

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.