

NCELA Fast FAQs

Compiled
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This NCELA FastFAQS is a list of ten of the most commonly asked questions from education professionals and clients.

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language
Instruction Educational Programs

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NCELA FastFAQ No.1

Question: How many English language learners are there in U. S. Schools?

Answer: According to data reported by the states for the 2004-2005 school year, there were 5,119,561 ELLs enrolled in grades PK-12.

According to data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau through the 2004 American Community Survey, there were 4,559,643 children, ages 3-21, reported as speaking a language other than English and speaking English less than "very well".

Sources:

[NCELA FAQ #1](#)

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fag/01leps.htm>

[American Community Survey Special Calculation](#) provided to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/oela/grants/fy2005/stateformula.htm>

www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/1.htm

NCELA FastFAQ No. 2

Question: What percentage of the ELL student population is foreign-born?

Answer: In both elementary (Pre-K to Grade 5) and secondary (Grades 6-12) education, more ELLs in America are native born than are foreign born. In elementary grades, 24% of ELLs are foreign-born (first generation Americans), while 44% of secondary ELL students are foreign-born.

Sources:

Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Ost, J., Passel, J., & Herwanto, S. (2005). *The new demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/2.htm

NCELA FastFAQ No. 3

Question: What is an English Language Learner?

Answer: The terms English language learner (ELL) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) are used interchangeably in the literature and in legislation. According to [Section 25 of Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965](#), as amended by the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, the definition of limited English proficient is an individual:

- (A) who is aged 3 through 21;
- (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- (C) (i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
- (ii) (I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and
- (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
- (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual —
 - (i) the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in section 1111(b)(3)
 - (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
 - (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society. There is not, however, a single operational definition of the term. Each State uses different identification and assessment measures and makes its own decision regarding cut-off scores for both entering and exiting programs designed for English language learners.

Sources:

[NCELA Glossary](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/glossary.html) <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/glossary.html>

Stanford University Language Site

http://www.stanford.edu/group.step/resources/LanguageSite/EL_Page.html

Federal definition of LEP [(See (25))]

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg107.html>

NCELA FastFAQ No. 4

Question: What languages do ELLS speak?

Answer: According to State-reported data from the 2000-2001 school year (the last year these data were collected by OELA), ELL (English language learner) students speak more than 460 languages. Among those languages, the five most commonly spoken are:

- Spanish (79.0%)
- Vietnamese (2.0%)
- Hmong (1.6%)
- Cantonese (1.0%) Korean (1.0%)

Sources:

[Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services 2000-2001 Summary Report](#) (Kindler, 2002)

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/policy/states/reports/seareports/0001/sea00001.pdf>

www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/4.htm

NCELA FastFAQ No. 5

Questions: What are the common program models used to teach ELLs?

Answer: Schools utilize a variety of programs to serve ELLs, and many schools use a combination of available programs and models to tailor education and maximize learning. Programs can be distinguished by whether and the extent to which the native language is used as a medium of instruction. While this list is not exhaustive, schools choosing to utilize the native language as a medium of instruction to teach academic content may use Two-way Bilingual Immersion (TWI, also known as two-way bilingual education and dual language immersion), Developmental Bilingual Education (DBE, also known as late-exit or enrichment), or Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE, also known as early-exit). All programs which use the native language to deliver a portion of the content instruction contain an English as a second language component. Among programs that use English as the primary language of instruction, schools can use Structured English Immersion (SEI, also known as Sheltered English, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English, or Content-based ESL), or Push-in or Pull-out ESL.

Regardless of program model, schools must have English language proficiency (ELP) standards which are aligned with English language arts (ELA) standards and linked to content area standards. ELL students must receive instruction that leads to their acquisition of academic English and subject matter, and their progress must be measured by appropriate assessment instruments and accountability systems.

Sources:

[NCELA glossary](#)

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/glossary.html>

[NCELA FAQ #22](#)

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fag/22models.htm>

[Program Alternatives for Linguistically Diverse Students](#) (Genesee, 1999)

<http://repositories.cdlib.org/crede/edupractrpts/epr1/>

www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/5.htm

NCELA FastFAQ No. 6

Question: What are the five states with the largest numbers of ELLs?

Answer: According to 2004-05 data reported by states, the five states with the largest populations of ELLs in public schools are:

California (1,591,525)
Texas (684,007)
Florida (299,346)
New York (203,583)
Illinois (192,764)

Sources:

[NCELA National and Regional Data and Demographics
http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/stats/2_nation.htm](http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/stats/2_nation.htm)

www.ncele.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/6.htm

NCELA FastFAQ No. 7

Question: What are the five states with the largest density of ELLs within their school-age populations?

Answer: As of the 2004-05 academic year, the five states reporting the highest density of ELLs in public schools were:

California (25.7% of the total school-age population)
New Mexico (22.4%)
Nevada (18.1%)
Texas (15.5%)
Alaska (15.1%)

Sources:

[NCELA National and Regional Data and Demographics
http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/stats/2_nation.htm](http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/stats/2_nation.htm)

www.ncele.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/7.htm

NCELA FastFAQ No. 8

Question: What are the five states that have experienced the greatest growth in their ELL population in the last decade?

Answer: According to state reports on public schools for the 1994-95 and 2004-05 school years, the states that saw the five highest percentage growth rates in the nation during that decade are:

South Carolina (714.2%)
Kentucky (417.4%)
Indiana (407.8%)
North Carolina (371.7%)
Tennessee (369.9%)

Sources:

[NCELA National and Regional Data and Demographics
http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/stats/2_nation.htm](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/stats/2_nation.htm)

www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/8.htm

NCELA FastFAQ No. 9

Question: What percentage of the ELL student population is enrolled at elementary and secondary levels?

Answer: According to the 2000 Census, 52.6% of ELL students are enrolled in Pre-K to Grade 5, with the remaining 47.4% enrolled in Grades 6-12.

Sources:

Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Ost, J., Passel, J., & Herwanto, S. (2005). *The new demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/9.htm

NCELA FastFAQ No. 10

Question: How many ELLs are served by Title I and Title III?

Answer: While Title I data were not available as of September 2005, states reported serving 4,017,504 ELLs through Title III programs and subgrants in 2003-04.

Sources: Biennial Evaluation Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Title III, Part A of the ESEA

[Biennial Evaluation Report to Congress on the Implementation of Title III, Part A of the ESEA](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/oela/biennial05/findings4.pdf)

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/oela/biennial05/findings4.pdf>

www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/fastfaq/10.htm

Authorized under Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) supports the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA) in its mission to respond to title III educational needs, and implement NCLB as it applies to English language learners.