publishing Co. 1993

In addition to interview and school transcripts, the ACPS uses Language Assessment Scales (LAS) for placement purposes. The LAS measures English proficiency of a second language learner, and compares him or her to a native-English speaker in the norming group. Based on the LAS technical manual, the oral measure must be individually administered, but reading and writing tests can be administered in groups. It is important that the LAS tests be administered in a quiet environment, otherwise the results may be invalid.

Many formal assessment measures, such as standardized tests, presuppose a certain level of English language proficiency and American cultural background. If used alone, they may not represent the true ability or progress of an ESL student's second language development. The Virginia State Assessment Program requires LEP students to take the Standards of Learning assessments. Only one exemption is permitted. Without the help in both content area and English, many LEP students may fail the state SOL tests and jeopardize their chance of obtaining high school diplomas.

Norm-referenced tests (e.g., Stanford Achievement Test Series, 9th Edition [Stanford 9]) measure a student against the norming group. The ESL students coming from different cultures, who have been residing in the U.S. for different periods of time, are usually not part of the norming group, at least not in sufficient number. For example, because of the exemption in the Stanford 9 available to LEP students, "there are no definitive national figures available for the number or percentage of students with disabilities or LEP students" (p. 27 of the Virginia State Assessment Program Preliminary Technical Data Report and Supplemental Data, Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement, 1996).

Because the majority of the test takers on Stanford 9 are native-English speakers, its validity is questionable when used with LEP students. Unfortunately very limited evidence addresses the validity of tests with LEP students. Educational measurement specialists are still struggling to develop valid instruments for LEP students.

Formal educational testing has assumed great importance because of practical policy questions facing educators. In some school systems, their LEP policies have led to the legal battles over the disproportionate numbers of LEP students placed in remedial educational classes. When assessing LEP students, performance-based measures, and teacher-created measures should be used in addition to standardized tests. In the ACPS, the Pre-LAS and LAS contribute to teacher observations and judgements about movement within the ESL program.

Purposes of the Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation Services initiated an evaluation study of the ESL program in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). The evaluation was conducted between April 1997 and March 1998. The evaluation is formative and provides descriptive information about the ESL program, ESL teachers, and ESL students. Issues and concerns of ESL teachers, students, and administrators in the ACPS are identified. Ultimately, the goal of the evaluation is to foster an ESL program of high-quality educational delivery for all students. The intended audience of the report includes school board members, administrators, and teachers. Administrators and policy makers can utilize information from the findings in their decision-making.

The following features serve as the foci for the evaluation: 1) philosophy and goals; 2) needs of LEP students 3) program structure and organization 4) program effectiveness.

Research Questions

1. What are the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the ESL program?
2. Who are the ESL students?
3. How is the ESL program (structure, personnel, resources, and costs) organized?
4. Is the ESL program meeting its stated goals?

METHODS

The context for the ESL evaluation was very rich. Descriptive demographic, financial, and achievement data were gathered from the Director of ESL; the Assistant Superintendent for Budget and Finance; Management Information Services; and Monitoring and Evaluation Services. Specific quantitative and qualitative data were collected from principals and teachers using two survey instruments. Qualitative data were gathered through classroom observation and face to face interviews of ESL students. Interview and observation data were analyzed for common themes and occurrences and will be reported in a like manner.

In October 1997, questionnaires were sent out to 13 principals in schools where ESL services were provided. By the end of November 1997, four follow-ups secured a 100% response rate. All schools provided their responses to the questionnaires and many made written comments. A copy of the questionnaire with descriptive statistics is attached as Appendix B and the written comments are provided in Appendix C.

The ESL teachers' questionnaire was first drafted based on related literature and informal comments from the Director of ESL and ESL teachers. Then initial drafts were reviewed by ESL center staff and teachers and their remarks were reflected in the final version of the questionnaire. The ESL center provided a complete mailing list of all ESL teachers. In May 1997, Monitoring and Evaluation Services sent out 46 cover letters and questionnaires. Two weeks after the initial mailing, 35 out of the 46 teachers had completed and returned the questionnaires (76% response rate). In June 1997, follow-up letters and the same questionnaires were mailed to the non-respondents. Five more teachers returned their questionnaires. As a result, 40 out of 46 teachers responded to the questionnaire with a response rate of 87%. One response was excluded from the quantitative analysis because the respondent was not an ESL teacher, but a department chair. However, the respondent's written comments were included in the report. A sample questionnaire with descriptive statistics is displayed in Appendix D.

During the summer of 1997, Monitoring and Evaluation Services staff conducted eleven exploratory visits to ESL classrooms in elementary and secondary schools. The visits aided in developing an ESL classroom observation checklist. Some ESL teachers were asked to critique an initial draft of the checklist. The summer observation data were not included in the observation summary due to its exploratory nature. At the beginning of November 1997, principals and ESL teachers were informed of the coming observations. After confirming class schedules with teachers, Monitoring and Evaluation Services staff observed 25 classrooms in 13 schools between October and December of 1997. Because of the time-consuming nature, not all ESL classes were visited. Classrooms were observed for one class period (30-50 minutes).

The classrooms were selected for observations through a two-stage sampling process. First, only schools with ESL programs were chosen. Lyles Crouch, George Mason and Maury elementary schools, and Secondary Training Education Program (S.T.E.P.) provided no ESL service in 1997-1998. Thus, these schools were excluded. Secondly, at least two ESL teachers were randomly selected in each school. If there was only one ESL teacher, he/she was chosen. For T. C. Williams and Hammond, three teachers were randomly selected due to their larger numbers of ESL teachers. A copy of the classroom

observation checklist is provided in Appendix F. After observation, teachers were interviewed and their comments reflected in the report without attribution.

To conclude the evaluation process, ESL students were interviewed. Initially, ESL teachers or department chairpersons were asked to provide the names of prospective secondary students as interview candidates, under the condition that the identified students can express themselves clearly in English. Teachers were asked to identify: 1) those who made rapid progress in the program; and 2) those who were struggling. By December, 1997, letters were sent to parents and students informing them of the study and asking their permission to participate in the interview.

Because many addresses were changed, one-third of 55 letters could not be delivered. To secure parental and student consent, students and parents were contacted by phone. Once permission was granted, Monitoring and Evaluation staff went to three secondary schools (Francis Hammond, Minnie Howard and T. C. Williams) and interviewed 15 ESL students between January and February 1998. Thanks to the help of teachers and school administrators, interviews were conducted in private rooms without disruption during school time. Students were told the purpose of the interview and assured confidentiality. Interviews were also taped with students' permission to make sure quotations were accurate. The interviewed students were a convenient sample who agreed to participate. The students' interview guide and their comments are included in Appendix G and Appendix H.

RESULTS

This section is divided into several parts, which will follow the order of the research questions. The four research questions cited earlier are to be examined individually. The major sources are the demographic and financial data, survey data collected from principals and teachers, and interview data gathered from face to face meetings with the program recipients, the ESL students. Descriptive statistics are presented for quantitative data and comments will be aggregated according to themes. To safeguard confidentiality, identifiable information such as names of schools, teachers, and students are omitted intentionally.

1. What are the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the ESL program?

The philosophy, goals, and objectives of the English as a Second Language Program in the ACPS are stated in the division 1997 Report: English As a Second Language document provided to Monitoring and Evaluation by the Director of the ESL program, Carol Lisi. The document was prepared by the ESL Center for the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. John Grymes. For this evaluation, the philosophy, goals, and objectives appear below as quoted from the 1997 report:

The goal of the English as a Second Language Program is to help students develop as quickly as possible the English language and content area skills that are prerequisite to successful transition to mainstream classes. The goals of reading and writing instruction as well as content-based language instruction is development of cognitive academic language proficiency so that the students may be successful in mainstream classes.

The realization of that goal is based on a cluster of components. All of the components are essential to maintaining the integrity of the levels at secondary and middle school, and to ensuring that all children acquire English as quickly as possible. The program recognizes that oral proficiency is not a sufficient predictor of success in school. Students must be able to read and write and must acquire the school language necessary to be successful in the mainstream classroom.

At all grade levels there is an emphasis on an intensive English program for beginners so that they can quickly begin to take part in the mainstream curriculum. As soon as possible, to the extent possible, they should be interacting with native English speakers.

It is apparent from the report that the goal of the ESL program is to help students achieve a level of English proficiency with sufficient content area skills to be successful in the mainstream curriculum as quickly as possible. The nature of the program and how that is achieved is detailed in a later section of this report.

Table 1 summarizes principals' opinion about the roles of the ESL center. As shown in the table, the most popular response was in setting criteria for placement and exit of students. The evaluation of ESL teachers was least favored as a role of the ESL center (39%) and hiring was second least (46%) with fewer than half of the respondents believing the center should be involved. Most principals thought the

ESL center should play a role in establishing curriculum guidelines, providing staff professional development, and monitoring students' progress. Some principals stated:

It has been frustrating not having a large enough candidate pool from which to choose. Heavy recruitment efforts are needed to attract trained ESL teachers.

[The] ESL center can facilitate initial screening for competence and skill preparation when hiring ESL teachers.

TABLE 1
Alexandria City Public Schools
Principals' Opinion on the ESL Center's Role

The ESL Center should play a role in . . .	YES
Establishing curriculum guidelines	69%
Setting criteria for placement and exit of students	85%
ESL teachers' professional development	77%
Providing information about ESL teaching methods	77%
Evaluating ESL teachers	39%
Keeping track of ESL students' progress	77%
Hiring ESL teachers	46%

Many teachers agreed that the major goals of the ESL program were to mainstream students as soon as possible, help them develop their potentials, learn basic academic and social skills to succeed in the regular classroom and the society. The following were some comments from the ESL teachers on program goals:

Prepare students for mainstream classes. Current mission is on target. Help students mainstream as soon (quickly) as possible and develop the basic skills in regular classroom.

Students learn how to become independent learners. Teach high order thinking skills. Should teach basic interpersonal communication skills, academic proficiency skills.

2. Who Are the ESL Students?

LEP students are usually children of immigrants who have come to the United States for various personal, political, and economic reasons. Some children arrived with their parents, and others entered the U.S. years after their parents' arrival. Often, they are students who confront various social and emotional challenges, as well as academic challenges, resulting from their LEP status. They generally perform lower than their age/grade peers who are not limited in their ability to speak English proficiently.

In general, the LEP population in the ACPS is a heterogeneous group representing 66 countries and speaking 45 languages. Spanish-speaking students make up the majority (63%) of LEP population. English as a Second Language (ESL) students are students of Limited English Proficiency (LEP). In 1997-98, 37% of LEP students were born in the United States and became American citizens by birth. In the division, Mt. Vernon has the highest percentage of LEP students of elementary schools as well as the highest percentage in the division, while Francis C. Hammond Middle School has the highest secondary school percentage (13%). The division's high school, T. C. Williams, has a total of 212 LEP students (11%).

This section presents a profile of LEP students in the ACPS. National origin and immigration, school attendance, factors affecting the education of LEP students, and academic achievement will be discussed.

National Origin and Immigration

Each year, the ACPS completes the Student Language Identification and Funding Survey. The survey is filled out by parents or staff in the ESL Center during student registration. Figures 1-4 present the profile of LEP students based on results of the survey since 1980. In Alexandria, the LEP student population has increased 2.5 times in 17 years.

As shown Figure 1 (page 14), there were 519 LEP students in 1980 compared to 1,289 in 1997. In 1980, there were no U.S.-born LEP students in the ACPS, but by 1997, the number had increased to 477 (37% of the total LEP population). All U.S.-born LEP students were attending elementary schools in 1997. Even though these LEP students were American citizens by birth, their parents came here during the past immigration waves. The dramatic increase of U.S.-born LEP students occurred in the past five years.

Figure 2 (page 14), indicates that about two-thirds of LEP students (n=802) were in elementary schools in 1997 and the remaining one-third were in secondary schools.

Figure 3, page 15, presents the number of countries and languages of LEP students in the past 17 years. In 1997, LEP students spoke 45 languages at home and represented 66 countries in the world. In 1997, LEP students came from more diversified language and cultural backgrounds than 17 years ago.

Figure 4, page 15, shows that since 1985, the majority of LEP students had spoken Spanish. In 1997, 63% of LEP students spoke Spanish.

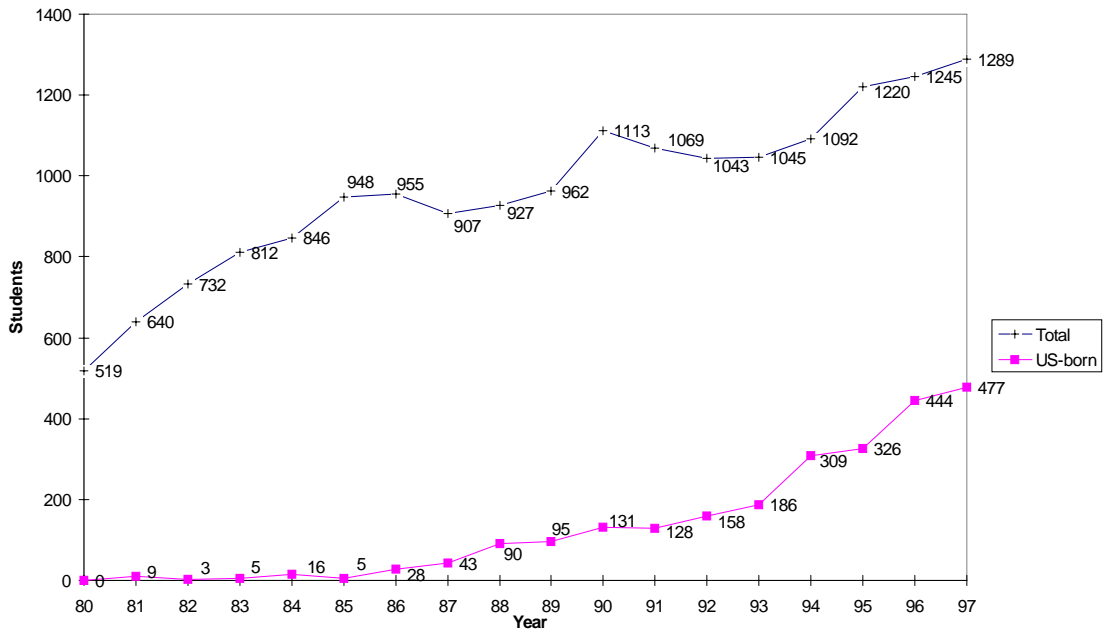


Figure 1. Total number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and US-born LEP students in Alexandria City Public Schools (1980-1997)

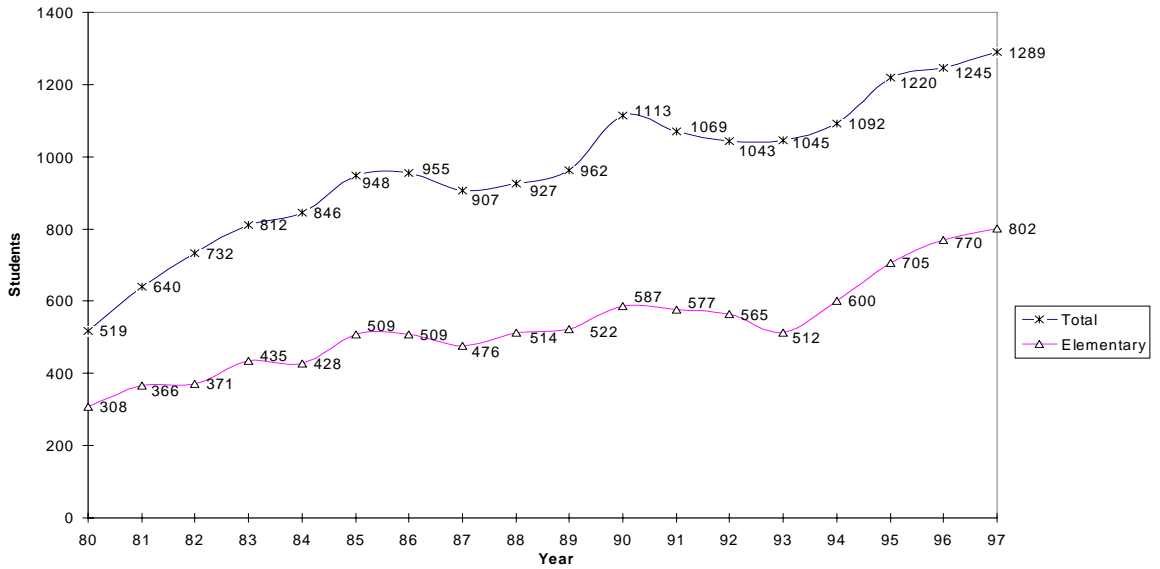


Figure 2. Numbers of total and elementary LEP students in Alexandria City Public Schools (1980-1997)

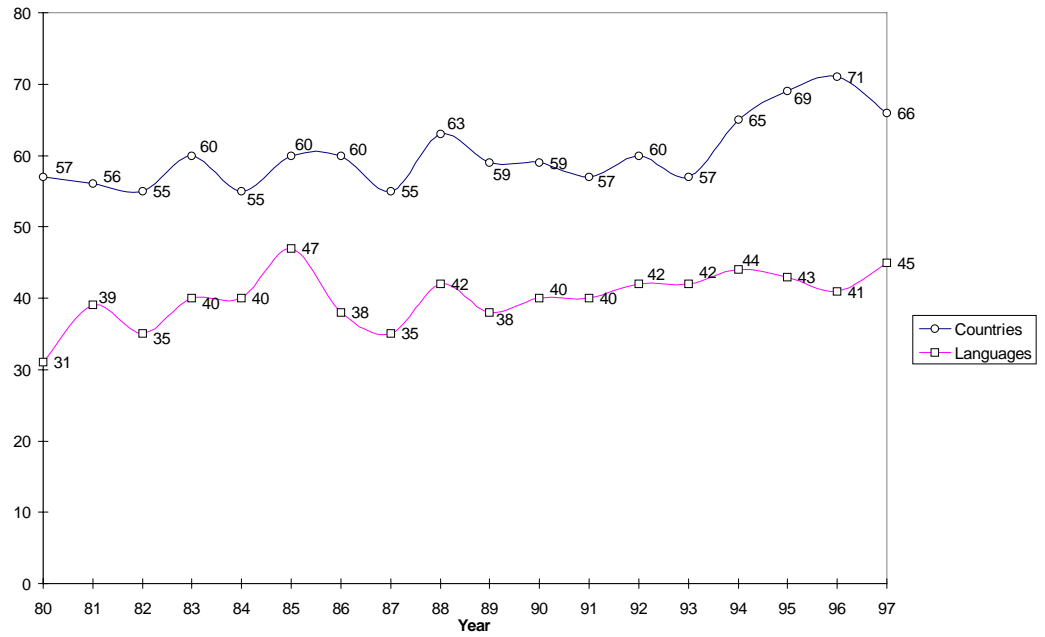


Figure 3. Countries and languages represented by LEP students in Alexandria City Public Schools (1980-1997)

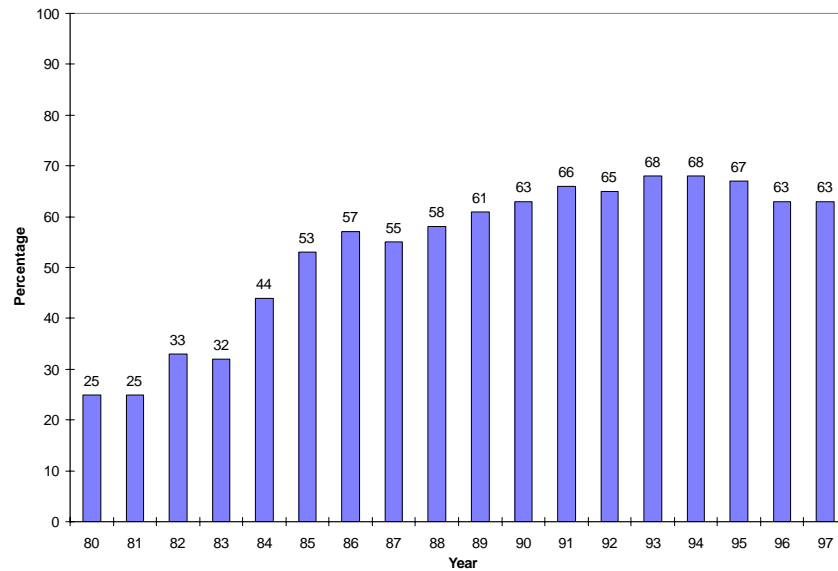


Figure 4. Percentage of LEP students speaking Spanish in Alexandria City Public Schools (1980-1997)

School Attendance

Table 2 (page 17) displays 1997 LEP student membership in each grade and school at the end of September, 1997. More LEP students attended T. C. Williams (n=212) than other ACPS schools. Kindergarten, however, has the largest number of LEP students enrolled in a single grade (n=285), followed by the first grade (n=192) and the 10th grade (n=106). Among all ACPS students, 12% were LEP students.

Table 3 (page 18), shows the percentages of LEP students in each elementary school. Percentages ranged from 0% in Lyles-Crouch to 28% in Mt. Vernon. In secondary schools, LEP student population extended from 0% in S.T.E.P. to 13% in Hammond. No ESL service was provided at Lyles-Crouch, George Mason, Maury, and S.T.E.P. as in December 1997.

TABLE 2
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Membership of Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students
 By School and By Grade (1997-1998)

School	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
John Adams	18	22	9	6	9	6								70
Charles Barrett	7	4	10	5	4	2								32
Patrick Henry	26	14	6	10	3	5								64
Jefferson-Houston	31	27	15	14	13	13								113
Cora Kelly	22	13	4	6	4	4								53
Lyles-Crouch				0	0	0								0
Douglas MacArthur	18	1	3	0	0	0								22
George Mason	0	2	0	2	0	0								4
Maury	3	5	1											9
Mount Vernon	79	66	25	12	11	9								202
James Polk	43	22	13	11	8	7								104
William Ramsay	38	16	18	14	29	14								129
George Washington							15	16	16					47
Francis Hammond							57	56	39					152
T. C. Williams											106	84	22	212
M. Howard										76				76
Division N	285	192	104	80	81	60	72	72	55	76	106	84	22	1289
% of total Enrollment	27	17	11	11	10	8	10	10	8	11	14	13	4	12

TABLE 3
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Number and Percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP)
 Students in ESL Program (1997-1998)

Schools	LEP Students	Total Students	% LEP
John Adams	70	567	12%
Charles Barrett	32	297	11%
Patrick Henry	64	454	14%
Jefferson-Houston	113	537	21%
Cora Kelly	53	610	9%
Lyles-Crouch	0	212	0%
Douglas MacArthur	22	444	5%
George Mason	4	277	1%
Maury	9	304	3%
Mount Vernon	202	728	28%
James Polk	104	562	19%
William Ramsay	129	644	20%
Elementary Total	802	5636	14%
George Washington	47	1036	5%
Francis Hammond	152	1149	13%
S. T. E. P	0	109	0%
T. C. Williams	212	1884	11%
Minnie Howard	76	674	11%
Secondary Total	487	4852	10%
Division	1289	10488	12%

Factors Affecting the Education of LEP Students

Between January and February of 1998, 15 students from T. C. Williams, Francis Hammond, and Minnie Howard were interviewed. They came from ten countries: Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Philippines, Peru, Sierra Leone, and Somalia. They comprised the sample of students who agreed to be interviewed after some preselected students could not be reached. The interviews were conducted during school time and recorded with permission. A copy of student interview guide is attached as Appendix G.

At the time of their interviews, some students had already exited the ESL programs after only one year in the program. Others were still in the program after 4-5 years. Some came from families in war-torn countries, and others from the elite groups, whose parents were diplomats or other professionals. One student interviewed had never been to school before, while others had a solid education in their home countries.

Table 4, below, provides some information about the students interviewed in terms of their grade level, gender, and progress in the ESL program. Students in this group provided the remarks used as qualitative data in the evaluation. Of the 15 students in grades 8-12, eight were identified by their teachers as students who were more successful, while seven were less successful and had made limited progress in the ESL program. Only illustrative statements are quoted in this section and the rest can be found in Appendix H

TABLE 4
Alexandria City Public Schools
Number of Secondary School Students Interviewed for the ESL Evaluation

Grade	Male	Female	Limited Progress	Rapid Progress	Total Number
8	1	1	1	1	2
9	1	3	1	3	4
10		1		1	1
11	1	1	1	1	2
12	5	1	4	2	6
Total number	8	7	7	8	15

Student interview data reveal four factors that have been identified by LEP students as having a bearing on their education. They are: dual frame of reference; serial immigration; family mobility; and family involvement. The themes are supported by research on the education of LEP students.

Dual Frame of Reference.

The first factor cited by those students interviewed, as affecting the education of the LEP child, is a dual frame of reference. Immigrant children and their families often use a dual frame of reference when evaluating their ongoing experience in the U.S. Students judge their lives here by comparing with those

in their native countries. Many enjoy their freedom and opportunities in the United States, however, the dual frame of reference can be a driving force behind their motivation to move upward on the American social ladder. This they believe, can be accomplished through education and hard work.

Compared with their native countries, many believed life and education in the U.S. were better and more affordable. Many interviewed students believed they had more opportunities for education and career choice in the United States. For students from the third world countries, where K-12 education was not universal and designed for elite groups, they had to pay for tuition and pass more vigorous exams at each grade level.

You have freedom here. You don't worry about your life. In my country, there are wars going on. You see lot of fighting. Here life is normal. Life here is the best of the best.

To students from high socio-economic backgrounds who usually enjoyed a more favorable educational environment in their native countries, life was not as favorable. One senior said:

It is pretty boring. There is not enough information. Information they gave us here as seniors or juniors is not enough for our levels. A senior should have known more in terms of literature, history and so on.

All interviewed students were motivated to learn the English language for their future opportunities. This was true even for students who were here for a short period of time with their families serving as foreign diplomats. A senior from family in diplomatic service wanted to learn English well so she could work in foreign affairs back in her native country. An El Salvador student whose mother worked as a maid said:

She (mother) told us she was pride of us. Now we are speaking English, this is something that will help us find a good job.

Immigration has an important impact on an individual's self identity. Immigrant children often feel the loss of homeland, loss of significant others and uncertainty in a receiving country. Adolescence is usually a turbulent period (Erikson, 1968). Immigrant teenagers have an even more difficult time trying to forge a cultural identity racially dissonant from their own. During the process, they are likely to regard themselves as marginalized, alienated and uprooted individuals torn between conflicting values. "The underlying consensus is that arriving to settle in another culture can have negative implications for both an individual's sense and the way in which one understands and relates to others" (Collier and Magnuson, 1997, p.114). Children are often torn by the conflicts between their home culture and American culture. A student from China explained why she did not like asking questions in class.

I used to be afraid of asking questions. I thought you were not supposed to ask teachers questions, because in China, teachers used to tell you what to do. It is even more impolite to challenge your teachers.

An Ethiopian student hoped to be a basketball player, but his mother wanted him to be a technician and concentrate on books. He decided to accept her choice.

In African, it doesn't matter what's your age. Even if you're a grown man, your parents are supposed to choose for you. Here in the United states, when you're 18, you can do whatever you feel like. I still follow my country's culture.

All the interviewed students spoke their native languages at home. Sometimes, they used their first language to understand English. Some parents helped them in their school work through translation. Those with a solid first language education benefitted through translation, especially when the English concepts were already familiar to them. Students indicated that translation assisted their understanding in English. One student said:

So if I don't understand something, my dad explains to me in Chinese and my mom explains in English. I got the benefit of both languages.

An El Salvadorian student also reported such transfer of cognitive skills.

I speak Spanish at home. If I don't understand something in English, my friends explain to me in Spanish. It helps me because sometime we know the idea in Spanish, but don't know how to express it in English.

However, some students believed they could learn much faster if they had to express themselves in English most of the time. A student from a country where nobody in the school spoke her language exited the ESL program in a year. She made the following remarks:

I moved from Beginner level all the way to regular English classes within one year. I think for people who don't speak Spanish, they can move fast. Because when I first started here, I was shocked to see that those people have lived in the United States for six years and still in the lower levels of ESL. There are so many people surrounding them speaking Spanish. I don't think it is good for you to learn English. In one of my classes, 13 students spoke Spanish. If there were 13 students spoke my language in my class, I bet I couldn't speak English now. Speaking a minority language helps you a lot. It allows you to express whatever you want to say in English. When nobody understands your language, you have no way to say what you want unless you speak English.

Another student who learned to speak English fluently within one year reflected on what helped her:

When I have nobody to speak English, I practice English in front of the mirror at home. It seems funny but it works for me.

An European student took her teacher's advice and surrounded herself with English.

As my ESL teacher suggested TV should be on 24 hours a day. You may not watch it, you may not see what is going on. But the background of English surrounding you is a very good idea. I don't watch TV a lot, but listening to it helps a lot.

A Spanish speaking girl wanted to practice English as much as possible. But when she tried to speak English, she was pressured not to do so by her Spanish-speaking friends.

We have a lot of people speaking Spanish. In my class, students always speak Spanish. When I want to speak in English, my friends said, "No, no, let's speak Spanish. That is our language. We are not Americans. We should speak Spanish, not English." But I like to speak English. That's what we are here for.

Student remarks on the use of first language reflected some teachers' beliefs that speaking a minority language forced a person to express themselves in English. A student's first language can be useful to facilitate English acquisition where used properly, but high exposure to English may be one key to rapid progress.

Serial Immigration.

The second factor affecting the education of some LEP students is the phenomenon known as serial immigration. Americans often imagine the immigration of a family as mom, dad, children arriving simultaneously on United States soil. Sometimes, what occurs is serial migration (Booth, Crouter and Landale, 1997). Many families migrate sequentially. Often one parent comes first, then sends for the spouse or children later. Often this occurs when he/she has become established enough to support a family or when sudden unexpected events such as wars happen.

The process can take longer than a decade. Children are usually left behind with relatives. Serial immigration and intentional child fostering can lead to a situation in which the biological parent is not the primary caretaker in their children's early childhood. The reunion with parents may mean separation from their primary caretakers, and require living with parents they have not seen for years.

Serial immigration is a common and very stressful experience for all interviewed students, including those from high SES backgrounds. For the students, the immigration process involves departure from their country of origin, leaving behind the culture they were familiar with, separation from families or friends, and adjustment in a new country. Parents usually came to the U.S. without their children, leaving them behind with relatives. Because petition for relative immigration took years or even decades, many students did not see their parents for a long time. For some, the family reunion took almost 20 years.

My father came here long ago. My mother came in 1981. When she left, I was living with my mother's sister in El Salvador. Actually, I grew up with her. I call her mother. She is like a

mom to me. I came here by myself six years ago. My aunt is still there. I miss her. My mother doesn't speak English. She works from 9:00 to 9:00 cleaning the bathroom.

Another senior recounted how his family came one after another. His older brother came to the states first about 10 years ago. Then he and his mother came three years ago, followed by his father's arrival last year. When they met for the first time, brothers could not recognize each other. Another El Salvador student from an illiterate family background described how the family serial immigration process lasted 10 years. In addition to separation, some students witnessed war and destruction in their native countries.

A few years ago, when Liberia tried to take over Sierra Leone, there was a war in my country, a lot of fighting. Buildings broke down. The building next to us were destroyed. Nothing left. So mother sent for me and my sister.

The repeated separation from their loved ones and the loss of significant others may create great stress or emotional disturbance for students. The long absence of parents from a child's life can also sabotage parental authority after reunion. These students not only have to study a new language, but also have to make psychological and cultural adjustments in the new land.

Students can arrive at any time of the school year. This phenomenon leads to a third factor which affects the education of LEP children: the family and parental expectation. Interviews with the ESL students reflect a consistent pattern in parental expectation for their children's education in the ACPS.

Family and Parental Expectation.

Despite their own occupation and education, immigrant parents have high expectations for their children. Fourteen out of the 15 interviewed students said that their parents wanted them to get a college education. Only one student said his parents wanted him to finish high school and get a vocational training as a computer programmer. Even those parents without schooling encouraged their children to pursue careers of high social status, such as computer programmer, designers, dentists, doctors and engineers. Most of the students were planning to go to higher education in the future even though some were still struggling to meet graduation requirements. They believed education could provide them the leverage to compete and survive on the land they called their second home.

However, none of the six graduating seniors applied for four-year universities. All cited lack of English proficiency as the major barrier for them to get into college, including students who already exited the ESL program at the time of the interviews. Most of them planned to go to Northern Virginia Community College.

Parents with higher education or speaking fluent English provide their children a more favorable educational environment. A student who moved from beginner level to advanced level within one year explained how her family helped her in the process.

My biological mother is a math teacher. My father has a master degree in electronics. He is a manager of Radio Shack. My biological parents are divorced. My stepmother is an American. She had her Ph.D. from UVA (University of Virginia). She is a good mom. She is a teacher in a middle school. She teaches me a lot of stuff I should have known long ago. She tried to find every opportunity for me to go in and touch the American society. That is why I went to three summer camps (academic, basketball and sailing) last year. My parents take me to places like museum and help me to learn the American culture.

Most students were not so lucky. Their families struggled to survive and their parents did not speak fluent English. Even though many families regarded education as important, few had the resources and skills to help their children in schools. Many times, the parent who spoke English well (usually father) was the breadwinner in the family. The caretaker (usually mother) who stayed at home with children spoke little English. For non-English speaking parents, all they could do was to encourage their children to study. A twelfth grade student from Somalia who went to the ninth grade in America without any previous schooling said:

I never went to school before, period. I went to school for the first time in my life here in the ninth grade. My mother never goes to school so she does not know anything about school. My father did not send us to school because he wanted us to learn English, not Somali. Then war broke out and I could not go to school. My parents do not speak much English. They can't help me with my work. They don't have any clue. They just encourage me to sit there and study. If my dad doesn't see me sitting at the table studying, he will ask me to sit down and study.

Some secondary students had to shoulder the responsibility of supporting their family because of economic hardship. One senior told the interviewer:

I don't want to be in school anymore. It is too hard to work and go to school at the same time. I don't have time for homework. I have to support myself. My parents can't support me. We have five people in the house. I have to earn money to buy things like clothes for myself. I also help to pay for rent and food. I have been supporting myself and my family since I came here at the age of 16.

A student from Ethiopia explained why his parents could not come for school activities.

My father works in the parking lot. Both of my parents graduated from college in Ethiopia. My father speaks a little English. My father has to work until 11:00 (PM). So he cannot come to school. My mother does not know where my school is. She only speaks little English. She is afraid to come to school.

Another eleventh grade student from El Salvador quoted a similar explanation for non-parental involvement in school.

No, they can't help me. They don't speak English. They work hard, they can not come to school because they do not speak English. But they often check to see if I finish my work. They told me to study hard. I wish they understand English so they can help me.

Academic Performance of ESL Students in the ACPS.

There are unique problems faced by many parents of ESL students. Despite their initial social-economic status in their native countries, many are facing similar problems which make them reluctant to participate in school activities: 1) speak no English; 2) unfamiliarity of the American educational system; and 3) economic hardship.

LEP students perform much lower than non LEP students in the division. Their lower performance prevents some of them from receiving a regular high school diploma. The results from standardized tests reveal the deficit confronted by LEP students.

Four standardized tests are administered to students in the course of the school year: The Literacy Passport Test; Standards of Learning Tests; Stanford 9 Achievement Test; Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT). Each of these assessments is administered to students at different grade levels. The ACPS students in grades one, two, four and seven are administered the ACPS criterion-referenced tests. The Stanford 9 now administered to students in grades four, six, and nine, was administered to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven in 1997. Literacy Passport Tests were administered to students in grade six and those above grade six who had not yet passed.

In this section, LEP students' performance on 1997 Spring Stanford 9, Literacy Passport Tests (LPT), and Alexandria Criterion-Referenced Tests, will be examined. As of this evaluation, student scores on the Standards of Learning Assessments were not available from the state. Tests were administered in accordance with state and local guidelines. It is important to remember that many LEP students are exempted from standardized tests because of their English proficiency. LEP students who take various standardized tests usually have higher English levels than those who are exempted.

In Literacy Passport Testing, LEP students may be exempt from testing for up to three years after entering a Virginia public school before facing penalties. They are required to pass all three literacy tests in order to earn their regular or advanced high school diplomas. In the Virginia State Assessment Program (VSAP), which includes the Stanford 9 Achievement test, it is expected that all students who are in grades 4, 6, and 9 are to be tested. For the Standard of Learning assessments (SOL) which are not part of this analysis, LEP students can get a one-time exemption. This expectation includes LEP students at these grade levels unless participation is clearly not in the best interest of the students.

In some cases, it may be determined that participating in the VSAP is inappropriate for the student. The scores of LEP students taking norm-referenced tests under standard conditions may be depressed since LEP students were not included as an identified group in the sample of students on which the tests were normed. According to the guidelines for administering the CRT, a LEP student can be exempted from

a test if the student is presently enrolled in the ESL program or teachers believe the student does not possess the English proficiency to take the test.

Table 5, page 27, shows the same pattern for LEP students' performance on Stanford 9 administered in Spring 1997. For instance, at grade three, only 14 LEP students were tested with a national percentile score of 12 in total reading, compared to a national percentile of 53 for the division average. This means if an average ACPS third grader performed better than 53% of the students in the national norming group, an average ACPS third grade LEP student performed only better than 12% of the national group.

Generally the division national percentile scores were much higher than those for LEP students across subscores. Some exceptions occurred in fifth grade total language and total math as well as eleventh grade total math. The differences in percentile scores between division means and LEP means were smaller in grade five. However, only eight students took the Stanford 9 tests at grade 5. Therefore, their mean was not reliable due to the small number. The largest differences occurred in total reading scores. Clearly LEP students performed much lower than their native-English speaking peers on the Stanford 9, a norm-referenced test.

TABLE 5
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 National Percentile Scores for Limited English Proficient Students on Stanford 9

	# Tested	Reading Total	Reading Vocab	Reading Comp	Total Lang	Total Math	Science	Social Science	Total Battery
Grade 3									
LEP	14	12	15	16	16	22	23	19	20
Division	666	53	54	53	53	50	55	50	54
Grade 5									
LEP	8	44	50	45	52	54	45	50	50
Division	598	58	59	55	51	54	50	56	55
Grade 8									
LEP	50	17	19	17	11	22	24	21	21
Division	612	52	50	51	45	48	54	56	52
Grade 11									
LEP	23	8	11	10	13	54	29	32	22
Division	488	44	51	42	48	47	48	59	51

Source: 1997 Spring Stanford 9 Analysis of Subgroup Performance for Alexandria City.

Table 6, page 29, presents the percentages and number of LEP students who passed the Literacy Passport Tests (LPT) by grade in spring 1997. A detailed description of the state mandated LPT tests and penalties associated with the tests can be found in the report of 1997 Literacy Passport Results for the ACPS. These tests aim at measuring basic skills at the sixth grade level.

The majority of LEP students usually attempt the mathematics tests at grade six. For example, 31 sixth grade LEP students took the mathematics tests and 13 of them failed (42% passing rate). At grade 6, only one student took the reading and the writing tests, but failed to pass them. Many LEP students take reading and writing at higher grades. At grade 11, 38 students took the reading tests earning a 47% passing rate.

Failure to pass all LPT tests will prevent students from getting a regular high school graduation diploma. In 1996-1997, 20 ACPS seniors failed to pass all three LPT tests. Among them, five were special education students planning to receive Individual Education Plan diplomas, two were regular students, two students from families in which English was not their first language, and the remaining 11 students were enrolled in ESL program during the LPT testing period. The majority of student who failed to pass LPT tests and did not receive a regular high school diploma in 1996-1996 were LEP students.

TABLE 6
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Percentage and Number^a of LEP Students
 Passing the Literacy Passport Tests by Grade in Spring 1997

Grade	Reading	Mathematics	Writing	All Three
6	0%	42%	0%	none
	0/1	13/31	0/1	
7	75%	50%	50%	100%
	3/4	11/22	1/2	1/1
8	48%	61%	36%	17%
	13/27	19/31	4/11	1/6
9	60%	50%	80%	40%
	3/5	5/10	4/5	2/5
10	64%	63%	53%	25%
	14/22	10/16	8/15	3/12
11	47%	50%	47%	18%
	18/38	10/20	9/19	2/11
12	56%		50%	
	5/9	none	2/4	none
UnGraded 9	9%	31%	50%	0%
	2/22	5/16	7/14	0/5
UnGraded 10	0%	0%	0%	0%
	0/1	0/2	0/1	0/1
UnGraded 11	29%	33%	17%	20%
	2/7	3/9	1/6	1/5
UnGraded 12	44%		0%	
	4/9	none	0/2	none

^a The number to the left of the diagonal line shows the number passing, while the number to the right shows the total number tested. None means no students attempted all the three tests. Source: 1997 Literacy Passport Testing Results in ACPS.

On the three major test results in 1997, LEP students performed much lower than the division average. The lower performance prevented some of them from receiving a regular high school diploma. The available test results were based only on tested or non-exempted LEP students. Even though there are no division-wide academic performance data for untested LEP students, it is assumed that they had lower English proficiency so that they were exempted from the various tests.

Tables 7 and 8 (below) show LEP students' participation in ACPS Criterion-Referenced Tests. If a student's score is excluded, the score is not included in school aggregates. Non-exempted LEP students are treated as regular students and their scores are included in school means. Table 7 shows that in the first grade, 55 LEP students were not tested in mathematics (39%). Scores of 32 students were not included in school means. Fifty-three students were not exempted.

TABLE 7
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Numbers of LEP Students Participating in 1997 Spring
 Criterion Referenced Mathematics Test

	Mathematics			
	Not Tested	Excluded	Non-Exempt	Total
Grade 1	55	32	53	140
Grade 2	33	35	41	109
Grade 4	25	20	21	66
Grade 7	40	0	22	62

Source: Criterion-Referenced Tests 1997 Results for the ACPS.

As shown in Table 8 (below), 65 LEP students in the first grade were not tested in language arts (46%).

TABLE 8
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Numbers of LEP Students Participating in 1997 Spring
 Criterion Referenced Language Arts Test

	Language Arts			
	Not Tested	Excluded	Non-Exempt	Total
Grade 1	65	29	46	140
Grade 2	39	31	39	109
Grade 4	35	18	13	66
Grade 7	37	18	7	62

Source: Criterion-Referenced Tests 1997 Results for the ACPS.

Figure 5, below, presents the curriculum mastery percentages on the 1997 spring CRT mathematics test for the non-exempt LEP students and the system average. Clearly, a lower percentage of LEP students

mastered mathematics curricula than the system average. Percentages of students with mastery were seven percentage points lower in grade one, ten percentage points lower in grades two and seven, and nine percentage points lower in grade four.

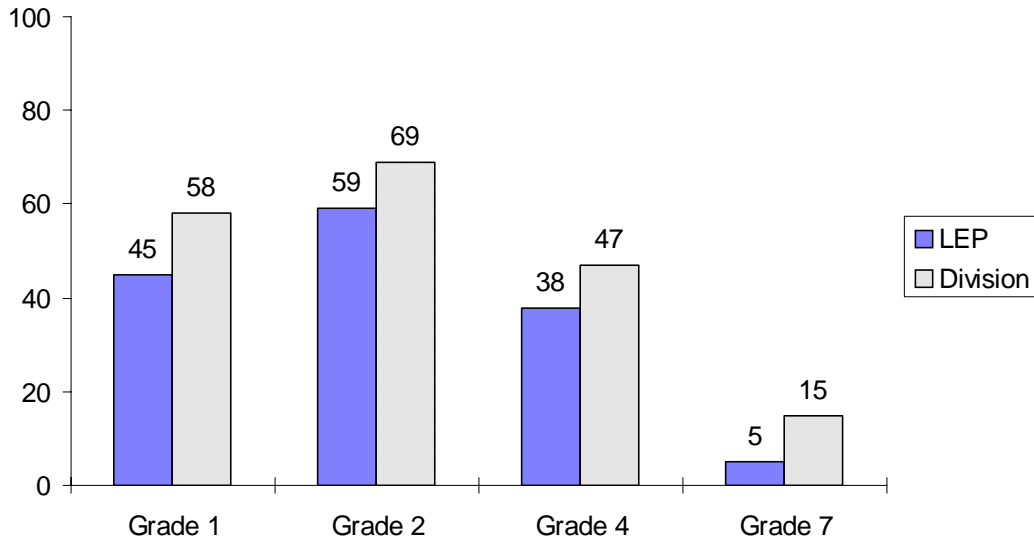


Figure 5. Comparison of Curriculum Mastery Percentages Between Non-Exempt LEP and All ACPS Students on 1997 Spring CRT Mathematics Test

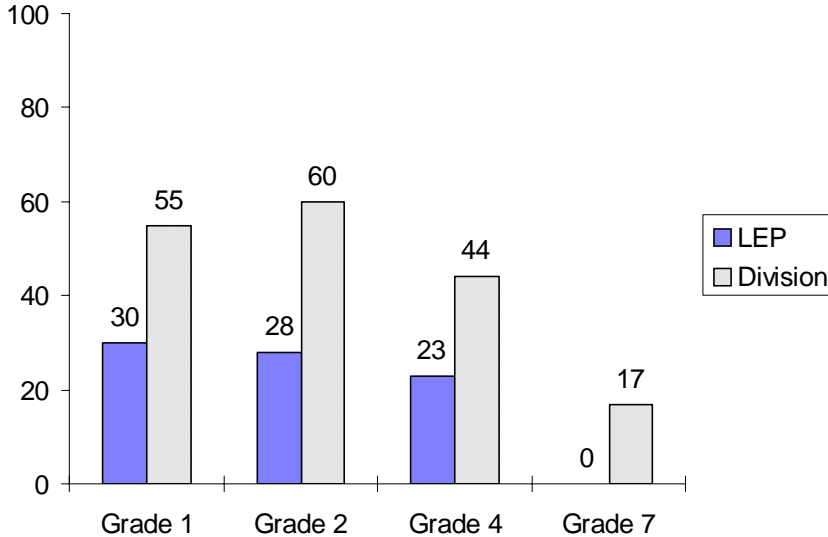


Figure 6. Comparison of Curriculum Mastery Percentages Between Non-Exempt LEP and All ACPS Students on 1997 Spring CRT Language Arts Test

Figure 6 (page 31) displays even bigger differences between percentages of LEP students who mastered the language arts curricula and the system averages. The largest difference (32-percentage points) existed in grade two. At grade seven, no LEP students mastered language arts curricula, compared to

17% in the system. From the 1997 CRT results, it is obvious that a much lower percentage of LEP students mastered ACPS language arts and mathematics curricula in all grades tested.

In summary, LEP students in the ACPS are a growing segment, 37% of whom are native born citizens. They represent 66 countries and speak 45 languages. They confront a variety of socio-economic challenges as a result, and these may affect their academic achievement. At the present time, LEP students do not perform at the level of their age grade peers on national, state, and local assessments.

3. How is the ESL program (structure, personnel, resources and costs) organized?

A student whose native language is not English or who was born in a foreign country is required to register in the ESL center when he/she first enters the ACPS. The registration process continues throughout the year as new students come into the ACPS. The peak registration time is August before school starts. The following narrative describes the steps in the process.

Parents walk-in to register. They come with someone who speaks English or with electronic dictionaries. At the ESL center, there are two Spanish speaking staff. There are no interpreters available for those who speak neither English nor Spanish. No appointments are made. Service is provided on a first-come first-served basis. During the registration, the receptionists help to fill out different forms. The ESL center will verify identification, residence, physical health, previous school records, standardized test results if any, and other background information. Parents or guardians have to fill out various forms such as language survey, student introduction letter, book contract, emergency care form, lunch form and so on. It may take as much as 45 minutes or more to finish the paper work if a parent does not speak English, due to the explanations involved.

Then the ESL specialist and staff give English and mathematics tests to students. Language Assessment Scales (LAS) English reading and oral tests are the standardized tests used. According to the Handbook of English Language Proficiency Tests (Vecchio and Guerrero, 1995), it is one of the most commonly used commercial standardized English proficiency tests. Pre-LAS results are used for English proficiency assessment in kindergarten and first grade. The LAS is used for assessment and monitoring in grades 2-5 for reading and writing.

In addition to standardized tests, ACPS ESL assessment (beginner through advanced) and grade-level mathematics tests are also given to students. Students who speak no English language but are literate in their native language are asked to write an essay to a writing prompt. The purpose is to estimate a student's native language proficiency. The essay is interpreted according to its language flow, not the actual content when the essay is written in a language other than French or Spanish.

Reading, writing, and mathematics tests are untimed. Students can take as much time as they need. The mathematics test contains only computation problems. Test administration often takes place in the ESL center office where the individual oral test is also given. The entire registration process takes two, three or more hours. Approximately 20 different tests are available for placement purposes. They are given to students according to their expected grade levels.

During the time when Monitoring and Evaluation staff was observing the registration process in August 1997, the rooms were crowded and many parents were waiting for hours due to limited staff and lengthy tests. The conversation and phone ringing made the testing condition less than desirable. According to the ESL specialist, student placements in English were more accurate than in mathematics. Students' mathematics abilities may be underestimated due to different ways that mathematics is taught throughout the world.

Students' previous foreign transcripts are evaluated by ESL staff with the help of dictionaries and professional network in Washington metropolitan area to determine their comparability with the United States curricula. The placement in a grade level is determined in the ESL center on the basis of previous school records, and test results, students' past educational experience, students' ages and grades. Schools are notified about the initial placement and are given flexibility to make adjustments if necessary.

According to the ESL center staff, the following are the most common complaints from the parents during the registration process:

1. long waiting time during peak registration and testing
2. no appointment service
3. the number of documents required by the school system

For example, the ACPS requires two proofs of residence at registration. A rental lease is not enough to prove residence. Monthly bills or a landlord's letter is needed. Once registered, students then enter the ESL program.

Structure of the English As A Second Language Program Structure in the ACPS

It is universally agreed that well-qualified teachers, adequate instructional time, and appropriate materials are essential components of any approach. In the elementary schools, the ACPS mainly employs pull-out and sheltered instruction. Students leave their classrooms to go to an ESL class for a portion of their day. As students learn more and English, they spend less and less time in ESL classes. However, most of the elementary schools do not provide sheltered content-area instruction. The elementary school principals set the ESL schedules and consequently the ESL program is not standardized (p.9 of the 1997 ESL report).

Pull-out and sheltered programs are two instructional models for LEP students in American schools. Four of the most common are: pull-out instruction, sheltered instruction, immersion, and bilingual programs. They serve different populations and purposes. Each is briefly described below.

Pull-Out Program.

In a pull-out program, LEP students are separated from English proficient students for some part of the school day in order to receive ESL instruction. The pull-out time depends on the students' proficiency in English. With increasing proficiency, students' are spending more and more time in mainstream classes. This is often used in schools with LEP students from heterogeneous cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages.

Sheltered Instruction.

In sheltered or content-based instruction, teachers use specific strategies to teach a specific content area (e.g., social studies or math) in ways comprehensible to LEP students. It is commonly used for LEP students at the secondary level. The teachers are usually trained content teachers, who teach LEP students in a specially designed content area instruction. Teachers increase the comprehensibility of the lesson by providing more concrete examples and by lowering the anxiety level of the students who are learning the grade level curriculum. The intended purpose is to teach students grade level content while they are learning English. Sheltered instruction provides background knowledge and literacy development. Instead of jumping directly to the mainstream, students take sheltered classes in their transition into the mainstream class (Krashen, 1991).

Immersion

Immersion means that students learn everything in English. Teachers using immersion programs generally strive to deliver lessons in simple and understandable language that allows students to internalize English while learning academic subjects.

Bilingual Education

In this program, instruction is taught in two languages (such as Spanish and English) with native speakers of the two languages in a class. There are different variations in the program, namely bilingual education with early exit, late exit, and so on. The purpose of these programs is to develop children's language competency in both languages. Content instruction, such as mathematics and social studies, is delivered in two languages. Language is emphasized through curriculum. Students learn to use both languages through content learning. Some bilingual programs aim at maintaining a student's first language while he or she is learning English. The bilingual program is often seen in schools with many students speaking a common language.

The ACPS Five Level ESL Model

At the middle and high schools, there are five levels of ESL classes, namely basic, beginner, intermediate I, intermediate II and advanced. Each level is equivalent to one-year of instruction. Students can move from one level to another in a period shorter than one year. Students can also complete one level through summer school. At the two lowest levels, basic and beginner, students take

no classes with mainstream students except physical education and perhaps an elective. The sheltered classes are taught by teachers who are certified in the subject matter, address the Standards of Learning, and deliver the same content-area skills as the mainstream classes.

Each of the five levels is described below.

Basic.

Basic level is designed for students with minimal literacy in their native language who do not speak English. Students take five ESL classes (language arts, reading, social studies, science and mathematics), physical education and an elective.

Beginner.

Beginner level is for students literate in their native language who do not speak English and for those who have completed one year of basic level. Students also take five ESL classes (language arts, reading, social studies, science and mathematics). They do not attend regular class except physical education and/or an elective. Some students with strong mathematics skills may be placed in mainstream mathematics classes.

Intermediate I.

Intermediate I is intended for students with a third or fourth grade English reading comprehension level. Students enroll in three ESL classes (grammar, reading, writing), ESL social studies or ESL science, and mainstream mathematics.

Intermediate II.

Intermediate II is designed for students with fourth and fifth grade English reading levels. Students take a two-period block ESL language arts class and continue to work on reading, grammar, vocabulary development, and writing. In high school, students take ESL earth science, mainstream mathematics, ESL social sciences, and electives. In middle schools, many students are in mainstream social studies classes in addition to mathematics.

Advanced.

The advanced level is for students with fifth and sixth grade reading levels. They continue to take a two-period block ESL language arts class where they review grammar, read English literature and further develop their writing skills. Students may also take a sheltered social studies class but are mainstreamed in mathematics and electives.

According to Linda Wallinger, Foreign Language Specialist for the Virginia Department of Education, LEP students must pass the SOL tests, just as any other public school student in Virginia. It is

“incumbent on lea’s (local education agencies) to provide the instruction that will promote that. There are no separate ESL standards in Virginia. SOLs are the guidelines. This increases the intensity with which ESL programs must operate.”

At the time of this investigation, the ESL curriculum and program standards exist in draft form. They are based on two scheduling models: Grades K-5 and 6-12. The structure of which is described above. As the curriculum and standards are in draft form, they cannot be considered as institutionalized. For a curriculum to be institutionalized, it undergoes a formal adoption process within the educational community and is accepted as the body of knowledge and skills around which instruction is focused. The curriculum and program standards have not gained this recognition to date. Therefore, they are not included in the evaluation of current practice.

ESL Program Personnel and Costs

The ACPS ESL center had 4.5 full time employees, the director, an ESL specialist, one clerical position, and 1.5 technical workers. Table 9 (below) presents more detailed information about the ESL program employees over the past six years (1992-97). For the past six years, ESL teacher and student ratios have been about 1 to 30 on the average.

TABLE 9
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Full-time Employees for ESL Program (FY 92-93 Through FY 97-98)

	1992- 1993 Actual	1993- 1994 Actual	1994- 1995 Actual	1995- 1996 Actual	1996- 1997 Actual	1997- 1998 Revised ¹
Director	1	1	1	1	1	1
Teachers	35	36.5	35	41	40.2	43
Guidance Counselor	1	1	1	1	1	1
Specialist	1	1	1	1	1	1
Paraprofessional Instructors	5.5	6	5	5	5	5
Technical	0	0	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
Clerical	2	2	1	1	1	1
Total Students Served	1043	1045	1092	1220	1245	1289
Division Teacher/Student Ratio	1:30	1:29	1:31	1:30	1:31	1:30

Table 10 (page 38) presents data on the student/teacher ratio. The ESL teacher/student ratio was calculated by dividing the number of LEP students by the number of full-time ESL teachers. In elementary schools the lowest ratio was 1:32 for Patrick Henry, Charles Barrett and William Ramsay, and the highest was 1:53 for Cora Kelly. This means that on the average one ESL teacher was responsible for 32 students in Ramsay, but responsible for 53 in Cora Kelly. The average ESL teacher/LEP student ratio was 1:30 in the division. The average ESL teacher and student ratio in elementary school was 1:39. The ratio for secondary schools differed greatly from school to school, such as 1:12 in George Washington and 1:27 in T. C. Williams. There were large variations in teacher/student ratio across schools.

TABLE 10
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Limited English Proficient Students and Teacher-Student Ratio
 in the ESL Program (1997-1998)

School	Number of LEP Students	Number of ESL teachers	Teacher/Student Ratio
John Adams	70	2	1:35
Charles Barrett	32	1	1:32
Patrick Henry	64	2	1:32
Jefferson-Houston	113	3	1:38
Cora Kelly	53	1	1:53
Lyles-Crouch	0	0	0
George Mason	4	0	0
Douglas MacArthur	22	0.5	1:44
Maury	9	0	0
James K. Polk	104	3	1:35
Mount Vernon	202	4	1:51
William Ramsay	129	4	1:32
Elementary Total	802	20.5	1:39
G. Washington	47	4	1:12
F Hammond	152	7.5	1:20
S. T. E. P	0	0	0
T. C. Williams	212	8	1:27
Minnie Howard	76	3	1:25
Secondary Total	487	22.5	1:22
Division	1289	43	1:30

In all secondary schools except Minnie Howard, ESL classes were of multi-grade levels, usually two or three grade levels in one class. Students in the observed classes came from very diversified backgrounds, as seen in Table 11 (below). In some classes, all the students were U.S.-born Spanish-

speaking children, but in others, students came from different parts of the world. One class had 23 students from 18 countries, speaking 17 languages at home. Generally secondary school ESL classes were more diversified than elementary schools in terms of language backgrounds.

In some elementary schools teachers in the observed classrooms said that their classrooms were not proper for instruction because of noise when two ESL classes had to share one classroom. As a result, students in different classes could hear one another. It caused distractions especially for the young students. It was observed that teachers had to keep their voices low so that they would not disturb the other class. One-third of the teachers in the observed classes said the books provided for them were not proper for instructional purposes.

TABLE 11
Alexandria City Public Schools
Average Class Size, Language, and Nationality in the Observed ESL Classrooms

Schools	Class Size	Languages	Nationalities	Observed Classes
Elementary Schools	10.6	3.6	5.9	10
Secondary Schools	16.3	6.8	9.8	15
Division	12.8	4.9	7.5	25

Program Resources and Costs

Program funds are obtained from two sources: external and the ACPS Operating Budget. The Emergency Immigrant Education Act (EMIA) is the external funding source for the English as a Second Language Program. This federal program “provides formula grants to state education agencies to assist local school systems that experience large increases in their student population due to immigration. Eligible students are those born outside the U.S. who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for less than 3 academic years. Eligible local educational agencies are those that enroll at least 500 students OR where these students represent 3 percent of total enrollment. States may make subgrants to school districts based on the number of eligible students. Grants are to be used to provide high-quality instruction to immigrant children and youth to help them make the transition into American society and meet the same challenging state performance standards expected of all children and youth.” (Source U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs)

As a formula grant, the amount varies from year to year and is determined by the federal government. Local education agencies receive funds from their state education department. States may apply to the federal government for funds. Currently 47 states participate in this program. Allocations are based on the number of eligible immigrants. Local jurisdictions are reimbursed by the state for their program expenditures. According to both the state grant manager, Mrs. Leigh Williams, and the ACPS Director of ESL, the ACPS has been eligible for emergency funding for at least the last 10 years. Mrs. Leigh

Williams cited the range of the entire Virginia allotment from the federal government as being a recent low of \$493,000 to \$2,000,000 in FY 1999. That sum is then divided up proportionally for eligible local education agencies on an immigrant per capita basis.

The amount of EMIA funds allocated to the ACPS in FY 1997 was \$105,366.00. Because the funding is by reimbursement, the ACPS submits proof of its program expenditures to the Virginia State Department of Education Emergency Immigrant Funds Manager. Reimbursements must be requested by September 30 of each year for the previous years' funds. The funds cover one fiscal year. Expenditures from federal revenue include clerical salaries (overtime), paraprofessional instructors, testing and evaluation, textbooks, instructional supplies, consumable texts, data processing, staff development, non consumable media, part-time salaries, and employee benefits.

The ACPS operating budget for the English as a Second Language program consists of funds allocated for personnel and non-personnel expenditures. The Manager of Budget and Procurement, Leslie Peterson, provided Monitoring and Evaluation with ESL program total expenditures from FY 1992-93 through FY 1996-97. The 1997-98 figures are not included because the budget format has been changed so it now represents the department not the program expenses, thus it is not directly comparable to the previous years. Figure 7, on page 40, shows the total ESL program expenditures in the past five years.

Figure 8, also on page 40, displays the ESL program cost per student. This per student cost should not be confused with the overall cost per student calculations typically included in the annual budgets. The program cost per student was calculated by dividing the total program expenditures with the total number of ESL students in a year. It is an appropriate means for viewing the financial resources committed to each educational program. In the past five years, the ESL program cost per student was between \$ 2,062 and \$ 2,199. There was a decline of \$97 per student in 1996-97 compared to the previous year.

Actual local ESL Non-Personnel expenditures for FY 1997-98 amounted to \$69,611. Federal fund expenditures amounted to \$105, 366 for the same period. Table 12 (page 41) indicates that most of the ESL non-personnel budget has been used for textbooks in recent years. FY 1995-96 indicates \$64,803 being allocated for textbooks, compared to \$38,773 the previous year.

During the registration process, various documents need to be copied and kept in student files, which include registration form, legal documents, residence proofs, health records, parental consent, grade placement, previous school records, standardized test information, language identification survey, introduction letter to schools, and forms in other languages. However, in the 1997-1998 budget, no money was allocated for these anticipated and routine costs.

TABLE 12
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Non-Personnel Expenditures for ESL Program (FY 92-93 Through FY 97-98)

Program Expenditure	1992-93 Actual	1993-94 Actual	1994-95 Actual	1995-96 Actual	1996-97 Actual	1997-98 Revised
Professional Services	2,020	61	630	2,063	506	2,883
Maintenance & Repair Serv.	2,277	275	502	178	290	744
Printing Services	3,415	1,009	964	2,417	1,606	0
Print Shop	619	1,521	2,750	737	1,384	0
Communication	0	0	10	120	622	655
Leases and Rentals	0	135	2,109	2,184	4,968	6,096
Travel	2,130	1,280	1,808	1,001	931	450
Miscellaneous	395	379	129	244	154	0
Education & Recreation Sup.	6,290	6,184	7,952	7,773	5,241	5,400
Textbooks	35,328	33,681	38,773	64,803	44,249	52,918
Books & Subscriptions	0	0	71	105	120	165
Food and Food Services Sup.	97	237	417	382	574	300
Total Non-Personnel	52,571	44,762	56,116	82,006	60,645	69,611

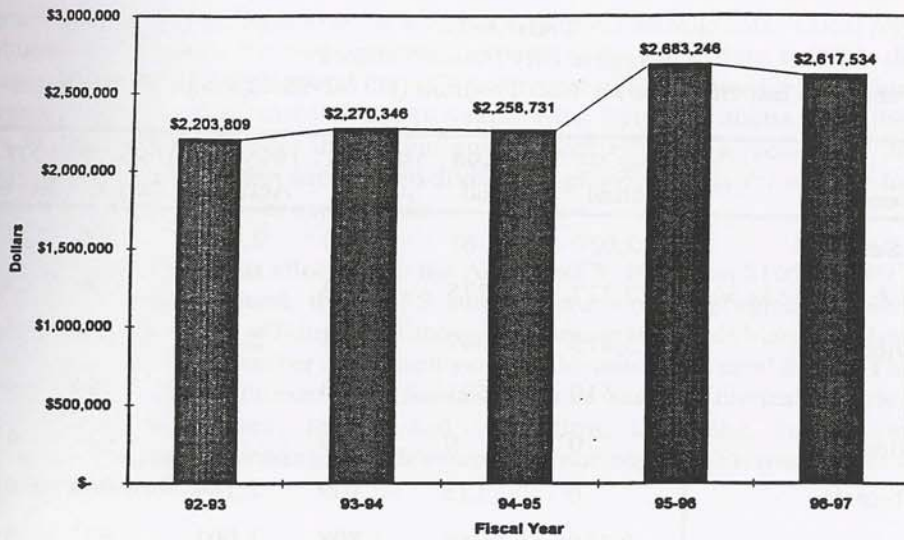


Figure 7. Total ESL Program Expenditures in Alexandria City Public Schools (FY 1992-93 to FY 1996-97)

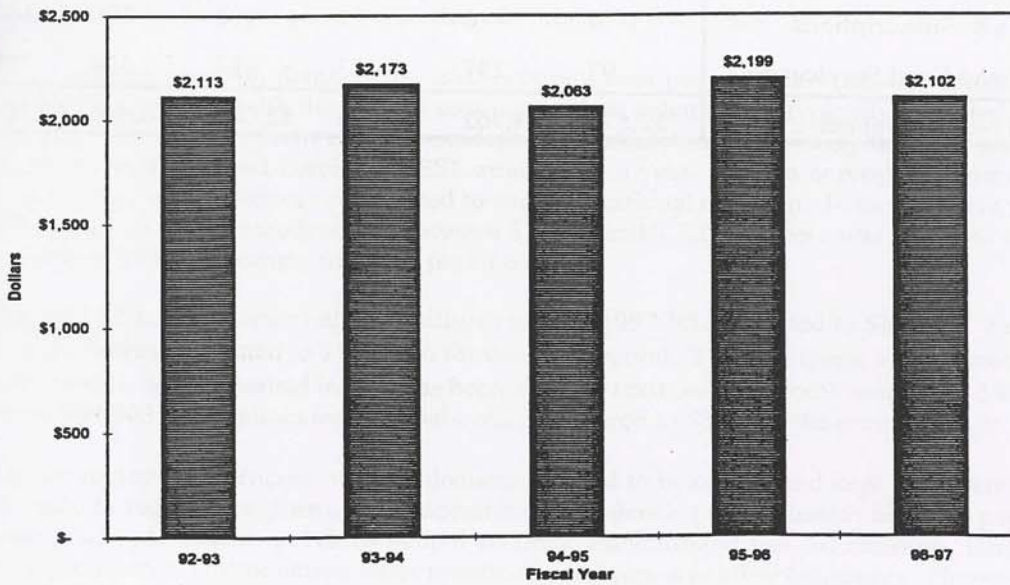


Figure 8. ESL Program Cost Per Student in Alexandria City Public Schools (FY 1992-93 to FY 1996-97)

4. Is the ESL program meeting its stated goals and objectives?

To determine the extent to which the ESL program is meeting its stated goals and objectives, student interview data, classroom observation data, and teacher/principal survey results will be examined. Indicators of program success are based on appropriate the structure and program delivery model, placement/exit criteria, the challenge of the ESL classes, and student success in the program.

The goals and objectives of the ESL program are “to help students develop as quickly as possible the English language and content area skills that are prerequisite to successful transition to mainstream classes. The goals of reading and writing instruction as well as content based language instruction is development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) so that students may be successful in mainstream classes.” (1997 ESL Report)

Program Delivery Model

When asked which program delivery model was the most appropriate for the ACPS ESL program, most ESL teachers (72%) preferred to have ESL teachers in every school with an ESL student population. Some mentioned other options, such as a newcomer school with intensive English classes, Spanish immersion program, more exposure to English speaking peers, and pooling resources for instructing heterogeneous groups.

Fifty-six percent of teachers believe that the five-level ESL model worked well in the ACPS program, but as many (57%) believe that there is no division-wide curriculum guide. Most (79%) believed there was continuity from lower to higher levels in their own schools, but it was necessary to develop a division-wide curriculum. Fifty-two percent (52%) of ESL teachers said that the ESL program content was not well integrated with what was being taught in regular classes.

Based on the 25 classroom observations, the delivery of the ESL program is as follows. The average class size is 12.8 students, with an average attendance of 11.9 students. Language Arts is the predominant subject of instruction (80% of classes). Approximately four languages are spoken among those in each class, representing 4.6 nations.

The textbooks are usually proper for the grade level (76%) and instruction takes place in a regular classroom, which is proper for instruction. Of those in class, most students are engaged in the learning activity. A variety of instructional strategies are used. Many teachers used instructional aids like chalkboard, projectors, flow charts, video, and concrete objects. Students in some classes used computer programs to learn vocabulary. Some used Internet for research projects. In one class, students sang along with the music while learning their letters and words.

For instance, students in one class presented their writing projects about student election results as if they were news reporters. In their news broadcast to the class, students were evaluated on the predetermined criteria. Students not only learned the words such as president, vice president, and treasurer, but also had to understand the responsibilities associated with the positions. The authentic learning situation sparked

students' enthusiasm. In another class, after studying the story of Troy, students did research on Greek characters, then wrote drama scripts based on the chosen characters and performed in the customs they made by themselves.

In another elementary language arts class, the teacher started with a 10-minute weather report for Northern Virginia. The teacher discussed how snow formed and compared weather forecasts for mountainous and beach areas. During discussion, the teacher disseminated scientific information related to students' life experiences in addition to teaching English. Many teachers tried to teach English by providing content knowledge in subject areas.

In some classrooms, students were drilled as a group. Sometimes students were asked to copy English words for almost half of the class time. In one class, the teacher asked students to practice grammatically incorrect usage for 10-15 minutes.

Many ESL teachers challenged students to learn as reflected in student comments:

My ESL teacher always gives us more than we can handle. That is a big challenge for us. Once you learn more, she always has some more for you. It is not like she has nothing to teach, nothing to do. The two classes we were with her went so fast. She uses her time very efficiently. She gives you the impression that no matter what you can do it.

Some students reported that ESL classes were the easiest class for them and mainstream classes were more demanding. All of the interviewees said they met their best friends in the ESL classes who came from either the same country or another country.

Students with a strong educational background in their native countries or at higher ESL levels felt they needed more challenges. Some students said to the interviewer:

Some stuff they are teaching, I learned in my country. It is like repeating what I have already learned. It is wasting my time. I need more. They have to challenge me. The teacher said she had been teaching for 25 years. I couldn't believe that. As an experienced teacher, you don't just read definitions from books. The information she gave to us was not useful. I would have stayed at home with the book and read it and not wasted my time in summer school.

When asked about the ESL teachers' workload, 62% of the principals thought it was the same as the other teachers, but 31% thought the load was heavier for the ESL teachers because of various English proficiency levels or grade levels of students, and other responsibilities such as translation. When asked how often they communicated with ESL parents, 36% of the teachers said often, and 62% said occasionally. Most of the teachers (95%) used conferences and telephone in their communication with parents. Seventy-seven percent (77%) used letters, 56% used interpreters, and 33% paid home visits. However, 62% said interpreters were not readily available when needed. Twenty-six percent reported having difficulty communicating with ESL parents. It seems that the most commonly used methods were conference and telephone.

Many principals (77%) had interpreters' available to them when needed due to an increasing number of bilingual or multilingual staff or school efforts to recruit bilingual volunteers. The availability of interpreters varied with the transience of staff.

There is no guarantee that translators will always be available. I have no one to translate for my Russian students.

The ESL teacher volunteers her time. Interpreters are available only because a social worker recruits and begs for volunteers and NOVA students. The ESL office does not supply us with any interpreters. All interpreters are arranged by school.

To determine the need for instructional resources in primary and secondary schools, additional analyses were conducted and their results are shown in Table 13 (page 46) For example, of all primary school ESL teachers who responded to the survey, 61% indicated that they did not have adequate teachers in their school's program. It seems that a higher percentage of primary school ESL teachers identified lack of adequate staff and instructional time. On the other hand, a higher percentage of secondary ESL teachers indicated that they did not have adequate instructional assistants, textbooks, supplementary materials, bilingual counselors, and social workers for their programs.

Responding to the survey question about adequate resources in their schools, forty-five (45%) percent of the teachers indicated that there were not enough ESL teachers in their schools, 84% said they did not have enough instructional assistants, 39% did not have enough instructional time. Thirty-five percent (35%) did not have enough textbooks and 48% did not have enough supplementary materials for their classroom uses. Sixty-nine percent (69%) said there were not enough bilingual counselors or social workers in their schools.

Comparison data from principals, as shown in Table 14, (page 46) indicate similar trends. Thirty-one percent of principals responding believed that there were not an adequate number of ESL program teachers in their school, compared to 45% of teachers. Sixty-two percent of principals, compared to 84% of teachers reported that the number of instructional assistants was inadequate. The responses were the same for the lack of instructional time, 39% of both principals and teachers said that this was so. The responses of teachers and principals were very similar for the number of textbooks (35% teachers; 39% principals said it was inadequate) and the amount of supplementary materials (48% of teachers; 46% of principals) believed them to be inadequate.

TABLE 13
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Percentage of ESL Teachers Indicating There Were Not Adequate Resources
 for the ESL Programs By School Type

	Elementary School ESL Teachers	Secondary School ESL Teachers	Total
Not adequate teachers for ESL program in your school	61%	29%	45%
Not adequate instructional assistants for ESL program in your school	78%	90%	84%
Not adequate instruction time for ESL program in your school	72%	5%	39%
Not adequate textbooks for ESL program in your school	22%	48%	35%
Not adequate supplementary materials for ESL program in your school	33%	62%	48%
Not adequate bilingual counselor/social workers for ESL program in your school	67%	71%	69%

TABLE 14
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Principals' Survey Results on ESL Program Resources

	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Adequate ESL teachers	69%	31%	
Adequate instruction assistants	15%	62%	23%
Adequate instruction time	54%	39%	8%
Adequate textbooks	69%	31%	
Adequate supplementary materials	54%	46%	
Adequate bilingual counselor/social workers	54%	46%	

Other results from the survey are shown in Appendix D. For example, 79% of the teachers believed that they had the opportunity to choose appropriate teaching materials for their classes. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the ESL teachers believed the teaching materials used in their schools were up-to-date, 36% said they were not. A third of the ESL teachers (34%) thought the teaching materials were not age-appropriate, while 64% believed they were.

ESL teachers used various means to obtain information about ESL research, 72% of them used professional journals, 77% used professional conferences, 62% utilized divisional in-service, 44% through media and 77% via other ESL teachers. It seems that professional conferences and their own ESL colleagues were the most commonly used means for the ESL teachers to obtain information about ESL research. Fifty-one percent (51%) indicated that ESL teachers were not kept adequately informed about the recent ESL research. The majority of the teachers (64%) thought there was not enough ESL in-service and professional development in the division.

Many teachers indicated that there were not curriculum guidelines for different ESL levels, and no clearly specified exit guidelines at the district level. Schools differed greatly in their instructional resources. In some schools, there were not enough materials, textbooks, teachers and assistants. In others, there was not enough classroom space for the ESL program so different teachers had to teach two different classes in the same spot simultaneously. Some comments of the teachers are presented below according to themes. Teacher comments can be found in Appendix E.

Placement/Exit Criteria

According to some ESL teachers, the initial placement by the ESL center was relatively accurate with flexibility for teachers to make adjustments. There were no written exit guidelines at the division level. Many teachers favored the establishment of such criteria as shown in their comments (See Appendix E). All principals (100%) believed it was necessary to establish division-wide placement/ exit criteria for each level in the ESL program. At the time the survey was conducted, the exit criteria did not exist. Some principals wrote:

The criteria do not exist now.

Our teaching staff sometimes disagree with the ESL center's determination.

Half of the interviewed students believed they were placed at the right level of ESL or mathematics classes and about half responded negatively towards their initial placement.

When I came a year ago, they put me in eighth grade not the ninth. It was so good. They were deciding what grade I should be in. My English level was not good to be in the ninth grade. I was in the intermediate II. I only knew very limited English like alphabet, chair and some words. I didn't understand what a cafeteria was, what a gym was and what a bus was. The first school day, I missed the bus. Now I am an honor student.

Math here is really low. When I came, I was ready to take Algebra. They put me in ESL math because I didn't speak English. I don't think that's the right math level for me. I got straight A's.

They were talking about addition, subtraction like the first grade, but I was in the eighth grade. For a long time, I wasn't learning anything in math.

The probability of misplacement, especially in mathematics, is higher if students do not speak enough English to communicate their previous schooling. For some, misplacement can result in frustration. A Pakistani student expressed his reaction towards his initial placement in the Basic class:

When I came, I can read, write and speak English. But they put me in Basic because I don't understand American accent, even though I speak English. I was not placed in the right place. I can understand them, do the homework. I should have gone to a higher level. It was not right for me. Later in summer school, I was talking to people and they found out about my English. We speak British English in Pakistan. I could not understand them because of their American accents.

Other students were placed in a much higher grade only because of their age even though they were in lower grades in their countries or had never been to school there. A student from El Salvador had never been to school in his country and did not know how to read in his native language. But when he came to Alexandria in 1994, he was put in the eighth grade because of his age.

It was so difficult for me. When I came, I spoke Spanish but I did not know how to read in Spanish. I never went to school. The first year, I did not learn anything.

I was in the seventh grade when I came to America. But I was placed in the tenth grade because of my age, skipping three grades. It was difficult for me to understand English and other courses. I believed I would be better off if I started in seventh or eighth grades instead of the tenth grade.

Thirty-six (36%) of the teachers agreed with the statement that an average ESL student should exit the program in three years, but 51% disagreed. ESL placement was more problematic for students with interrupted education or for students older than their grade-level peers. There were more misplacements in mathematics or grade level due to age than other factors.

Tables 15 and 16 provide a needs summary for the program and LEP students. Table 15, (page 49) shows there were not adequate resources in some schools according to principals. Suggestions for ESL program improvement included professional workshops for both regular and ESL teachers, division-wide ESL curriculum, placement and exit criteria, and monitoring students progress in the program in a systematic way. As shown in Table 16, 46% of the principals believed that the roles and responsibilities of the ESL teachers were not clearly established, 61% said that the placement criteria were not consistent within the ACPS, 69% indicated the ESL professional development was not adequate, and 100% suggested in-service training for regular teachers to address the needs of the ESL students.

TABLE 15
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Principals' Survey Results on ESL Program Improvement

	Not needed at all	Not Needed	Needed	Much Needed
Need workshops on second language acquisition for regular class teachers	8%	15%	31%	46%
Need information about second language teaching methods for ESL teachers			54%	46%
Need division wide ESL curricula		15%	39%	46%
Need a systematic way to keep track of students' progress		8%	31%	61%
Need guidelines for placing ESL students	8%	39%	8%	46%
Need guidelines for exiting ESL students		15%	15%	70%

Table 16 (page 50) summarizes principals' and teachers' beliefs about ESL program needs. Many principals pointed out the strength of their school's ESL program includes the commitment and expertise of their ESL teachers and assistants, and cooperation between the regular and ESL teaching staff. Some schools used a mentor system for new ESL teachers. A mentor teacher was described by a principal as "creative, energetic" and a new ESL teacher "enthusiastic and willing to learn."

The lack of ESL curriculum, inaccurate placement, no alternative services for students, not enough staff and instruction time, lack of knowledge of second language teaching methodology, were cited as program weaknesses by principals.

The strength of our school's ESL program is our dedicated ESL staff. These teachers thoroughly enjoy working with students, they take advantage of course, staff development opportunities that are provided, they also provide staff development for parents and demonstrate genuine concerns for students, their growth and development. Having the program at our school helps us keep focus on issues of multi-culturalism. ESL teachers provide good information in this area.

TABLE 16
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Survey Results on ESL Program Needs

	Role and responsibilities of ESL teachers clearly established		ESL instruction coordinated and integrated with regular classes		School needs ESL teachers reflecting ESL students' demographic characteristics		Not adequately informed about changes in ESL programs		ESL professional development in the ACPS adequate for school		Regular teachers should receive in-service to address the needs of ESL students	
	PRIN	TEAC	PRIN	TEAC	PRIN	TEAC	PRIN	TEAC	PRIN	TEAC	PRIN	TEAC
Strongly Agree	8%	13%	15%	3%	15%	5%	8%	5%		5%	62%	5%
Agree	39%	18%	39%	26%	31%	26%	31%	28%	8%	23%	38%	5%
Don't Know	8%	5%		21%	15%	18%	8%	15%	23%	8%		
Disagree	46%	54%	39%	31%	39%	39%	54%	39%	46%	49%		33%
Strongly Disagree		10%	8%	21%		13%		13%	23%	15%		56%

Summary of the Findings

This section summarizes the major findings of the evaluation and presents recommendations for improving the ESL program. The summary is organized around the research questions: What are the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the ESL program? Who are the ESL students? How is the ESL program (structure, personnel, resources and costs) organized? Is the ESL program meeting its stated goals? The evaluation is formative and the 22 recommendations offered are programmatic and involve each of the areas listed above.

What are the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the ESL program?

The ACPS goal of the ESL program is to “help students develop as quickly as possible the English language and content area skills that are prerequisite to successful transition to mainstream classes. The goals of reading and writing instruction as well as content-based language instruction is the development of cognitive academic language proficiency so that the students may be successful in the mainstream.”

By Virginia law, the ACPS is bound by the Standards of Accreditation and the Standards of Learning to assure that all students master the content of mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science. As such, it is the responsibility of the school division to provide the instruction students will need to acquire these skills. The specific role of the ESL program in this endeavor must be identified and explained. Some ambiguity now exists in the goal statement relative to content area skills. The degree to which the ESL program is responsible for this is unclear.

The ESL program in the ACPS has legal obligations as identified by the Supreme Court ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) and the Code of Virginia, 22.1-212.1, which permit local choice. Under *Lau v. Nichols*, (1974) schools systems must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency of students who do not speak and understand the English language, or where their deficiency excludes them from taking part in the district’s educational program. In broad strokes, the implementation of a program that addresses this mandate is a state decision.

The state, in the Code of Virginia 22.1-212.1, has established that School Boards have no obligation to teach the standard curriculum, except courses in foreign languages, in a language other than English. School boards shall endeavor to provide instruction in the English language which shall be designed to promote the education of students for whom English is a second language. Within the state, the program structure and what shall be offered may vary.

In January 1998, The Department of Education’s Civil Rights office recommended five national principles in teaching LEP students: 1) encourage parent involvement; 2) use nondiscriminatory assessment to determine LEP students’ ability and needs; 3) group students of different language skills in regular classes to the greatest extent possible and adjust their placement regularly; 4) dedicate equal shares of money, teachers and facilities to LEP students; and 5) offer equal access to all subjects, activities and career opportunities (Hoff, 1998).

Recommendations:

1. Establish a committee under the leadership of the Director of ESL to inspect the stated philosophy, goals, and objectives of the ESL program. The committee would act to clarify the educational intent of English as a Second Language. The focus of the philosophy, goals, and objectives should be the attainment of English through language arts.
2. Clarify the specific obligations of the ESL program as related to the Supreme Court Ruling of *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; the Code of Virginia 22.1-212.1; and the Standards of Accreditation and the Standards of Learning.
 - A. If the expectation of the ESL program is to provide language arts and content area skills than a complete and exhaustive list of instructional objectives would need to be generated.
 - B. If the expectation of the ESL program is to provide only language arts skills that will facilitate learning in the content areas, then the focus should be in language arts.

Who are the ESL students?

The main finding about the ESL students in the ACPS is that the number of LEP students has doubled in 17 years from 519 in 1980 to 1,289 in 1997 and that 37% (n=477) were born in the United States. Among all ACPS students, 12% were LEP students. Across grades, kindergarten had the largest number followed by the first grade. TC Williams had the largest number of LEP students, followed by Mt. Vernon. Among elementary schools, Mt. Vernon had the highest percentage of LEP students and Francis Hammond the highest percentage in secondary schools.

In the past six years, the ESL teacher and student ratio has been about 1 to 30 on the average. In order to meet the needs of a growing segment of the ACPS population the ESL program must be effective.

Recommendations:

3. Report current ESL student placement on the division student information database for accurate tracking and assessment purposes.

How is the ESL program (structure, personnel, resources and costs) organized?

Structure

The analysis of the surveys, interviews, and observation data indicate that the ESL program in the ACPS meets the federal and state regulations to provide services to limited English proficient students. The program includes the required components of identification and program delivery. The finding that the ESL program includes content area skills complicates the delivery of

instruction. The ACPS has selectively institutionalized sheltered instruction at the secondary level. There are two main findings of this evaluation in the area of curriculum. First, that most teachers perceive that there is not an ESL curriculum. Second, there is not a clear set of placement/exit criteria.

Curricula made available to Monitoring and Evaluation for the purposes of this investigation were in draft form. If an education agency teaches content area skills, they generally select from bilingual, immersion, and sheltered instruction. Labels and language can be misleading. The variation of approaches clumped under the label bilingual education for example, is enormous. English as a Second Language, however, is very clear: provide instruction geared for language acquisition.

The findings also verify that there is an identification procedure in place that, due to the increasing LEP enrollment, may be less effective than it once was. The curriculum requires several levels of instruction and must support the Virginia Standards of Learning. In order for ESL students to be “successful in the mainstream curriculum as quickly as possible”, the content of the ESL courses needs to be increasing complex as students advance through the program.

Survey and observation data indicate that the operation of the ESL program in the elementary schools is not standardized. Further, the survey data suggests that many ESL teachers perceive the ESL program to be a low priority in the system. Other observations are that, in some schools, ESL teachers feel that they are not granted the same professional courtesy as other teachers and ESL students are not treated as equally as other American students.

It was believed that some schools do not have sufficient staff, time, books, and space for instruction. There exists great variation in resources across elementary schools. In their present draft form, there are currently no adopted division-wide standards, curriculum guides, and exit criteria in circulation. Once adopted, these must be made available to teachers. There is also a felt need for professional development among both ESL teachers and regular classroom teachers.

Recommendations:

4. Explore options to serve LEP students, such as a newcomer program and relative concentration of ESL programs in elementary and middle schools. Development of a newcomer program could be factored into the redistricting and space allocations discussions that are currently underway.
5. Encourage collaboration between ESL and other programs so that LEP students can also benefit from content area instruction in other educational programs, such as special education.
6. Provide support to immigrant parents. Inform them of important information about their children’s education and actively involve them in school activities by overcoming language obstacles.

7. The student information database (as recommended in *Who are the ESL students?*) for reporting and assessment purposes would enable appropriate ESL student placement in the division by providing up to date student data.
8. Maintain desirable testing conditions for group and individual placement tests.
9. Consider additional personnel to facilitate the registration process at peak periods toward a more client centered approach.
10. Complete the steps necessary to move the curriculum from draft to adoption. Distribute the ESL program standards and curriculum to all ESL teachers.
11. Establish a rigorous set of benchmarks and ways of providing feedback on ESL students' progress. Ensure the alignment of curriculum standards to Virginia Standard of Learning (SOL) and match instructional materials to the standards. Make the ESL benchmarks criteria for assessing and evaluating student performance.
12. Establish explicit placement/exit criteria. The ESL center needs to provide both elementary and secondary schools division-wide ESL assessment guides, which address identification of LEP students, placement criteria, movement from level to level, and exit criteria. Administrators and teachers should be given minimal flexibility for placement adjustment.
13. Review the delivery model in use. Select from various alternatives, the model(s) that is/are appropriate for the goals of the ESL program (e.g. Structured English Immersion).
14. Develop a division-wide network from which interpreters of different languages are available to teachers and administrators when needed. Use parents, staff, and volunteers in the metropolitan areas as resources.
15. Establish a systematic way to monitor students' progress within the program. Add ESL program information on the district-wide student data file, such as ESL entry date, levels, their movement in the system, exit date, and exemption from standardized tests.

Personnel

The strength of the ESL program is in the commitment of its teachers and their expertise. As suggested by observation and survey data, in some schools, there were not enough teachers, instructional time, and instructional materials for students. The ESL center needs to play a consultative role to recruit ESL teacher candidates, to provide professional development and to monitor students' progress.

Recommendations:

16. Provide regular and ESL teachers adequate professional inservice to help them understand and respond to the needs of students. Include ESL teachers in grade-level teaching teams to improve cooperation between ESL and mainstream teachers.

17. Institute more consistent ways of disseminating staff development training. With the large pool of ESL teachers, some experienced, some inexperienced, professional activities need to be consistent, uniform, and up-to-date.

18. An important goal of the education of limited English proficient students is to promote literacy and content area knowledge, there is a need for more teachers who understand the specific needs of LEP students.

19. Ensure that a sufficient number of ESL-qualified faculty is hired to provide instruction and leadership in the ESL program.

Resources and Costs

The main finding in the area of resources and costs is that the ESL program relies on funds from external sources to maintain some existing services. A portion of these funds provide for instructional personnel, textbooks, and materials to promote the education of LEP students in the ACPS. At the local level, the program seems funded for maintenance, not for planned improvement. The lion's share of personnel costs (which include 40.17 teacher positions) are subsumed by the operating expenses for the division as for any other ACPS costs for personnel. Actual local ESL Non-Personnel expenditures for FY 1997-98 amounted to \$69,611. Federal fund expenditures amounted to \$105, 366 for the same period.

Recommendations:

20. Increase local funding for the ESL program to provide staff development and resource materials for ESL teachers, as well as funds for additional resources during peak registration periods.

21. Aspects of the ESL program in the ACPS, as in other jurisdictions, are contingent upon the proportional allocation of EMIA funds received from the state. This amount varies from year to year. Examine the specific areas of the ESL program that rely on external funding from year to year. Determine which portions of the program would be jeopardized by a reduction if this source of funding dried up unexpectedly.

Is the ESL program meeting its stated goals and objectives?

The main finding in the area of goal attainment is that the division's stated objective (to 'help students develop as quickly as possible the English language and content area skills prerequisite to successful transition to mainstream classes') is not being fully satisfied. Poor standardized test scores, the need for curriculum revision and placement /exit criteria provide evidence for this claim. It is widely accepted that the path to academic achievement for language-minority students in most cases is to learn English and learn it quickly. This purpose is underscored by the recent mandate for all students in the state of Virginia to be successful on the Standards of Learning assessments.

The current pressing challenge for the ACPS is the academic achievement of second generation immigrant children. The country that contributes the most LEP students to the ESL program in the ACPS is the United States. This suggests the need for a careful examination of programs to educate LEP students who may have some English, or no English. It also suggests the selection of an approach that reflects the immigrant childrens' social and economic background characteristics. A few Structured English Immersion (SEI) programs have been developed and tested in the past two decades throughout the nation. The experience of these programs can provide much-needed guidance to those interested in the reform of bilingual education programs (1998 Baker). In these situations, English is used and taught at a level appropriate to the class of English learners and teachers are oriented toward maximizing instruction in English and use English for 70% to 90% of instructional time, averaged over the first three years of instruction.

Recommendation:

22. Determine if the program delivery model is congruent with the revised philosophy, goals, and objectives ESL program. The delivery model should complement the philosophy and goals.

Conclusions

As the gateway to learning, the ability to speak English for an LEP students is an absolute survival skill in this information- driven society. Some of these questions unmet by the current program evaluation could be explored by further study. For example, how do ESL students fare in the mainstream when the program says they are ready? Are exited ESL students successful in the larger society?

The needs of the ESL students are many and varied. This report represents one in a series of steps that must be taken to best serve the ESL students in the new millennium. The concerns of families, educators, and policy makers also generate difficult issues to confront. Such issues include the way in which educators and families are meeting the language needs of LEP children? What can policy makers do to support LEP students to learn English as a Second Language?

In the light of these issues, the division should consider a careful examination and restructuring of the ESL program in the ACPS. No longer is it a program that serves few. Approximately 12% of the ACPS student population is served by this program. Generally, the major emphasis of the program restructuring should be on achieving consistent delivery of a structured ESL curriculum.

Obviously, the unique linguistic needs and cultural characteristics of the LEP population need to be taken into consideration when planning instruction and administering assessments. However, administrators need to ensure that the curriculum is not only appropriate for LEP students, but is implemented uniformly in all classrooms and aligns to the Virginia Standards of Learning.

A secondary, if not concomitant, emphasis must be placed on the full development of reasonable and specific criteria for placement within the ESL program and exit from the ESL program. The professional educators responsible for making the decisions that affect these students' lives must be fair and congruous, not only to the student, but also to the school system. Students' language proficiency and academic progress are the building blocks for establishing and maintaining high expectations.

Lastly, more community involvement in decision-making is needed. Children, not only LEP children need a great deal of emotional support in order to learn, and as Comer (1986) points out, this support is optimally created when families and schools work together. The recent (December 1998) addition of an Immigrant Family Liaison to the ESL office should become a catalyst in this regard.

The major challenge of adjusting to new roles and responsibilities places a burden on program directors, and on all program personnel. When considered apart from budget, accountability, and ideological concerns, the goal ultimately is about enabling individual children to achieve the literacy necessary to enjoy lifelong learning, personal growth, and economic stability.

Summary of All Recommendations

1. Establish a committee under the leadership of the Director of ESL to inspect the stated philosophy, goals, and objectives of the ESL program. The committee would act to clarify the educational intent of English as a Second Language. The focus of the philosophy, goals, and objectives should be the attainment of English through language arts.
2. Clarify the specific obligations of the ESL program as related to the Supreme Court Ruling of *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; the Code of Virginia 22.1-212.1; and the Standards of Accreditation and the Standards of Learning.
 - A. If the expectation of the ESL program is to provide language arts and content area skills than a complete and exhaustive list of instructional objectives would need to be generated.
 - B. If the expectation of the ESL program is to provide only language arts skills that will facilitate learning in the content areas, then the focus should be in language arts.
3. Report current ESL student placement on the division student information database for accurate tracking and assessment purposes.
4. Explore options to serve LEP students, such as a newcomer program and relative concentration of ESL programs in elementary and middle schools. Development of a newcomer program could be factored into the redistricting and space allocations discussions that are currently underway.
5. Encourage collaboration between ESL and other programs so that LEP students can also benefit from content area instruction in other educational programs, such as special education.
6. Provide support to immigrant parents. Inform them of important information about their children's education and actively involve them in school activities by overcoming language obstacles.
7. The student information database (as recommended in *Who are the ESL students?*) for reporting and assessment purposes would enable appropriate ESL student placement in the division by providing up to date student data.
8. Maintain desirable testing conditions for group and individual placement tests.
9. Consider additional personnel to facilitate the registration process at peak periods toward a more client centered approach.
10. Complete the steps necessary to move the curriculum from draft to adoption. Distribute the ESL program standards and curriculum to all ESL teachers.

11. Establish a rigorous set of benchmarks and ways of providing feedback on ESL students' progress. Ensure the alignment of curriculum standards to Virginia Standard of Learning (SOL) and match instructional materials to the standards. Make the ESL benchmarks criteria for assessing and evaluating student performance.
12. Establish explicit placement/exit criteria. The ESL center needs to provide both elementary and secondary schools division-wide ESL assessment guides, which address identification of LEP students, placement criteria, movement from level to level, and exit criteria. Administrators and teachers should be given minimal flexibility for placement adjustment.
13. Review the delivery model in use. Select from various alternatives, the model(s) that is/are appropriate for the goals of the ESL program (e.g. Structured English Immersion).
14. Develop a division-wide network from which interpreters of different languages are available to teachers and administrators when needed. Use parents, staff, and volunteers in the metropolitan areas as resources.
15. Establish a systematic way to monitor students' progress within the program. Add ESL program information on the district-wide student data file, such as ESL entry date, levels, their movement in the system, exit date, and exemption from standardized tests.
16. Provide regular and ESL teachers adequate professional inservice to help them understand and respond to the needs of students. Include ESL teachers in grade-level teaching teams to improve cooperation between ESL and mainstream teachers.
17. Institute more consistent ways of disseminating staff development training. With the large pool of ESL teachers, some experienced, some inexperienced, professional activities need to be consistent, uniform, and up-to-date.
18. An important goal of the education of limited English proficient students is to promote literacy and content area knowledge, there is a need for more teachers who understand the specific needs of LEP students.
19. Ensure that a sufficient number of ESL-qualified faculty is hired to provide instruction and leadership in the ESL program.
20. Increase local funding to provide staff development and resource materials for ESL teachers, as well as funds for additional resources during peak registration periods.
21. Aspects of the ESL program in the ACPS, as in other jurisdictions, are contingent upon the proportional allocation of EMIA funds received from the state. This amount varies from year to year. Examine the specific areas of the ESL program that rely on external funding from year to year. Determine which portions of the program would be jeopardized by a reduction if this source of funding dried up unexpectedly. Make contingency plans to reduce the overwhelming dependency on such funds.

22. Determine if the program delivery model is congruent with the revised philosophy, goals, and objectives ESL program. The delivery model should complement the philosophy and goals.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

Monitoring and Evaluation Services
Alexandria City Public School
Suite 207
2000 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311
Phone: (703). 824-6638

May 29, 1997

Dear

Monitoring and Evaluation Services is conducting an evaluation study of the ESL program in the ACPS. The evaluation will provide descriptive information about ESL students, ESL teachers and the ESL program. If appropriate, recommendations for improvement may be suggested in the final report. The ESL evaluation, which will be carried out in several phases, will continue into the 1997-1998 school year.

The first phase of the project requires your assistance. As an ESL teacher, you can provide valuable first-hand information about various aspects of the program. Your completion of the enclosed questionnaire is crucial and will have a significant impact on the ESL program in the future. Without your efforts, it is impossible to conduct the evaluation.

It will take about 30 minutes of your valuable time to finish the questionnaire. Please feel free to write comments throughout the questionnaire. Confidentiality will be safeguarded in the evaluation. No individuals will be identified and aggregated results will be summarized in the final report. The code at the right-hand corner of the questionnaire will be used to trace the response rate. We would appreciate it if you could finish the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed envelope to Monitoring and Evaluation Services by **June 10, 1997**.

Thank you in advance for your time and efforts! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 824-6638.

Sincerely

Huafang Zhao (Ph. D).
Monitoring and Evaluation Technician

Appendix B

Principals' Questionnaire

	N	%
1. Who is responsible for evaluating ESL teachers in your school? Please specify:		
principals + assistant principals	6	46%
assistant principals	2	15%
principals	5	39%
2. Should the ESL center be involved in the evaluation process?		
1) Yes	6	46%
2) No	4	31%
3) Not sure	3	23%
comments:		
3. Are you responsible for hiring ESL teachers in your school?		
1) Yes	13	100%
2) No		
comments:		
4. Do all ESL students in your school receive ESL instruction?		
1) Yes	13	100%
2) No		
comments:		
5. Is it necessary to establish division-wide exit and placement criteria for each level in the ESL program?		
1) Yes	13	100%
2) No		
3) Don't know		
6. In your opinion, the ESL center should play a role in (circle those that apply to your school)	N	%
1) establishing curriculum guidelines.	9	69%
2) setting criteria for placement and exit of students.	11	85%
3) ESL teachers' professional development.	10	77%
4) providing information about ESL teaching methods.	10	77%
5) evaluation of ESL teachers.	5	39%
6) keeping track of ESL students' progress.	10	77%
7) hiring ESL teachers.	6	46%
8) other (specify)		
comments:		

7. Do you think ESL teachers' workload is
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|------------|
| 1) the same as other teachers'? | 8 | 62% |
| 2) lighter than other teachers'? | 1 | 8% |
| 3) heavier than other teachers'? | 4 | 31% |
- Comments:

8. Which program delivery model do you believe is the best for the ACPS ESL programs?
- | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|
| 1) ESL teachers in every school with ESL student population | 10 | 77% |
| 2) ESL teachers and instructional resources are pooled to offer the ESL program in selected sites. | 1 | 8% |
| 3) other (specify) | 1 | 8% |
| 4) Don't know | 1 | 8% |
- comments:

9. Are interpreters available to you when you need to communicate with parents who don't understand English?
- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|----|
| 1) Yes | 10 | 77% | 2) |
| No | 3 | 23% | |
| 3) Not applicable | | | |
- comments:

10. When hiring an ESL teacher, what qualifications do you rank highest in a candidate in addition to those that apply to a regular classroom teacher?

Please indicate your opinion about the following statement by circling one of the following.

SA=Strongly agree

A=Agree

DK=Don't know

D=Disagree

SD=Strongly disagree

11. The roles and responsibilities of the ESL teacher have been clearly established.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N		1	5	1	6
%		8%	39%	8%	46%
12. The criteria for ESL students' placement into ESL classes within the ACPS is consistent.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N		3	2	2	6
%		23%	15%	15%	46%
13. The ESL instruction in my school is coordinated and integrated with what is taught in regular classes.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	2	5		5	1
%	15%	39%		39%	8%
14. My school needs ESL teachers that reflect ESL students' demographic characteristics.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N		2	4	2	5
%		15%	31%	15%	39%
15. Principals are not kept adequately informed about changes in the ESL programs.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N		1	4	1	7
%		8%	31%	8%	54%
16. ESL professional development in the ACPS are adequate for my school.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N		1	3	6	3
%		8%	23%	46%	23%
17. Regular teachers should also receive in-service to address the special needs of ESL students.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N			8	5	
%			62%	39%	
18. In your school, are the following resources adequate for the ESL program?					
a. Number of ESL teachers			Yes	No	Don't
Know				9	4
N				69%	31%
%					

b. Instructional assistants	Yes	No	Don't Know
N	2	8	3
%	15%	62%	23%
c. Instructional time	Yes	No	Don't Know
N	7	5	1
%	54%	39%	8%
d. Basic textbooks	Yes	No	Don't Know
N	9	4	
%	69%	31%	
e. Supplementary materials	Yes	No	Don't Know
N	7	6	
%	54%	46%	
f. Bilingual counselors/social workers	Yes	No	Don't Know
N	7	6	
%	54%	46%	

What is needed for the ESL program in your school?

	Not needed at all-----Much needed			
	1	2	3	4
19. Workshops on second language acquisition for regular classroom teachers				
N	1	2	4	6
%	8%	15%	31%	46%
20. Information about the current second language teaching methods for ESL teachers				
N		7	6	
%		54%	46%	
21. Division-wide ESL curricula.				
N	2	5	6	
%	15%	39%	46%	

22. A systematic way to keep accurate academic progress of
of ESL students

N	1	4	8
%	8%	31%	62%

Not needed at all-----Much needed

1 2 3 4

23. Guidelines for placing ESL students

N	1	5	1	6
%	8%	39%	8%	46%

24. Guidelines for exiting ESL students

N	2	2	9
%	15%	15%	69%

25. List the strength of your school's ESL program.
(See Appendix C)

26. Indicate the weakness of your school's ESL program.
(See Appendix C)

27. Outline suggested changes for the ACPS ESL program. Thank you!
(See Appendix C)

Appendix C

Principals' Comments

1. ESL Teacher Evaluation

ESL center should be involved in the evaluation in a consultative, professional development and non-evaluative support context. It is helpful if a principal does not have background in ESL methodologies.

ESL center should be monitoring the program, rather than evaluating staff. It should serve as a resource to the building principal when teachers are experiencing difficulty.

The delivery of instruction in ESL classroom may call for specialized skills that regular teachers do not use as often. This should be reflected in the evaluation. As a principal, I have little knowledge of specialized skills in teaching English as a second language.

2. Exit and Placement Criteria

Our teaching staff sometimes disagree with the ESL center determination.

The criteria do not exist now.

3. ESL Center's Roles and Suggested Changes

Would like to see expanded role (of the ESL center) to other areas but need paradigm change to reach this goal.

It has been frustrating not having a large enough candidate pool from which to choose. Heavy recruitment efforts are needed to attract trained ESL teachers. Our students' numbers are increasing and we need to guarantee positions so we don't lose good people.

ESL center can facilitate initial screening for competence and skill preparation when hiring ESL teachers. Advisory in hiring ESL teachers.

ESL center can be involved in assisting research of an excellent pool of candidates (recruitment).

Schools are not sure of "standards" such as expectations vs. teacher-student ratios. Provide appropriate staffing ratios.

Being proactive during new teacher orientation so all teachers are trained in primary and second language acquisition.

Candidates are usually, but not always screened by the director of ESL services. The directors' approval is sought. Hiring recommendation actions have been made by the principal to personnel.

4. ESL Teachers' Work Load

ESL teachers may have fewer students, but particularly with the literacy issues many students are facing, the load becomes heavier.

ESL teachers' workload is the same as other teachers at the secondary level, but heavier than other teachers' at many elementary schools.

ESL teachers have more students than the regular teacher during many parts of the day, more time on task requires more staff.

(ESL teachers') efforts to coordinate instruction, planning for too many students, other translation duties hamper complete focus on goals.

5. Program Delivery

Would like to increase the instruction time per student so it would equal what native English speakers get.

6. Interpreter Availability

There is no guarantee that translators will always be available. I currently have 2 staff members who speak Spanish. But I have no one to translate for my Russian students.

Not enough help is available during conferences in the office or over the phone. Principal and 3 staff members are bilingual- that is all (so far).

The ESL teacher volunteers her time. Interpreters are available only because a social worker recruits and begs for volunteers and NOVA students. The ESL office does not supply us with any interpreters. All interpreters are arranged by school.

We employ people from our business partnerships and school staff members who happen to be bilingual.

7. Strength of Your School's ESL Program

The strength of our school's ESL program is our dedicated ESL staff. These teachers thoroughly enjoy working with students, they take advantage of course, staff development opportunities that are provided, they also provide staff development for parents and demonstrate genuine concerns for students, their growth and development.

The ESL teachers work well as a team and with administration. Our teacher who goes above and beyond to help students and their families. She also works well with our regular classroom teachers to help support the ESL population.

Three experienced teacher who serve specific grades so that they become members of the grade level teams. Their work enhances alignment of the curriculum or goals.

Having the program at our school helps us keep focus on issues of multi-culturalism. ESL teachers provide good information in this area.

8. Weakness of Your School's ESL Program

Curriculum

Curriculum is essentially non-existent, not to speak of correlating to the regular curriculum.

Curricular work needs to be done. The curriculum needs to correlate with regular curricula as much as possible. Have an ESL curriculum that is aligned to support the regular ACPS curriculum.

Placement and exit criteria

There are not any established exit criteria. Students are exited only on judgment of teachers. Consistency is important.

Exit criteria needs to be formulated for all levels of ESL (Basic through Advanced).

Set specific guidelines for entering and existing the ESL program that are to be adhered to by all schools.

We continue to debate with the ESL center regarding the placement of older students in the school program, especially when language acquisition appears to be the goal.

Resources

The number one priority- effective K-5 staffing and programs.

Hire more ESL teachers. Increase instructional ESL time for students.

In my school, there is not enough time. The teacher is only part time, only half of the day. Students need support all day. Students need more time in ESL (45 minute - 1 hour daily is not enough especially for grades 3, 4, 5).

Lack of sufficient staff to adequately meet the needs of the growing number of beginning students.

Support for regular classroom

Regular classroom teachers are not knowledgeable of second language teaching methodology. Help regular education teachers to better teach ESL students.

Takes too long for students to gain competence in “academic English” so that can be measured to today’s higher standards.

ESL center and program

ESL center should be a resource for teachers, not an entity that is arbitrary and capricious. It should not attempt to dictate program but should work with teachers to develop appropriate curriculum that parallel to curricula of other standards.

Program needs overall strengthening. Work with reading teachers and principals to develop exit criteria for ESL students. Reading levels and language development must be addressed (critical). ESL students who exit generally read at 2 or 3 years lower than other students put a hardship on reading instructional delivery.

Increase the dialogue between schools and ESL center staff.

Alternative Services

The system needs to expand alternatives and services to assist older students who may not be able to acquire a diploma in the time they could have in school. There are no effective electives at secondary level.

Offer after-school program in basic skills in 1st language.

More translators and information given in Spanish and other languages.

Expand range of options based on demographics at schools, language of learners, academic needs of learners. Should include immersion and other bilingual program options.

Appendix D

ESL Teacher's Questionnaire Code ____

1. Circle the grade levels of the ESL students you serve.

KG 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Mean=3.6 grade levels

2. How long have you been a teacher?

Year(s) ____

Mean=13.4 years

3. How long have you been teaching ESL students?

Year(s) ____

Mean=9.1 years

4. Do you speak another language besides English?

1) Yes

2) No (If no, skip the next question)

N	%
36	92%
3	8%

5. What is the proficiency level of your second language?

1) Not very proficient

2) Somewhat proficient

3) Very proficient

9) NA

8	21%
13	33%
15	42%
3	8%

6. Circle the ESL levels of the students you teach.

1) Basic

2) Beginner

3) Intermediate One

4) Intermediate Two

5) Advanced

4	10%
9	23%
15	39%
7	18%
4	10%

7. In your opinion, does the above 5-level model work well in the ACPS? Please explain.

1) Yes

2) No

3) Don't know

22	56%
8	21%
9	23%

8. What assessment instruments do you use to evaluate ESL students for placement?

Please specify:

9. What assessment instruments do you use to evaluate ESL students for exit of the program?
Please specify:

10. How often do you communicate with ESL parents?

1) Rarely	1	3%
2) Occasionally	24	62%
3) Often	14	36%

11. How do you communicate with ESL parents? (circle all that apply)

1) Conferences	37	95%
2) Telephone	37	95%
3) Letters	30	77%
4) Home visits	13	33%
5) Through interpreters	22	56%
6) Other (specify): _____		

Please indicate your opinion about the following statements by circling your choice.

SA=Strongly agree

SD=Strongly disagree

A=Agree

D=Disagree

DK=Don't know

Strongly agree-----Strongly disagree

12. Interpreters are not readily available when needed.

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	9	15	4	7	4
%	23%	39%	10%	18%	10%

13. There is a division-wide curriculum guide for all levels/courses in the ESL program.

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	6	7	4	10	12
%	15%	18%	10%	26%	31%

14. There is continuity in the ESL program from lower to higher levels in your school.

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	11	20	1	3	4
%	28%	51%	3%	8%	10%

15. The roles and responsibilities of the ESL teachers are not clearly established.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	5	7	2	21	4
%	13%	18%	5%	54%	10%
16. The contents of the ESL program are well integrated with what is being taught in regular classes.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	1	10	8	12	8
%	3%	26%	21%	31%	21%
17. The evaluation process for ESL teachers is inadequate.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	1	6	10	14	8
%	3%	15%	26%	36%	21%
18. There is a need for ESL teachers who reflect students' backgrounds.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	2	10	7	15	5
%	5%	26%	18%	39%	13%
19. ESL teachers are not kept adequately informed about changes in local ESL programs.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	2	11	6	15	5
%	5%	28%	15%	39%	13%
20. ESL in-service and professional development in the division are adequate.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	2	9	3	19	6
%	5%	23%	8%	49%	15%

SA=Strongly agree
A=Agree

SD=Strongly disagree
D=Disagree

DK=Don't know

Strongly agree-----Strongly disagree

21. Regular teachers do not need to receive in-service to address the needs of ESL students.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	2	2	0	13	22
%	5%	5%	0%	33%	56%
22. ESL teachers have the opportunity to choose appropriate teaching materials for their classes.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	9	22	1	5	2
%	23%	56%	3%	13%	5%
23. The average ESL student should exit the program in three years.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	2	12	5	13	7
%	5%	31%	13%	33%	18%
24. ESL teaching materials in my school are up-to-date.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	1	20	4	8	6
%	3%	51%	10%	21%	15%
25. ESL teaching materials are age-appropriate for my students.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	2	23	1	10	3
%	5%	59%	3%	26%	8%
26. There is not enough uninterrupted instructional time to implement the ESL curriculum.	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	5	11	0	19	4
%	13%	28%	0%	49%	10%

27. ESL teachers are not kept adequately informed about the recent research on teaching ESL students.

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	2	18	5	12	2
%	5%	46%	13%	31%	5%

28. ESL teachers have a difficult time communicating with ESL parents.

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
N	0	10	5	20	4
%	0%	26%	13%	51%	10%

29. How do you obtain information about ESL research? (circle all that apply)

	N	%
1) TESL journals	28	72%
2) Professional conferences	30	77%
3) Divisional workshops/in-services	24	62%
4) Media	17	44%
5) ESL teachers	30	77%
6) Other (specify): _____		

30. In your school, are the following resources adequate for the ESL program?

1) Number of ESL teachers	Yes	No	Don't know
N	22	17	
%	56%	44%	
2) Instructional assistants	Yes	No	Don't know
N	4	33	2
%	10%	85%	5%
3) Amount of instructional time	Yes	No	Don't know
N	25	14	
%	64%	36%	
4) Textbooks	Yes	No	Don't know
N	24	14	1
%	62%	36%	3%
5) Supplementary materials	Yes	No	Don't know
N	20	19	
%	51%	49%	

6) Bilingual counselors/social workers	Yes	No	Don't know
N	9	27	3
%	23%	69%	8%

31. Which program delivery model do you believe is the most appropriate for the ACPS ESL program?

	N	%
1) ESL teachers in every school with an ESL student population.	28	72%
2) Students travel to several ESL centers in the ACPS.	1	3%
3) ESL teachers and instructional resources are pooled to offer the ESL program in the select sites.	7	18%
4) Other (specify): _____		

Major needs for your ESL students Not needed-----Much needed

1 2 3 4

32. To develop oral proficiency

N	5	10	24
%	13%	26%	62%

33. To develop proficiency in writing

N	5	34
%	13%	87%

34. To develop academic language and proficiency

N	1	7	31
%	3%	18%	80%

35. To develop basic interpersonal communication skills

N	1	9	8	21
%	3%	23%	21%	54%

36. To participate in ESL summer school

N	2	1	7	29
%	5%	3%	18%	74%

Major needs for the ESL program

37. Workshops on how to teach ESL students in regular classrooms

N	1	22	16
%	3%	56%	41%

	Not needed-----Much needed			
	1	2	3	4
38. Information about the current second language teaching methods for ESL teachers				
N	3	8	18	10
%	8%	21%	46%	27%

Major needs for your ESL students

39. Division-wide ESL curricula				
N	2	6	13	18
%	5%	15%	33%	46%

40. Systematic records of academic progress of ESL students				
N	1	4	17	17
%	3%	10%	44%	44%

41. Appropriate instructional materials for different levels				
N	2	1	13	23
%	5%	3%	33%	59%

42. Do you have the same access to technology as other teachers in your school?		
	N	%
1) Yes	28	72%
2) No	11	28%

43. Please comment on the appropriate placement/exit criteria for ESL students.

(See Appendix E)

44. List the strengths of the ACPS ESL program.

(See Appendix E)

45. Indicate the weakness of the ACPS ESL program.

(See Appendix E)

46. What do you think the ACPS ESL program should accomplish?

(See Appendix E)

47. Outline any suggested changes in the ACPS ESL program. Thank you!

(See Appendix E)

Appendix E

ESL Teachers' Comments

1. Goals of the ACPS ESL Program

Prepare students for mainstream classes. Current mission is on target. Help students mainstream as soon (quickly) as possible and develop the basic skills in regular classroom.

Mainstream when ready so they can earn enough credits to graduate. Help them succeed in getting a diploma and higher education.

ESL should help students progress and advance in a timely manner, to exit the program in a minimum of time.

Get students out of ESL as soon as they are able to function successfully at C (Grade) and above in the mainstream classroom.

Bring students' academic proficiency to a level where they can successfully work in regular classroom.

Educate students in all subject areas while they develop their language skills so when they exit, they are not behind in content area. Develop English proficiency in speaking, reading and writing.

Help them build confidence as speakers, readers, writers and listeners of the English language so they can perform to their potential (success) in the regular classroom. To function on grade level. Able to pass LPT (all three) who enter grade 8 or above.

Have a talented/gifted resource program and a learning disability program when needed. Provide best learning opportunities for our students so they have the skills to achieve at a level commensurable with their intellectual abilities. We should settle for nothing less.

Increase student self-esteem and pride.

Students learn how to become independent learners. Teach high order thinking skills. Should teach basic interpersonal communication skills, academic proficiency skills.

Help ESL parents understand and support their children's education.

Prepare students for employment. Help students to succeed in life interaction or the world.

Prepare students to be at home in American culture. Help them successful in social interactions in a new culture.

Teach American culture so they can adapt to society. To function in an English speaking system.

Teach students to maintain and respect their language and culture while embracing that of their new home.

To honor and validate students' culture, language and experience.

Provide place where students are free to make mistakes and experiment.

2. ESL Program Delivery

Non-English speaking students would benefit from attending an intensive ESL program for one or two semesters and then return to feeder schools when they become orally proficient.

A newcomer school for basic/beginner level students only. As intermediate students, they could enter ESL program in a regular school.

ESL instruction through immersion program for Spanish speakers may work.

We could use books about a given topic in a range of 2-4 different reading levels so we could differentiate the instruction in heterogeneous classes.

Segregation is illegal. Students need to have contact with English speaking population as well as exposure to native-English speakers. They can gain a lot by being in a regular classroom and exit transition can be easier.

ESL students are often alienated. If students travel to several ESL sites in the ACPS, or if instructional resources and teachers are pooled to offer ESL program in the select sites, they would be further alienated.

3. Placement/exit Criteria

The ESL center does the initial placement and school teachers fine-tune it when necessary. It is imperative to be flexible based on each student's program constraints and needs.

Considering staffing limitations and budget constraints, ESL center does an outstanding job of testing and placing students in ESL programs.

More needs to be done at either the ESL center or at the students' school to assess the students' ability and competence in greater depth, preferably in the students' first language.

Now there are no standardized exit criteria. Exit criteria should be consistent and written down into standard forms.

They should be more specifically defined. Exit test should be tied to curriculum objectives or course objectives.

The exit process should be gradual with tutoring and support. Students should be able to learn academic subjects in English after exit.

Exit tests may include close reading tests and grammar tests, end of term test from ESL center and reading level/ability. A standardized test to mainstream students would be helpful, too.

We need a good placement/exit test which includes grammar, reading and writing.

Summer schools help us to exit advanced students. But students sometimes are exited because there was not time and resources for them.

Some students can spend 5 years in ESL and not improve because of an LD problem. If a student has been in ESL 5-6 years, exit them. Try a new plan. It may not be an ESL problem. Keep them in the ESL program is discrimination.

In our school, former ESL students have an extremely high success rate in the mainstream because of an external process of evaluating students prior to exiting them.

4. Strength of ACPS ESL Program

The major strength of the program is the teaching staff. 90% of teachers are excellent, experienced, dedicated, wonderful and caring teachers. Some bilingual ESL teachers.

This system has a group of the best ESL teachers not to be found anywhere. In addition to being full time teachers, they are part-time translators, parents and social workers for their students and families.

Teachers sensitive to diverse needs of students. We adapt to the needs of our population. Teachers able to tailor-make their program. Teachers act as students' advocates.

These dedicated teachers are probably the greatest strength of the program.

In my school, I am lucky to work with such a caring, hard working and creative group of ESL teachers.

In some schools, there are adequate staff. Supportive administrators in secondary schools.

Flexible to the diverse needs/program flexibility in different schools, teacher flexibility to design schedule, making changes based on students' level when necessary.

Pull-out/inclusion system depending on teachers' decision. Availability of teachers on site. Teaching by levels is a good idea.

Students at the upper levels are integrated into mainstream classes.

Strong advocacy by ESL center. Effective administration at ESL center. Relatively accurate initial placement.

Good communication and effective management between ESL teacher at some secondary schools and ESL center.

Cooperation between classroom teachers and ESL teachers in some schools. Some schools have small classes, adequate resources, and adequate materials. Communication among ESL teachers.

There are some new materials with a focus on literature that prepares ESL students for regular English course work.

Good summer school for ESL students. There is curriculum guide in secondary school for ESL teachers. Good block scheduling.

School system should recognize the strength and diversity the ESL population brings to the students. In the May 30, 1997 Gazette-Port Packet, list of TC students receiving scholarships, 5 I recognized as products of John Adams ESL program.

Students for the most part, are willing to work if approached at the right level.

5. Weakness of ACPS ESL Program

Program Marginality

In the last 2 years, teachers' morale system-wide seemed low. ESL is a low profile in the mission of school district.

Feel ESL is a marginal part of the ACPS. ESL is not a priority in ACPS.

ESL teachers are not considered real teachers and not extended professional courtesy.

Little respect for the ESL professionals. Teachers have compartmentalized day.

We need to raise the awareness and stature for ESL with administration and school board.

Administrators and others consider ESL to be baby-sitting service and pass off problems to ESL teachers.

Let's not treat ESL students differently. If the student was exited from the program for a good reason, then maybe there are some other issues going on that are not really language related.

Treat them like Americans, call parents, involve guidance counselor.... ESL students should be treated with the same dignity as everyone else.

ESL students should feel welcomed, receive excellent education and be treated with the same dignity as everyone else.

Students, parents and teachers not to be regarded as second rate or expendable merely because majority of the population does not vote.

The district is seriously out of compliance with federal guidelines for ESL students referral to special education because of a lack of personnel to test in other languages.

ACPS have no sensitivity of ESL population, no opportunity to professional conference.

Administrators do not care about Hispanic Population, everything is either black or white. You have a sense of not wanted. Alexandria had the highest Hispanic drop out rate in the whole metropolitan area. It is not a coincidence.

Do not consider the ESL program a very outstanding one. My X³ years at the school, with the exception of the interaction with students, have offered very little for my professional development. ESL get lost.

We are not even the least priority. We are like stepchildren.

System regard ESL as low priority. System ignores ESL students' needs. System not supportive of alternative programs.

I, myself as an ESL teacher of (certain ethnic group), have always felt unwanted in the (specific) school⁴. I don't even have a phone to communicate with parents.

In some school, Hispanic parents have to wait for hours for somebody to talk to them. Because I communicate with students and help them understand English through their native language, I have received negative evaluation. No career for Hispanic ESL teachers here.

In intermediate and advance level of ESL, students are not receiving the same quality of literature that mainstream students are offered.

My classroom has to be moved in the middle of a semester due to a crowded class. Because of the pull-out model, students come and go and a lot of time wasted. My past experience teaching ESL in other place was much pleasant than here in ACPS.

We are the last to get resources, technology.

³ The actual number of years is intentionally omitted by the researcher to safeguard confidentiality of the teacher.

⁴ Ethnicity and the school name were omitted by the researcher on purpose.

Curricula

Each elementary school do things differently. Need to make sure they are on the right tracks.

Need clear curriculum guidelines at each level aligned with SOL. Lack integration with ACPS curricula. Need curricula and guidelines for the elementary program.

Not enough curriculum leadership. Not all of the lower levels have curriculum materials yet. We need to keep up with changes in curriculum development.

Curriculum does not acknowledge or respond to the needs of a very large segment of the ESL population.

Need curriculum in print, standards and exit criteria, no curriculum to follow. The same curriculum from 6th to 12th grades. Lack of well defined criteria for movement through and out of program.

As a new ESL teacher, I am not given curriculum guide. What is the expectation in each level? No one to consult because we are teaching different grades. With a very diversified population, no leadership provided and no support. I have to copy teaching materials for students almost every day. I am exhausted and frustrated. I am teaching multiple grades in one ESL class, what SOL should I use? At what grade level?

Assessment and Placement

The student is placed in the third grade due to her age, and has to learn how to hold pencils for the first time in our school, need basic social skills to function in class, such as ask permissions, show respect, take turns, don't interrupt people. We have a 9-year old fourth grader, starting school only in September and function at K level. Out of 20 or more students, only five ready to learn.

Too many ESL students are excluded from standardized tests in some schools to improve class/school scores.

No other formal assessment tools available for ESL students. No exit criteria. Need consistent standards or criteria for exit.

Reading and math placement tests are not adequate. Need more clearly defined and operated placement system that consists of varied assessment.

Need special placement or assistance with ESL students of learning disability. Appropriate placement is difficult in mid-year.

With SOL in place and no extra help, many students are not likely to get advanced diplomas.

In standardized tests, there is a tendency to exclude students from taking these tests. As pressure built up for mainstream students' performance, ESL students are also pushed back.

Communication

ESL center was moved from the other department of the central offices so it makes disseminating information more difficult. ESL center needs more professional help.

Not enough communication. Need better articulation between schools and administrators.

Program support

No consistency across district at elementary level. Programs vary according to school administrators.

Little consistency between schools regarding placement, exit criteria, curriculum and teacher-student ratio.

Mainstream teachers need to be trained on working with ESL students. Staff in other programs unprepared for bilingual or monolingual special education students.

Some mainstream teachers are very help, some regard ESL students as extra burden and ignore the students in regular classes. Higher grade students have less time to catch up with their English peers.

Students are isolated. Some regular teachers do not want to include ESL students. If a students have not where to put, they are put in ESL.

Administrator made changes so students spent more time in ESL. We are mainly language teachers, not content teachers. When students reach high grades, we don't feel comfortable to teach outside our expertise. ESL teachers and students are in cross-grade teams so they are less integrated with mainstream students.

Need more staff development. ESL program not well staffed and supported by the central office staff. Limited classroom teacher preparation in multicultural education.

First language instruction needed to boost academic achievement and self-esteem.

Difficulty getting ESL students through special educational referral process, especially speech/language. Many delays. No specialized program for preliterate or at risk ESL students.

No bilingual support outside ESL teachers, such as social workers, guidance....

No support from the central office.

Need standard forms in other languages for information dissemination.

Bilingual instructional assistants being pulled from the classroom (e.g. If anyone calls with Hispanic sounding name, assistant is called because the secretary/clears can not be bothered to see what the person needs. Often they speak English well and interpretation assistant not really needed.

Resources

Lack of city-wide cohesiveness. Great discrepancy across schools.

High teacher-student ratio. Some classes too large considering that they are so very heterogeneous. ESL teachers have more responsibilities than teaching English.

Elementary students undeserved. Some not served. Try to serve too many students with too few teachers.

Our ESL student number is so large and we have never got the additional person the superintendent agreed we needed. Not enough teachers to give students intensive instruction they need.

Too many students, not enough support. ESL teachers spent a lot of time as translators or interpreters.

In my school, over 130 ESL students across six grade levels with three teachers. Few students receive enough instruction time.

Not sufficient classroom space for the ESL program at all levels. System-wide, teachers share classrooms, often teaching two different lessons in the same space.

Others are teaching in rooms built to be offices and storage rooms. This problem must be solved. It not only affects staff morale, but it negatively impacts the learning environment.

One of the points that is against all research and for which I have been evaluated as having a deficiency is using the native language my students speak.

Not enough appropriate reading and writing materials. Limited supplies of some books, some outdated materials at some levels.

Not enough time to teach at elementary level. High/middle schools can't do their job effectively if the students do not have a strong base at elementary level. Not enough time with students. Need assistant teacher at lower levels.

More mainstreaming for electives. Need classes for students with high oral but low reading/writing skills.

Many of the stories in the ESL texts are about different cultures and the lives of these people. They should be exposed to the same kinds/quality of literature as others. When they are mainstreamed, they are not at the disadvantage.

Insufficient personnel and money to maintain quality. Little focus on ESL and its role and staff development.

Should provide quality education comparable to that of regular students. Prepare 2nd language learner to fit into our society culturally, economically.

Produce oral/written proficient, well-adjusted new members of the society. Students only receive a small amount of ESL instruction per day.

Newly arrived students spend 4-5 hours a day in the regular classroom without work they can do.

Higher level ESL students are often ignored by classroom teachers as if not their responsibility.

We don't have math textbooks geared toward children who had no schooling in their native language due to war.

Too many students to serve, no materials tailored to our population who are not literate in first language.

How to educate the illiterate students is a real challenge. We need strong reading support. We also need to address the needs for students who speak tribal English, but no academic skills.

6. Suggested Changes

Division Policies

Support from central office and administrators at each level division wide. Change the low priority perception towards the program. Do not regard ESL as a burden.

Heighten sensitivity towards our ESL population. Some students have no winter clothes, no transportation, their families struggle to survive.

Students over 17/18 years old should not be enrolled in the high school. Explore alternative programs (adult education and vocational).

ESL teachers need regular classroom experience before teaching ESL so they can understand skills needed to survive in the classroom.

Teachers need to be more involved in designing the curriculum and select appropriate materials.

Need a positive outlook for the ESL program so this will filter down to the students so that they believe there are doors of opportunities waiting for them.

For newly-arrived students, more intensive and stable ESL classes so that they are not pushed around and overwhelmed with social and emotional turmoil in the first year here. Consider newcomer school for elementary.

Address the issues of students with little or no previous schooling. Acknowledgment of the larger ESL population and its impact on teaching, test scores.

Track the transience of ACPS ESL population. Introduce a system to track basic ESL students' program. Institute exit criteria and test.

Offer more Spanish immersion. Offer some self-contained bilingual classrooms for at risk students.

Curriculum supervision/ program advocate at district level. ESL teachers should be able to schedule in a way best for the students not for some convenience.

Continuous stream of ESL students into the classroom difficult for teachers. Possibly students be held after intake testing for specific dates of entry into the classroom.

Maintaining a continuing, cohesive plan of instruction with students coming and going is a difficult task. I draw 4th and 5th students from 4 homerooms (last year it was 7) during a language arts time block. With special programs, field trips, orchestra, band, TAG..., there is seldom a week that I have all of my students in class at one time for an entire period.

Professional development

Plan in advance so teachers can have professional development and arrange for substitutes if needed. Consolidate mentor system in schools.

More integrated with mainstream content classes. Cooperation between regular and ESL teachers. Planning with mainstream teachers.

Professional training in multicultural education. Train mainstream teachers to work with ESL /transiting/exit students.

In-service training for ESL teachers' professional development. ESL related workshop or inservice seminars. Sponsorship of conference attendance.

We used to have language in-service classes. This was extremely helpful. Fund them again.

Training for principals. Provide more teaching /training workshop to introduce new development trends in ESL methodology. Educate them about language learning stages.

Curricula

Create and design the ACPS curriculum for ESL that correlates with the national, state and local SOL while considering the time limit of ESL teachers.

Curriculum should choose certain skills that are of the highest priority and transferred easily to each grade level building upon the prior year.

Broaden ESL curriculum. Objectives clearly stated. Revise the curricula to a more age/grade appropriate for middle/high schools.

Curriculum in content areas such as ESL biology, ESL VA history, ESL LPT preparation.

Teachers and administrators should be sensitive to multicultural issues. Not only focus on English language skills/acquisition.

Assessment

ESL teachers should get test scores, placement test score and their background information from the ESL center as soon as students are placed in schools.

Formalized and standardize placement and exit criteria division-wide. More cooperation between reading department and ESL department.

Get away from focus on 'three years and your out'. Make sure students receive the support they need.

Make sure all exit students get the help they need or don't exit until right at grade level. Need more staff.

Resources

More funding and staffs needed. More teachers needed, esp. at the upper middle schools. More resources in ESL programs.

Large classes are counter-productive. More contact hours with students. Inclusion model for advanced ESL. Not enough time with students. Picking up students from different classes wastes instructional time.

Provide continuous support for some exiting students to help them deal with academic content areas, and reading/writing difficulty.

Need form letters/report cards available in main languages spoken.

Provide proper study materials such as textbooks. Purchase useful language learning software to take advantages of technology

Realize the fact many bilingual students not qualified for ESL have parents who do not speak English well, if at all

Hire salaried parent liaisons at schools with more than 10% ESL population. Provide more interpreters. Hire more translators so parents can help children at home. Provide parent training, cultural orientation class for parents.

Offer bilingual pre-school ESL program and parenting classes. More information and awareness of Learning Disability characteristics in ESL population. More documentation of LD possibilities for students going through ESL center. Early intervention ESL students to learn K-1 skills to be on grade level at the 2nd grade.

Not direct all resources at K-1 level due to primary initiation and ignore intermediate grade.

Allow more teacher time to collaborate with classroom teachers (such as co-teaching). Train instructional assistant to work with ESL students in the grade level classrooms.

Encourage reading teachers to serve ESL students. More support from reading department.

Provide enough summer school classes. This year at least 2 classes were cut. Need ESL-Special education program with teachers having both ESL and Sp. Edu. certification. Increase pre-school program and kindergarten summer school.

ESL students should be mainstreamed whenever possible. They should be definitely allowed into electives like art where they can succeed. Because of space problems at our school, they have been isolated in an art class that an ESL teacher must teach. Couldn't the ESL teachers be better utilized?

Reorganize that the ESL center is responsible for curriculum and placement. ESL center need more help.

A district of this size with many ESL students needs more personnel to run things effectively. Most districts have twice the personnel. More budget to ESL.

Bilingual person in school office. Employ and train aids from various language and cultural backgrounds.

Hire teachers who reflect the same demographic background as the students.

Need more ESL counselor (the current one does good job but overloaded). ESL social worker to deal with special problems of these students. Bilingual social workers/counselors to do academic testing of ESL children.

Look into the possibility of an "inclusion" mode such as special education has.

Modify the program to ensure greater success for uneducated or minimally educated students. Basic level no sufficient for their needs. Some students need to be directed into trades as well as academic areas.

Provide opportunities for learning experience in the students' home languages so that they will see the outside world values their languages and cultures.

Ensure all ESL teachers with 30 or more students have an assistant so that ESL staff can work more closely with regular teachers. I don't have time to participate in regular teachers' team planning because I am serving too many students. Working closely with regular teachers help students exit more quickly

Students

For those literate in first language, provide a concentrated program so that they are able to function on or near grade level within two years. A resource teacher be available to assist students in contend area.

Students with good academic credentials have opportunity to progress in English to a level, able to enter community college without having to take ESL classes prior to admission.

For students illiterate in their first language, have an established program to give them the basic literacy skills. Give them a long range plan maybe through adult education. Ensure students entering mainstream classes with language proficiency to compete with their peers. Would not be exited from ESL without the skills necessary to pass LPT.

For students to learn good English language skills they have to believe this country has an opportunity for them. Through hard work, and responsible behavior, they can achieve the things they want.

At the elementary level, most students who have had appropriate K-3 services are demonstrating language competencies by the end of third grade. They may not yet be reading or writing on grade level, but they are close. This shows that early intervention works.

At some school where there are sufficient staff to implement an extended resource program, the students do quite well. In some schools, ESL teachers also teach ESL math class designed to teach computational skills and math vocabulary. This is sorely needed in all schools where ESL students come to ACPS without grade level computational competencies.

Sometimes we enroll few totally non-English speaking students. Because they are so few yet require extended instructional time, we have difficulty allocating sufficient time to meet their needs.

Now students come to us with non-standard English oral survival skills, with severe academic decencies in language, math, social study and science and lack appropriate school social skills. They are different from central American or Afghan students a few years ago. They need different methodologies and material to address their learning needs. At present, we have neither.

Appendix F

Classroom Observation Checklist⁵

School _____ Observer _____ Date 10/15-12/03 1997 Time : 19 morning 6 afternoon

Note: Complete 1-7 with the help of teachers if necessary.

1. Class size **12.8** (No. of students) Today's attendance **11.9 mean**
2. Grades **1-10**
3. Subject taught: **Language Arts 20 Mathematics- 1 Social Studies- 2**
Beginning Level- 1 Intermediate Level- 1 Total= **25**
4. How many languages spoken by students? **3.6 (mean)**
5. How many nationalities represented by students in your class? **4.6 (mean)**
6. Are textbooks usually proper for the grade levels?
Yes-**19**
No- **3**
Sometimes- **3**
7. ESL Levels
1 Basic- **4**
2 Beginner- **6**
3 Intermediate I- **2**
4 Intermediate II- **2**
5 Advanced- **3**
6 mixed- **7**
8. Classroom location
1. regular classroom- **20**
2. classroom shared- **3**
3. open space- **1**
4. other- **1**
9. Is the classroom proper for instruction?
Yes- **22**
No- **3**
10. How many students are disengaged in the class? **.9 (mean)**

⁵ The summary of the classroom observation can be found in the RESULTS section.

11. How are discipline problems handled?
12. Instructional aids
 - 1 video- **6**
 - 2 computer
 - 3 chalkboard
 - 4 overhead
 - 5 handouts
 - 6 concrete objects- **3**
 - 7 other- **14**

(Other included multiple methods from the list for questions 12 through 18)
- 13 Group work
 - 1 groups- **12**
 - 2 pairs
 - 3 seating arrangement- **5**
 - 4 other- **8**
14. Interaction
 - 1 teacher circulates in class- **1**
 - 2 teacher probes students' thinking
 - 3 students ask questions
 - 4 teacher asks students questions- **4**
 - 5 students ask one another questions
 - 6 other- **20**
15. Practice
 - 1 worksheets - **7**
 - 2 assignments- **2**
 - 3 role play
 - 4 oral drill- **1**
 - 4 other- **12**
16. Discussion
 - 1 whole class- **8**
 - 2 group- **1**
 - 3 teacher-directed- **2**
 - 4 students-students
 - 5 other- **12**
17. Problem solving
 - 1 teacher modeling - **10**
 - 2 students sharing
 - 3 experimentation if applicable
 - 4 other- **5**
18. Assessment

- 1 teacher's questions- 3
- 2 worksheets- 4
- 3 homework- 3
- 4 pop quiz- 1
- 5 other- 9

19. classroom activity summary

Teacher Interview Questions

20. What program support do you need most to serve the ESL students?

23. Would you please identify some students who have exited the ESL in a short period ? In your opinion, what factors do you think contributed to their progress?

Name	Grade	School
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24. Would you please identify some students whose progress has been slow? In your opinion, what are the possible reasons?

Name	Grade	School
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Appendix G

ESL Students' Interview Guide⁶

Date: Interviewee:
Nationality: Native Languages:
Sex: Total Time:

Interviewer: Explain the purpose of the interview, ask permission for the use of a tape recorder and promise confidentiality.

Background

1. Which grade are you in now?
2. How long have you been in the US?
3. Do you work after school? If yes, how many hours a week?
4. How many years of schooling did you have before you came to America?
5. Tell me something about your family (family members, parental education, occupations in home and host countries)
6. When do you still use your first language? (How often in school?)

Frame of References

7. How do you like (or dislike) your life/education in the US?

Hostility and Strategies to Deal With It

8. Have you experienced discrimination in school? Tell me what happened.
(Explain "discrimination" if needed)

Parental Expectation

9. What is the highest education your parents want you to get?
10. What do your parents want you to do when you finish school?

Self Motivation

11. What is the highest education you want to get?

⁶ The summary of student interviews is also provided in the RESULTS section.

12. What do you want to do after you finish school?

School work and Family Support

13. Are your parents (relatives) able to help you with your school work?

14. (if yes to the above question) How do they help you?

15. If you have difficulty with your school work, who usually helps you?

16. How many hours do you usually spend on study a day?

17. Tell me about your best friends.

18. Do you belong to any school clubs or sports teams (or take part in any extra-curriculum activities)?

ESL Program

19. How long have you been in the ESL program?

20. Do you think you were placed at the right ESL level at the that time? (If the answer is no, ask why?)

21. How did the ESL teachers help you with learning? What help do you need most from them?

22. Are you satisfied with the ESL classes in your school?

Mainstream Classroom

23. Tell me your experience in the regular class. or what is it like in your regular class?
Use prompts if needed (Do you ask questions in classroom, do group work...?)

24. Do you feel comfortable asking questions in your regular class? (If the answer is no, ask why?)

25. How do regular classroom teachers help you to learn?

26. Which class do you find most difficult? Why?

27. Which class do you find easiest? Why?

28. Are you able to manage your work in regular classes now?

29. What do you think your school can do to help ESL students?

30. What advice would you give to new ESL students?

For Exited students only

31. When did you leave ESL?

32. How long did you stay in ESL before you left the program?

33. Were you able to handle regular class work when you first left ESL?
If no, how did you manage to get the work done?

Appendix H

Students' Comments

1. Serial Immigration

My father came first eight years ago, then he sent for my mother six years ago, then they sent for us, me and my sister. When my parents came, I lived with my father's brother and my sister lived with my mother's sister. It was difficult to be separated from my parents and my sister. I was not used to living with my father's brother. Now I am here, I miss my uncle because I grew up with him. A few years ago, when Liberia tried to take over Sierra Leone, there was a war in my country, a lot of fighting. Buildings broke down. The building next to us were destroyed. Nothing left. So mother sent for me and my sister.

I live with my mother and brothers. My father lives in Chicago, but I don't ever know him. He never gives us anything, not even a penny. I don't have any relationship with my father. My father came here long ago when he was my age. My mother came in 1981. When she left, I was living with my mother's sister in El Salvador. Actually, I grew up with her. I call her mother. She gave everything to me. She is like a mom to me. I came here by myself six years ago. My aunt is still there. I miss her. I want to visit her. My mother has been here for a long time, she doesn't speak English. She works from 9:00 to 9:00 cleaning the bathroom. She first came here, she had to work and send money back to El Salvador. She has no time to study. She told us she is pride of us. Now we are speaking English, this is something that will help us find a good job.

My father came to the US about 20 years ago and visited home several times. Some of my brothers came next. Then I came with my mother and three brothers about three years ago. It took 20 years for us to be together.

I have one sister, two brothers, my father and mother. There are six of us in the family. But only three of us here in the US, my parents and me. I am the youngest child. My father works in a restaurant. My mother is not working. My father came here 10 years ago. When my mother came here, about 7 years ago, I stayed with grandma. I really miss her. My brothers are coming this year.

2. Family

My parents work in the embassy. They have been here for three years. They finished college and worked for insurance in my country. I speak both English and my native language. We studied English from kindergarten to high school. English is our official language. My parents speak English. They help me. They read me some books. If I have questions, they explain to me in my language I can understand.

My father came here six years ago. I have no brothers and sisters. My biological mother is a math teacher. My father has a master degree in electronics. He is a manager of Radio Shock. My biological parents are divorced. My stepmother is an American. She had her Ph.D. in UVA. She is a good mom. She is a teacher in a middle school. She teaches me a lot of stuff I

should have known long ago. She tried to find every opportunity for me to go in and touch the American society. That is why I went to three summer camps (academic, basketball and sailing) last year. My parents take me to places like museum and help me to learn the American culture.

I never went to school before, period. I went to school for the first time in my life here in the ninth grade. My mother never goes to school so she does not know anything about school. My father did not send us to school because he wanted us to learn English, not Somali. Then war broke out and I could not go to school. My parents do not speak much English. They can't help me with my work. They don't have any clue. They just encourage me to sit there and study. If my dad doesn't see me sitting at the table studying, he will ask me to sit down and study.

Now I have to work to support the family. I have to work very hard, yesterday from 3 to 11 PM. During holidays, I have to work longer hours to make money. I have to support my parents and two younger brothers with some help from the government.

My father works in the parking lot. Both of my parents graduated from college in Ethiopia. My father speaks and reads a little English. My father has to work until 11:00 (PM). So he can not come to school. My mother does not know where my school is. She only speaks little English. She is afraid to come to school.

No they can't help me. They don't speak English. They work hard, they can not come to school because they do not speak English. But they often check to see if I finish my work. They told me to study hard. I wish they understand English so they can help me.

No body can help me with my homework. My parents can not provide any help. Sometimes, they ask me to do homework. They have to support us three children. My father is making only enough money for the food. They can't come to school because my father has to work during the day and at night. My father works in a hotel full time. My father speaks a little English but my mother does not. That is why she doesn't want to come to school. She also works part time. I don't know how much schooling they had, I guess several years, they can read and write a little Spanish. My parents know nothing about schools here.

I don't want to be in school anymore. It is too hard to work and go to school at the same time. I don't have time for homework. I have to support myself. My parents can't support me. They are very old. We have five people in the house. I have to earn money to buy things like clothes for myself. I also help to pay for rent and food. I have been supporting myself and my family since I came here at the age of 16.

3. Hostility and Mechanism to Deal With It

They call my names. They think it is fun to say that way. But it's kind of disrespect. I didn't say anything. I just let it go. They are trying to find some fun. If you try to laugh at me, fine. Later, you will understand what you did is wrong. You are disrespectful and you may have the same situation later when other people make fun of you. Later in society, you will learn that was wrong.

One day in summer, some students didn't want me to sit in the bus. Because they don't like the way I do things. They called my names and made fun of me.

When I first came here, they called my name. It made me angry. They fought me. I found back. We got suspended. One day a student gave me a can opener. He asked me to hold it for me. I took it. Then they came and said, "You have a weapon." When the opener opens, it is like a weapon. I didn't know that. So school suspended me for two days because of that. I stayed home doing nothing. I was sad. I was angry. The student should have told me. I did not know you can not hold an opener. Now I tell my friend, "Don't hold stuff for your friend. It may be a weapon. Don't trust everyone when you first came here."

In school bus, they bothered me. My brother told me if somebody bothers you, don't listen, just walk away. Don't get into trouble. I listen to him. So when they said something about me, like you are ugly. I just looked at them and walked away. I don't want to get bad record. I want to be clean.

When I first came, the American students looked at me as if I was strange. They laughed at me. On day in class, we were speaking in Spanish because many of my friends did not know how to speak English. I was explaining to them. Some black students said to us, " You're immigrants. You should go back to your country. This is not your country." I just ignored them because I don't want to get into trouble. One day, they beat me after I got off the bus. They hit me and then ran away. I didn't do anything. I just stayed away from them.

Last year, the teacher's comments after the Georgian diplomat's incidence were very shocking for me. She made very negative comments towards diplomats in general. It is the anti-foreigner feeling. This is in school, not outside.

In Alexandria, when I was 16 years old, they put pepper spray , hot paper in my eyes. That day, I didn't come to school because I didn't have enough clean clothes to wear for school. My mom was working at that time. I took the day off to wash my clothes by myself. I was in the street. The police decided to take me to school. I told them I already called the school. It didn't work. They still wanted to take me to school. The policewoman put pepper spray in my eyes. She is no supposed to do that. I got sick that day, they took me to the police station to wash my eyes. It didn't work. They took me to the hospital and gave me some medicine. I asked them if I can talk to the woman. They said yes, but she never talked to me. I was released later, sure, I wasn't doing anything bad. They didn't even bother to apologize to me.

4. Dual Frame of Reference

I like everything here. I study English and that will help me find a good job. In El Salvador, I don't have many choices. This is my place now. Education is better here. We have to work hard to get what we need, but we can survive.

You have freedom here. You don't worry about your life. In my country, there are wars going on. You see lot of fighting. Here life is normal. If I learn English, I can get a job. Life here is the best of the best.

It is pretty boring. There is not enough information. Information they gave us here as seniors or juniors is not enough for our levels. A senior should have known more in terms of literature, history and so on. Some students complained it is too much, but it not for me. I think I can handle more by absorbing more information. I want to learn English well so I can work in foreign affairs back in my country.

5. Conflicting Values and First language

I used to be afraid of asking questions. I thought you were not supposed to ask teachers questions, because in China teachers used to tell you what to do. It is even more impolite to challenge your teachers.”

In African, it doesn't matter what's your age. Even if you're a grown man, your parents are supposed to chose for you. Here in the United states, when you're 18, you can do whatever you feel like. I still follow my country's culture.

We have a lot of people speaking Spanish. In my class, students always speak Spanish. It is not a right thing to do. When I want to speak in English, my friends said, “No, no, let's speak Spanish. That is our language. We are not Americans. We should speak Spanish, not English.” But I like to speak English. That's what we are here for. Teachers should make them speak English as much as they can.

My mom speaks English and a little Chinese. My dad speaks both language. So if I don't understand something, my dad explains to me in Chinese and my mom explains in English. I got the benefit of both languages.

I speak Spanish at home. If I don't understand something in English, my friends explain to me in Spanish. It helps me because sometime we know the idea in Spanish, but don't know how to express it in English.

I moved from Beginner level all the way to regular English classes within one year. I started in beginners, in a month, I moved to intermediate I, stayed there for two or three weeks, and moved to intermediate II. After summer school, I went to regular classes. I think for people who don't speak Spanish, they can move fast. Because when I first started here, I was shocked to see that those people have lived in the United States for six years and still in the lower levels of ESL. There are so many people surrounding them speaking Spanish. In my gym class, you can choose it in English or Spanish. I don't think it is good for you to learn English. Every teacher has her rules that English should be the only language spoken in her classroom. In one of my class, 13 students spoke Spanish. If there were 13 students spoke my language in my class, I bet I couldn't speak English now. Speaking a minority language helps you a lot. It allows you to express whatever you want to say in English. When nobody understands your language, you have no way to say what you want unless you speak English.

When I have nobody to speak English, I practice English in front of the mirror at home. It seems funny but it works for me.

When somebody is in the ESL for four or five years, he is hopeless and thinks he is never going to get out of it. Try to speak English as many hours as you can. Work with your friends

in English. My brother came here with not knowledge of English. He went to NOVA and went through three levels of ESL classes in two months. As my ESL teacher suggested TV should be on 24 hours a day. You may not watch it, you may not see what is going on. But the background of English surrounding you is a very good idea. I don't watch TV a lot, but listening to it helps a lot.

6. ESL Placement

I had seven and a half years of school in my country. Back there, I jumped from 5th to 6th grade. I found out was I was too young for my grade. When I came a year ago, they put me in 8th grade not the nine. It was so good. I learned things that I hadn't learned before. They were deciding what grade I should be in. My English level was not good to be in the 9th grade. I was in the intermediate II. I only knew very limited English like alphabet, chair and some words. I didn't understand what a cafeteria was, what a gym was and what a bus was. The first school day, I missed the bus. The principal took me home. Now I am an honor student.

My sister, she was in the 8th grade. She was taking the test in the ESL center. She was afraid my mother was going to leave so she just read fast to finish quickly. She didn't think what she was doing. So she was put in ESL math. She should be in the regular math, it was not difficult for her. In my test, I was thinking a lot of things we learn in Africa, then write the right answers. I was put in regular math. I started with ESL beginner's class, it was too easy for me.

Here it is easy in ESL. Even though I didn't speak English, the homework was really easy. In El Salvador, it was hard. Schools give you a lot of work there. Math here is really low. When I came, I was ready to take Algebra. They put me in ESL math because I didn't speak English. I don't think that's the right math level for me. I got straight A's. I knew all of them. They were talking about addition, subtraction like the first grade, but I was in the 8th grade. Some of my friends they didn't know the math. They were learning, not me. For a long time, I wasn't learning anything in math.

When I came, I can read, write and speak English. But they put me in Basic because I don't understand American accent, even though I speak English. I was not placed in the right place. I can understand them, do the homework. I should have gone to a higher level. It was not right for me. Later in summer school, I was talking to people and they found out about my English. We speak British English in Pakistan. I could not understand them because of their American accents. We read the same English, but speak different accents.

I was not satisfied with the ESL class at the beginning. When I was in the basic, everybody was looking and laughing at me. I didn't want to go to school because people were making fun of me. I feel I don't belong there. My cousin helped me. He said you will be OK and you will learn English more than anybody else. He made me feel confident.

I was in the 7th grade when I came to America. But I was placed in the 10th grade because of my age, skipping three grades. It was difficult for me to understand English and other courses. I believed I would be better off if I started in 7th or 8th grades in stead of the 10th grade.

I was in the sixth grade in El Salvador. When I came here, I was put in the ninth grade because of my age, I was 14 years old. They look at your age and then put you in the different grade levels. In the beginning, it was very difficult for me because I skipped three grades.

It was so difficult for me. When I came, I spoke Spanish but I did not know how to read in Spanish. I never went to school. The first year, I did not learn anything.

7. ESL Classes

My ESL teacher always gives us more than we can handle. That is a big challenge for us. Once you learn more, she always has some more for you. It is not like she has nothing to teach, nothing to do. The two classes we were with her went so fast. She uses her time very efficiently. She gives you the impression that no matter what you can do it.

If I have any problems in school, I just go to my teachers ask if they can help me. Many offered help after school.

My ESL teacher is like a friend to me. She speaks Spanish. Sometimes she explains in Spanish to help me understand. She makes me laugh.

The ESL teachers did their best jobs. It is me. I never went to school in my country. If I fail the test, they give me make-ups.

I learned a lot in the ESL classes. But I want to get out of ESL class next year. Because if I want to be a doctor, I have to learn more.

I have been in the ESL program for a year. I was first placed in intermediate II. Some stuff they are teaching, I learned in my country. It is like repeating what I have already learned. It is wasting my time. I need more. They have to challenge me.

The teacher said she had been teaching for 25 years. I couldn't believe that. As an experienced teacher, you don't just read definitions from books. That class is not useful. We went to it just because we had to. Honestly, I would not take the course. There is no meaningful interaction. The course itself is a good one, just the way she taught us. The information she gave to us was not useful. The way the teacher presented made a whole difference. I would have stayed at home with the book and read it and not wasting my time in summer school. The course should be made as interesting as possible since it reviews what we have learn in the previous ESL levels. Basically, you have to supplement, not just repeating.

The teacher just try to keep students quiet. She is nice, but I don't think she has effective ways to deal with students. The teacher has no authority over these students. She just said "Be quiet" and the class went on.

8. Integration into Mainstream Classes

I don't feel to ask questions in my science class. It is not the same as ESL. If I ask something, if it is wrong, students will laugh at me. They laugh at other students. So I am afraid they are going to laugh at me because of my accent.

It is my first year for regular class. So I am nervous. But sometimes I can't finish the book report because I can't finish reading on time. Now I am with different people, I can't talk to them. I got nervous. I don't like to talk to people that I don't know much. I don't want to ask questions in regular classes.

It is hard for me to ask questions. You know American students will laugh at you. The problems is me. I am learning what I should have learned long ago. In ESL class, you are comfortable. You make mistakes, they will not laugh at you. Everything is hard for me, Algebra is especially difficult.

I don't have many problems asking questions now. If they don't understand why we ask the question, that is their problem. One day, we had a great dispute about whether the teacher should or shouldn't give so much work. One student said to me, "You don't have a right to talk about it because you have an A." I said, "Think about it. If I, a foreigner can handle it and English is my second language, why can't you? How do you feel if I just let you live in my country for 4 years? And you don't know the language or anybody." She never asked me again. They really need to experience what we have been through to understand.

One day, I asked a question. American students laughed at me because of my accent. The teacher told them not to laugh. We are here to learn and anybody makes mistakes. After that nobody laughed at me anymore.

They always consider English is your second language. If I don't understand a word in a test, I will just ask for another word with the same meaning. She is not to provide the answer, but she helps me understand what I am supposed to do.

I have a mainstream class literature book. It is kind of hard for me. But if I keep the work of the mainstream students, I will catch up what they are doing. The first day I was in algebra class, my teacher did not know I just came. I didn't do my homework on the first day because I didn't know what was going on. She called my mom and talked about my situation. The teacher helped me a lot. She put me to sit in front. She let everybody help me. She went through my homework with me personally.

School shouldn't separate ESL students really from mainstream students. I don't like to be called ESL students. Because it is like you are not part of their community. When they ask what course you take, you said ESL, then they changed the subject or not talk to you anymore. I don't know how other ESL students feel, but this is the strongest feeling I have. Two years in the ESL program, I have learned a lot. In ESL and mainstream classes, it is like two feelings. In mainstream, students are more educated. But in some ESL classes, there are a lot of discipline problems. That is the most important thing the school should improve.

In regular class, it is better. Because they speak English. In ESL class, some people speak different languages so it is difficult to understand. If I have any questions, I stay after school. In regular class, you can't talk that much. Teacher can't help one student.

In the sixth grade, the teacher teaches the same math as the regular class. It is the same thing. It takes only three weeks and then I feel comfortable. It is difficult to move from ESL social study to regular social study because in history, there are many hard words.

9. Guidance Counselors

I don't think she is very helpful. She is not listening to me. I wish I knew I had to get good grades, to take courses colleges are looking for in admission. I only realized this last year. It was too late for me. I want to be a dentist, but I know I can not get into any college except NOVA.

I think my counselor can do a better job to help me. She told me I had to fill out papers only a few months ago if I want to go to college, which I guess it is too late. Only around December last year, the whole process started. Of course, you have boxes of flier to tell you the information. But it is up to you to follow the deadline. If you ask for it, I think she will provide the information. There are too many things that I found out too late to do anything about it. As an ESL student, you don't know how the school system in the US works. I never knew I had to take TOEFL weeks before I filled out the papers. As soon as I found, I did not have time to prepare myself for it. I did not take SAT prep course. I think the information ESL students can get to is not enough. You don't know how the system would work unless somebody comes and tells you. When I think back, I believe I should take sports earlier. If I had taken sports, it could probable have helped me during college admission and a lot of other things. I don't think how they believe we could get all these information all by ourselves. I don't even send out my transcripts because I don't think it is worth the efforts.

I talked to her. But I don't have full information from her. I don't know how many credits I have to graduate. When I came to this country, I don't know how many credits they gave to me for the 9th grade. I wish the counselor could tell me how many credits I need to graduate and how to apply for college.

10. Advice to ESL Students

1. Practice English as much as you can
2. Get help from teachers
3. Focus on learning and don't be disruptive
4. Always keep your eyes open for information
5. Don't be afraid of asking questions

11. Advice to Schools

1. School should encourage integration into the mainstream classroom
2. Provide more challenge curricula for ESL students
3. Deal with classroom disruption more effectively
4. Do not stigmatize ESL students because of their limited English proficiency.