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U.S. Not Improving Chances for Student Success; Nation Gets C-Plus While State Grades Largely Unchanged

***Special Analysis Documents Growth in English-Language Learners,
Finds That One-Quarter Fail to Make Progress Toward English Proficiency***

Report Cards and Highlights Reports Issued for all 50 States and D.C.

WASHINGTON—Jan. 7, 2009—The nation and most states have failed to improve the opportunities for students to succeed throughout their lives, according to *Education Week's* annual education report card. The nation received a C-plus on the report's annual Chance-for-Success Index, while one state – Massachusetts – earned an A. Four states received a D-plus.

Launched two years ago by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, the Chance-for-Success Index provides a detailed look at the role that education plays as a person moves from childhood, through formal K-12 education, and into college and the workforce. Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, and New Hampshire received the highest scores for the second consecutive year. Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, and New Mexico received a D-plus, the same score they received last year.

“The 50-state comparison reveals just how important the educational environment is to an individual's opportunities,” said Christopher B. Swanson, the director of the EPE Research Center. “While eight states saw increases or decreases in their grades from last year, those changes were generally modest,” he added.

The report, supported by the Pew Center on the States, also grades the nation and the states in two other categories that are monitored on an ongoing basis: school finance and policies that aim to better align the different stages of the educational pipeline. The nation held steady in school finance, earning a C-plus this year, while the C for alignment policies marked a slight improvement over last year's grade.

SPECIAL FOCUS ON ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The report, *Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population—How English-Language Learners Are Putting Schools to the Test*, also includes the most comprehensive examination to date of English-language learners (ELLs), highlighting efforts by state and local leaders to address the needs of this diverse and rapidly growing group, which increased from 3.2 million in the 1995-96 school year to 5.1 million in 2005-06, or a jump of 57 percent in that period. Twenty states have seen their ELL enrollments at least double in this time.

While the report finds that nationally one-quarter of ELLs failed to make progress toward English-language proficiency, results vary widely between states. Connecticut reported that only 1.4 percent of its English-learners failed to make progress, while Maine counted 44.9 percent of its ELLs in this category.

“A lot of progress has been made in recent years to understand who ELLs are and how they perform in school,” Swanson added. “But it is clear that many of these students are struggling. At the same time, states face the daunting challenge of finding the combination of teacher preparation, instructional support, and assessments that works best for these students.”

ELLs BEHIND PEERS ON NATIONAL AND STATE TESTS

The academic-achievement gap between ELLs and public school students as a whole is significant, both on state-developed assessments and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a test administered through the states by the U.S. Department of Education. Large gaps are found both in states with historically large numbers of English-learners and in parts of the country where the ELL population has exploded only in recent years.

In mathematics, 9.6 percent of 4th and 8th grade ELLs scored “proficient” or better on the 2007 NAEP, compared with 34.8 percent of all students, a gap of 25.2 percentage points. The gap was 24.8 points in reading, with only 5.6 percent of 4th and 8th grade ELLs scoring “proficient” or better compared with a national average of 30.4 percent.

These disparities were similar on state-developed assessments in 2006-07, where, on average, ELLs were separated from their peers by 23.6 percentage points in math and 32.3 points in reading. These gaps were even more pronounced in particular states, where the difference could exceed 40 percentage points.

“ELLs often trail their English-speaking peers when they begin school and may fall further behind as they get older,” said Virginia B. Edwards, the editor and publisher of *Education Week*. “One of the biggest challenges facing our schools is finding ways to bring students to fluency in English while continuing to develop and tap into their academic skills in other subject areas.”

SPECIAL WEB-ONLY FEATURES AVAILABLE AT EDWEEK.ORG

- The full *Quality Counts 2009* report and a multimedia gallery of English-language learners from around the country: www.edweek.org/go/qc09.
- State Highlights Reports for the 50 states and District of Columbia featuring detailed, state-specific data on ELLs and our comprehensive grading of the states across six categories of educational performance and policy: www.edweek.org/go/qc09/shr.
- *Perspectives on a Population: English-Language Learners in American Schools*, a special 50-state report with extensive data on the characteristics of the ELL population, its performance, and state policies and programs: www.edweek.org/go/qc09.
- Two live online chats about *Quality Counts 2009* at www.edweek.org, on January 8 at 2 pm EST and January 15 at 3 pm EST, and a Webinar featuring report findings on January 13 at 2 pm EST.

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The EPE Research Center is the research division of the Bethesda, Md.-based nonprofit Editorial Projects in Education. The Research Center conducts policy surveys and collects data for the Quality Counts, Diplomas Count, and Technology Counts annual reports and maintains the Education Counts and EdWeek Maps online databases. It contributes research and analysis to Education Week and edweek.org. The EPE Research Center is on the Web at www.edweek.org/rc.

The Pew Charitable Trusts applies the power of knowledge to solve today’s most challenging problems. The Pew Center on the States identifies and advances effective policy approaches to critical issues facing the states. Online at www.pewcenteronthestates.org.

Examination of English-Language Learners

New Findings from *Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population*

NOTE: Embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. EST on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009

About *Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population*

Portrait of a Population: How English-Language Learners Are Putting States to the Test will be released Jan. 7, 2009. The report provides a comprehensive data-driven profile of the growing population of English-language-learners (ELLs) in U.S. schools. The data, combined with new information on state policies and academic achievement, underscore the urgent challenges posed by this diverse population and the responses mounted by federal and state policymakers. To help guide your reporting, we have highlighted some of the key findings below. Additional information will be provided as it is available.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The **ELL population continues to grow**, particularly in some Southeast and Midwest states.

- Nationally, growth in English-language learners was 57 percent between the 1995-96 and 2005-06 school years. That is an increase from 3.2 million to 5.1 million ELLs in that decade.
- Several states have seen particularly large spikes in ELL enrollments. Concentrated mostly in the Southeast, 13 states saw growth of more than 200 percent in their ELL populations from 1995-96 to 2005-06. ELL numbers quadrupled in the fastest-growing states, which include Arkansas, Indiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina.
- In 20 states, the size of the ELL population has at least doubled over this period (map available).

The **national achievement gap** between English-learners and all public school students is significant on both national and state-developed tests.

- Only 9.6 percent of 4th and 8th grade ELLs scored “proficient” or higher in mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2007, compared with 34.8 percent of students as a whole.
- The gap was similar on the 2007 NAEP in reading: 5.6 percent of ELLs scored proficient, compared with a national average of 30.4 percent.
- A similar pattern emerges on state-developed assessments, where the average gap between ELLs and students as a whole in 2007 was 23.5 percentage points in math and 32.3 points in reading. In some states, math gaps of 40 points or more were found. Reading gaps approached or exceeded 50 percentage points in several states.
- States vary widely in the percentage of their ELL students who are not making progress toward English-language proficiency. Connecticut, for example, reports that just 1.4 percent of its ELLs failed to make headway, while Maine places 44.9 percent of students in that category. Nationally, one-fourth of ELLs failed to improve.

Policies targeting the education of ELLs vary dramatically, as state and federal policymakers face the challenge of effectively serving this diverse and rapidly growing student population.

- While 33 states have set teacher standards for instruction of English-language learners, only **three** states require that all prospective teachers show they are competent to teach such students to earn a license.
- Only 11 states offer incentives to earn an English-as-a-second-language license and/or endorsement.
- Currently, English-language-proficiency (ELP) testing lacks uniformity across the nation. Several main sets of ELP assessments developed by consortia of states are currently in use. The number of states employing each ranges from a handful to more than a dozen.
- While federal law requires all states to adopt an English-proficiency test of some kind that their districts must use to measure progress in English acquisition, more than a dozen states allow school districts to determine when students should enter and/or leave ELL services.

ELLs are not a monolithic group.

- Nearly two-thirds of all ELLs are second- or third-generation Americans, meaning they are native-born with at least one parent born in the United States or its territories.
- Seventeen percent of ELLs are third-generation Americans with both parents born in the United States.
- Sixty-eight percent of ELLs from the ages of 5 to 17 are Hispanic, while 14 percent are non-Hispanic whites and 13 percent are of Asian or Pacific Islander descent.
- Mexico accounts for the majority of ELL youths born outside the United States (54 percent).

Resources

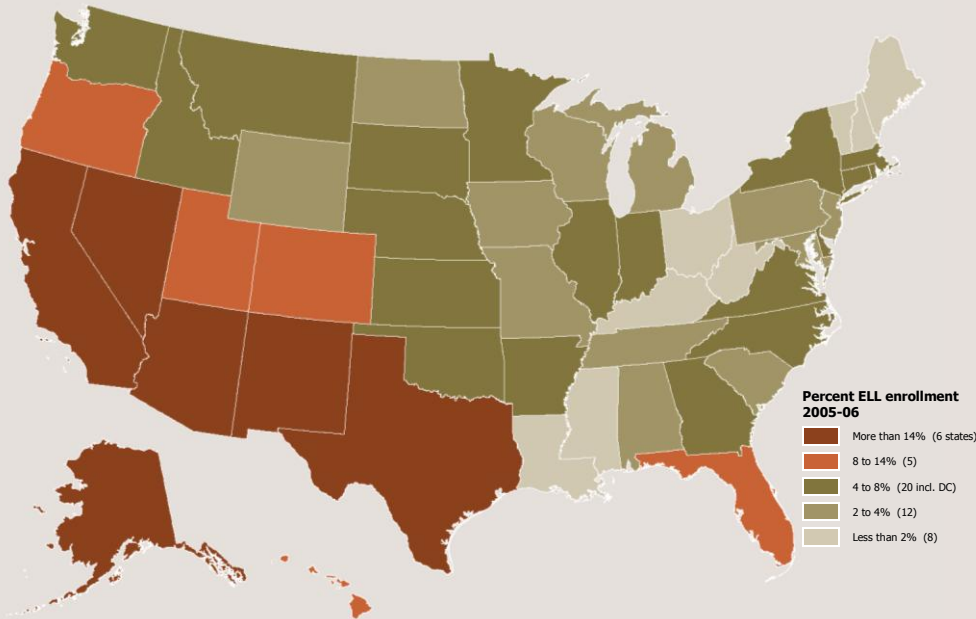
The *Quality Counts 2009* release will also include:

- The Chance-for-Success Index, which grades the nation and states on 13 indicators capturing the critical role that education plays as a person moves from childhood, through the K-12 system, and into college and the workforce.
- The annual national and state update of key areas of performance and progress, including Chance for Success, transitions and alignment policies, and school finance.
- *Perspectives on a Population*, a special 50-state report from the EPE Research Center featuring a wide range of detailed data on ELLs, available online.
- State Highlights Reports, individualized online reports featuring state-specific findings from *Quality Counts*, including our comprehensive state report cards.

All of these resources will be available on the *Education Week* Web site:

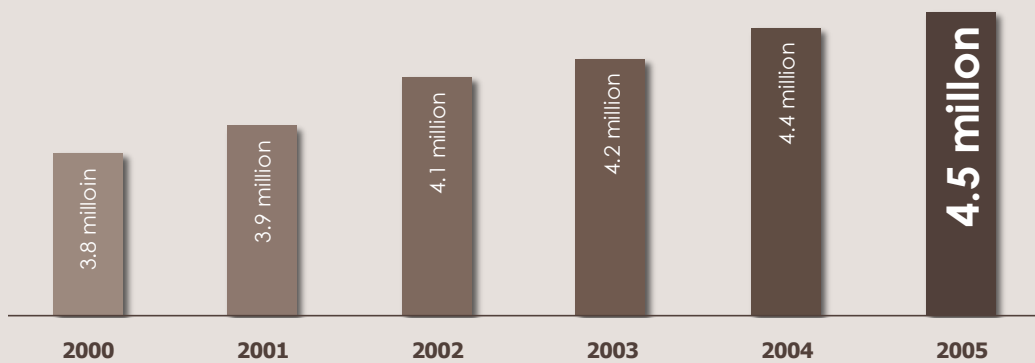
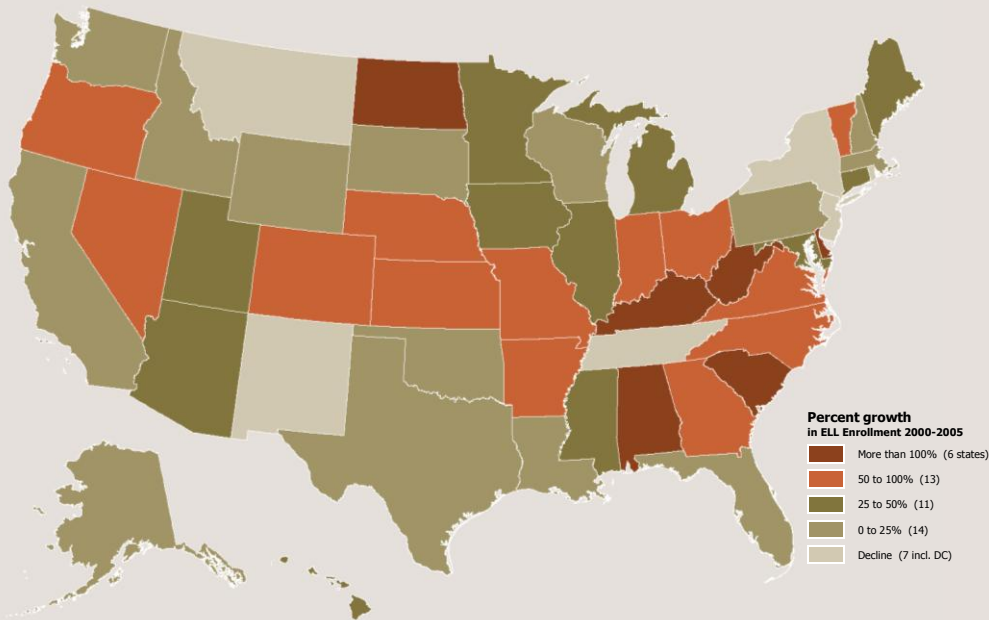
www.edweek.org/go/qc09.

A Growing Population of English-Language Learners



Nationwide enrollments of English-language learners increased by 18 percent from 2000 to 2005. During the 2005-06 school year, public K-12 schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia educated a total of 4.5 million ELL students, comprising 9 percent of the total student population.

In six states, the size of the ELL population has at least doubled over this period, with the greatest percentage increases in Delaware, Kentucky, and South Carolina. The most rapid growth in English-learners has occurred in states with historically low concentrations of such students.



English-language learners in U.S. public schools



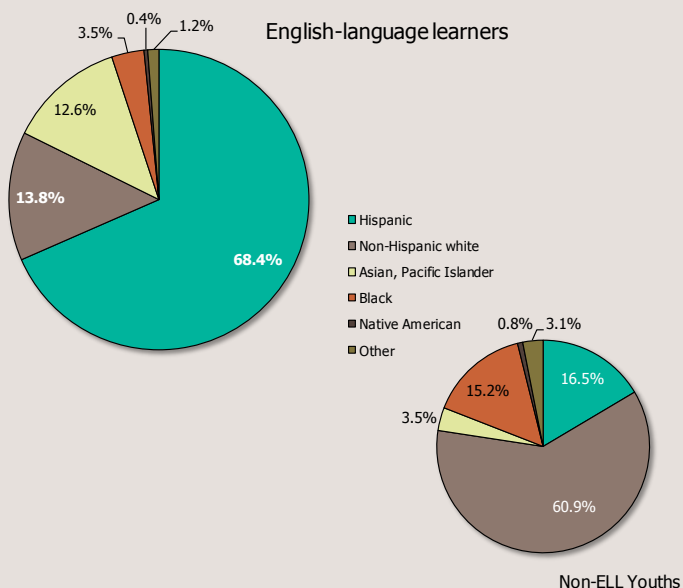
Detailed maps of ELL concentration and growth at the school-district level can be found in *Perspectives on a Population*, a new report from the EPE Research Center, available online at www.edweek.org/go/qc09.

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2009. Analysis of data from the Common Core of Data, U.S. Department of Education.

A Distinctive Population

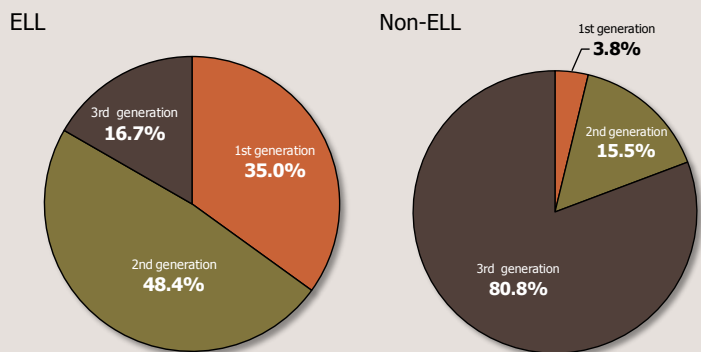
Race and Ethnicity

More than two-thirds of English-language learners from the ages of 5 to 17 are Hispanic, while 14 percent are white and 13 percent are of Asian or Pacific Islander descent. The majority of the school-age non-ELL population is non-Hispanic white.



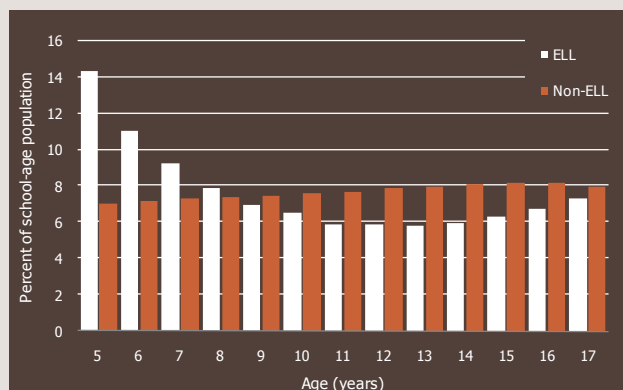
Immigration

Slightly more than one-third of ELL youths in the United States are foreign-born, compared with 4 percent of their non-ELL peers. Nearly half of all English-language learners are second-generation Americans, meaning they are native-born with at least one parent born outside the United States or its territories. Seventeen percent of ELLs are third-generation Americans with both parents born in the United States. Ninety-six percent of non-ELL youths are native-born.



A Young Population

English-language learners of school-going age tend to be younger than members of the non-ELL population. That pattern may result from particularly high birth rates among language-minority populations, high immigration rates among the youngest ELL youths, and the tendency to acquire proficiency with the English language over time.



Family Income and Education

The families of school-age English-language learners are consistently more socioeconomically disadvantaged than those of their peers. ELL youths are half as likely to have a parent with a two- or four-year college degree and much more likely to live in a low-income household. While two-thirds of ELL youths have a parent who holds a steady job, their parents typically earn much less than those of non-English-language learners.

	English-language learners	Non-ELL youths
At least one parent with postsecondary degree	22.1%	44.1%
Family income less than 200% of poverty level	65.9%	36.9%
At least one parent working full time and year-round	65.3%	72.9%
Median family income	\$36,691	\$60,280

Linguistic Diversity



is spoken by 75 percent of English-language learners

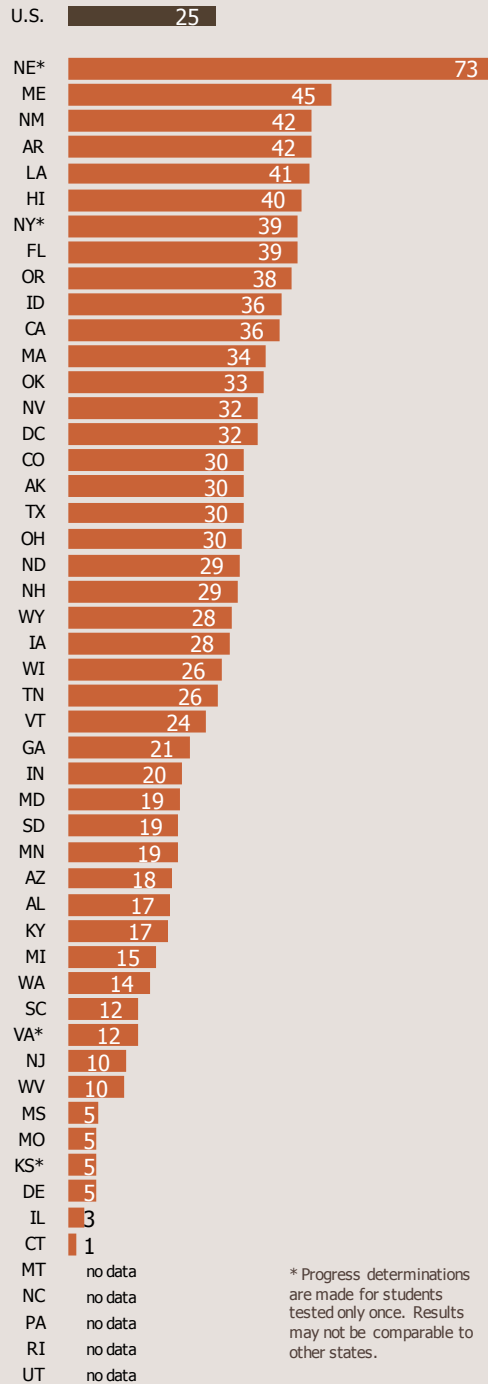
Other native tongues—more than 100—add to the diversity of the ELL population. The “word cloud” displays the most common native languages spoken by ELL youths after Spanish. Those other languages are shown in proportion to the number of speakers.

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2009. Analysis of data from the American Community Survey (2005-2007), U.S. Census Bureau. English-language learners are defined here as youths from the ages of 5 to 17 who do not speak English very well and speak another language at home. Languages spoken are as reported by survey respondents. Word-cloud image created using Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net>).

Academic Performance

Learning English

Nationwide, one-quarter of ELLs are failing to make progress toward English-language proficiency, according to 2006-07 data reported by the states. Half are making progress toward or have attained proficiency. Progress of the remaining ELLs cannot be determined because they have been tested only once.

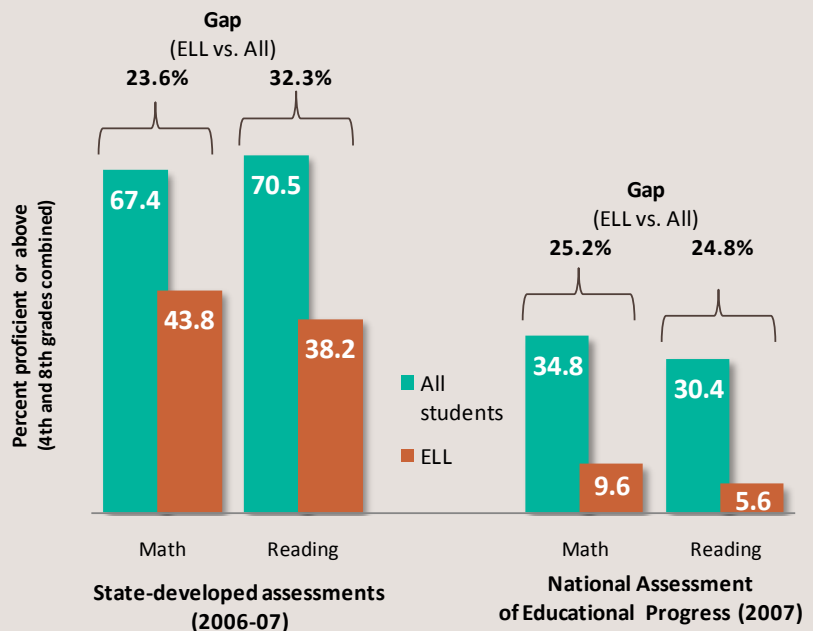
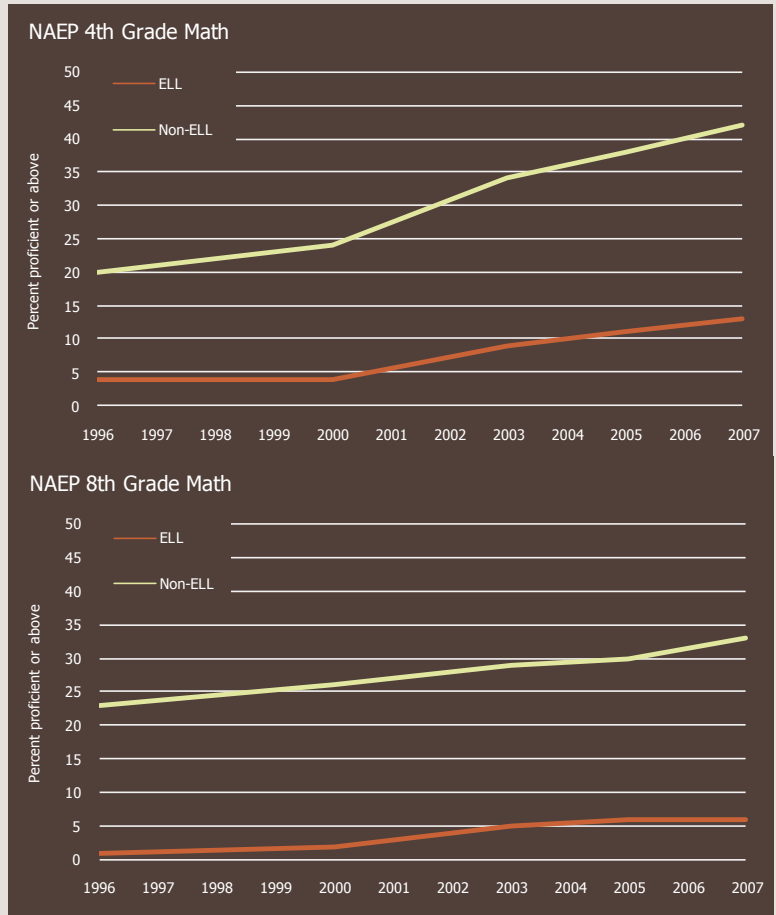


Percent of ELLs not making progress toward English-language proficiency (2006-07)

* Progress determinations are made for students tested only once. Results may not be comparable to other states.

Some Improvement Seen, But Gaps Remain Large

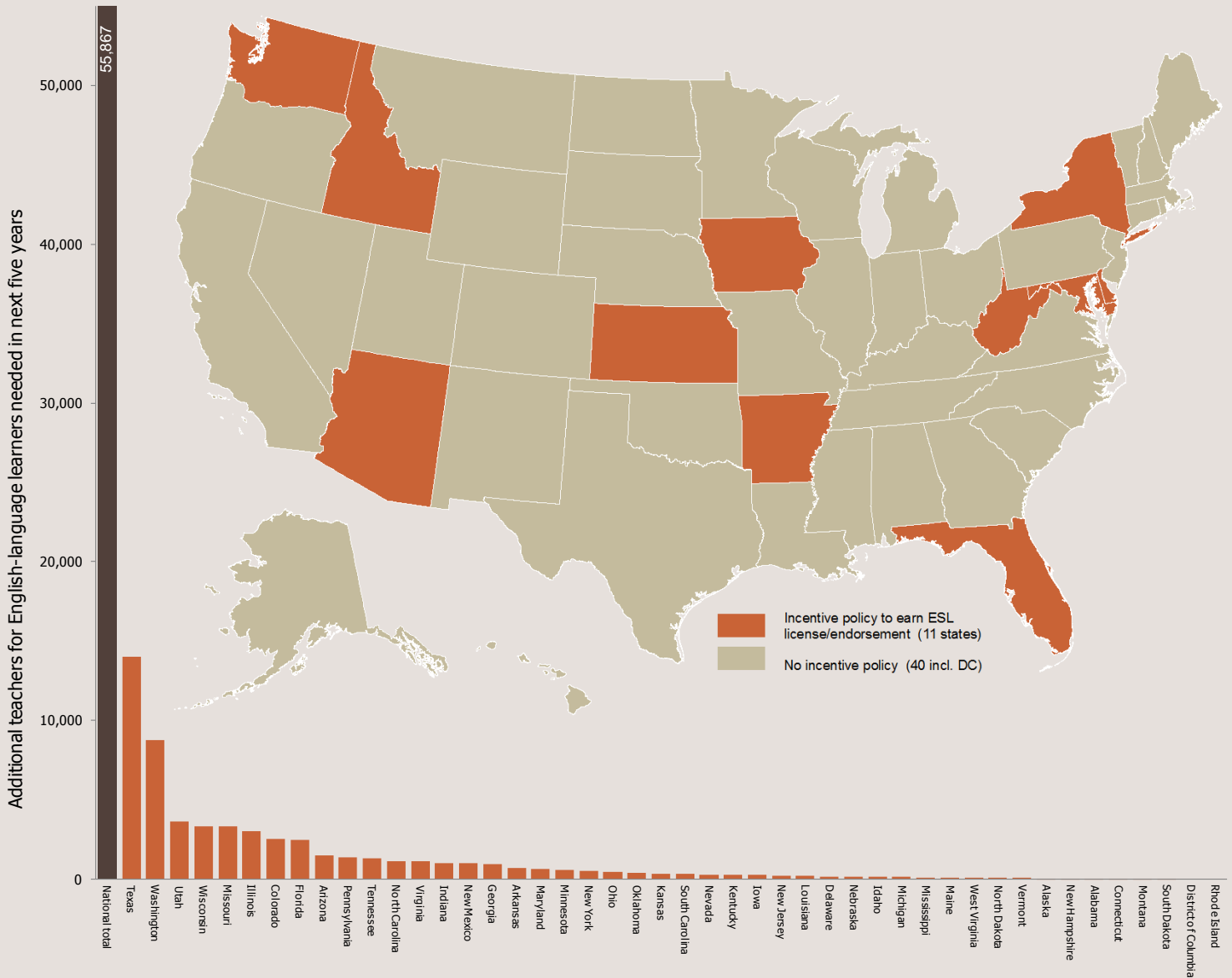
National assessment results show that academic performance of English-language learners has improved during the past decade, particularly in math (shown below). However, according to both national and state tests, significant achievement gaps persist between English-learners and the overall student population.



SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2009. Analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education's 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and state assessment results from the Consolidated State Performance Reports, 2006-07.

ELL Teachers—Matching Supply and Demand

In reports submitted to the federal government in late 2007, states were asked to estimate projected demand for additional certified teachers in Title III programs over the next five years. Texas reported needing to expand its workforce of educators for English-language learners by 14,000 teachers, the highest level among states providing data. Several states projected very limited or no additional demand in the next five years. In an effort to increase the ranks of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) specialists, 11 states currently offer such incentives as scholarships and tuition reimbursement to teachers earning an ESL endorsement.



Note: Data on projected demand for additional ELL teachers not reported by California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Wyoming. In the following states, fewer than 100 additional teachers were needed: Mississippi, Maine, West Virginia, North Dakota, Vermont, Alaska, New Hampshire, Alabama, Connecticut, Montana, and South Dakota. The District of Columbia and Rhode Island reported requiring no additional teachers.

SOURCE: EPE Research Center Annual State Policy Survey, 2009. Analysis of data from Consolidated State Performance Reports, 2006-07.

Grading Summary

	Overall State Grade		Quality Counts 2009	Quality Counts 2008	Quality Counts 2008	Quality Counts 2009	Quality Counts 2008	Quality Counts 2009
	Grade	Score	Chance for Success	K-12 Achievement	Standards, Assessments, & Accountability	Transitions & Alignment	Teaching Profession	School Finance
Alabama	C	75.4	C-	F	A-	C+	B-	C-
Alaska	C	73.2	C	D+	B	C-	D-	B-
Arizona	C-	72.2	C-	D	A-	C-	D+	D+
Arkansas	B-	79.6	C-	D	B+	B	B+	C
California	C	76.1	C	D	A-	B-	C-	C
Colorado	C	73.6	B	C-	B-	D	D+	C
Connecticut	C+	77.0	A-	D	C	C-	C-	B+
Delaware	C+	77.4	B-	C-	B+	D	C+	B-
District of Columbia	D+	68.3	C+	F	C+	D+	D-	—
Florida	B-	79.6	C+	C	A-	C+	B	C-
Georgia	B-	80.0	C	D+	A-	B	B	C+
Hawaii	C	75.1	C+	D	B-	C-	C+	—
Idaho	D+	69.1	C+	C-	C	D-	D	D
Illinois	C	72.9	B-	D+	C+	D+	D+	C-
Indiana	C+	79.0	C+	C-	A	C+	C-	C+
Iowa	C	76.3	B	C-	D+	C+	B-	C
Kansas	C	73.3	B	C	C+	D-	D+	C+
Kentucky	C	76.0	C	D+	B+	C	B-	C-
Louisiana	C	74.4	D+	D-	A	C	B	D
Maine	C+	77.7	B-	C	C+	B-	D	B+
Maryland	B	84.7	B+	B	B	A	C-	B
Massachusetts	B	84.6	A	B	A-	C	C	B
Michigan	C+	77.8	C+	D	A-	B	D+	B-
Minnesota	C	76.2	B+	C	C	C	D+	C+
Mississippi	D+	69.4	D+	F	B	C	D	D+
Missouri	C-	72.4	C+	D	C	D+	C	C
Montana	C-	71.2	C+	C-	C-	D	D+	C
Nebraska	C-	69.8	B	D+	D	F	D+	C+
Nevada	D+	68.8	D+	D-	C+	D+	C-	D
New Hampshire	C	75.9	A-	C	C	C-	D	B-
New Jersey	B-	81.9	A-	B-	B-	C+	C	B+
New Mexico	C+	76.9	D+	D-	A-	A	C+	C
New York	B	84.1	B	C-	A	B+	C+	B+
North Carolina	C	75.5	C+	D+	B+	D+	B	D+
North Dakota	C	73.7	B	C	C	D+	D+	C
Ohio	B-	81.2	B-	C-	A	B-	C+	B-
Oklahoma	C	76.1	C-	D	A-	C+	B-	D+
Oregon	C-	71.5	C	D	C+	C+	F	C
Pennsylvania	B-	80.3	B	C+	C+	B-	C+	B-
Rhode Island	C	76.0	B-	D	B+	C-	D	A-
South Carolina	C+	78.9	C	D	A	C	A-	C
South Dakota	C-	71.1	B-	C-	C+	D-	D	C-
Tennessee	C+	77.0	C-	D+	A-	B+	C	D+
Texas	C+	77.1	C	C	B+	B	C	D+
Utah	C	73.3	B-	C-	C+	C-	C-	D+
Vermont	B-	79.5	B+	C+	B-	C-	C-	B+
Virginia	B	83.2	B	C	A	B-	B-	C+
Washington	C	75.2	B-	C-	B-	C	C	C-
West Virginia	B-	80.0	C-	F	A	A	C+	B
Wisconsin	C+	78.0	B	C-	C+	C-	C+	B
Wyoming	C	74.4	B-	C-	C+	D	D-	A-
U.S.	C	76.2	C+	D+	B	C	C	C+

Note: The District of Columbia and Hawaii are single-district jurisdictions. As a result, it is not possible to calculate measures of financial equity, which capture the distribution of funding across districts within a state. The District of Columbia and Hawaii do not receive grades for school finance.

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2009. This table integrates findings across two years of indicators reported in the 2008 and 2009 editions of *Quality Counts*.

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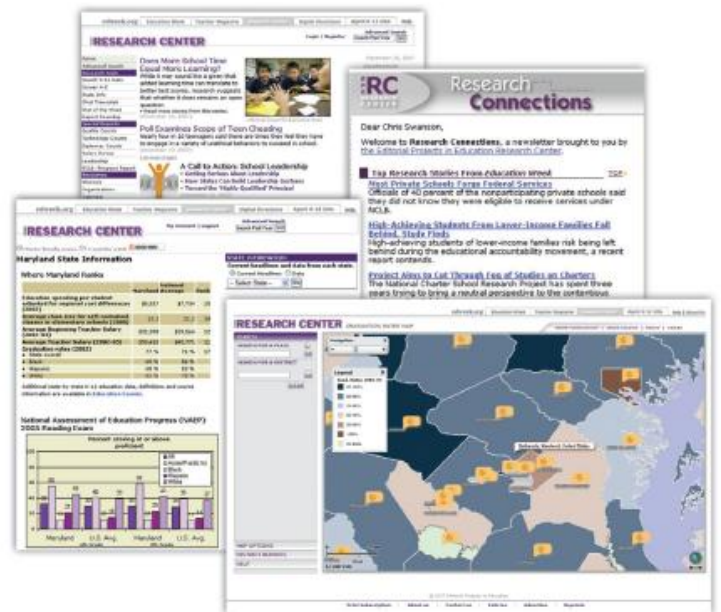
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- ▶ **Chats** - Transcripts of live Web chats, featuring leaders in education discussing key policy issues with our online audience
- ▶ **Research Connections** - The EPE Research Center's monthly newsletter for updates on education policy and analysis



Access the Education Counts database to build custom tables, charts, and maps using **Quality Counts 2009** data.

Virginia B. Edwards

EDITORIAL PROJECTS IN EDUCATION

EDUCATION WEEK

President, Editorial Projects in Education
Editor and Publisher, *Education Week* and edweek.org

As president of Editorial Projects in Education, Virginia B. Edwards oversees the nearly 90-person nonprofit corporation that publishes *Education Week* and edweek.org. She has held the post since 1997.

Ms. Edwards has been the editor of *Education Week* – the “newspaper of record” for precollegiate education in the United States – since 1989. The newspaper, which covers policy developments in K-12 education and is published 37 times a year, has a paid circulation of about 50,000 and is read by more than 160,000 others. The newspaper also publishes three highly anticipated reports each year: *Diplomas Count*, *Quality Counts*, and *Technology Counts*.

For the past 13 years, Ms. Edwards has also served as the editor and publisher of edweek.org. Currently, edweek.org serves up 2 million page views to nearly 400,000 unique visitors each month. In addition, 275,000-plus people now subscribe to the site’s weekly newsletter, *EW Update*, and hundreds of thousands have subscribed to a growing array of themed weekly and monthly e-newsletters. Among its other offerings, the site routinely hosts live Web chats with key education players and houses the most comprehensive K-12 research center and education news archives to be found anywhere on the Web.

Ms. Edwards is also publisher of EPE’s *Digital Directions* magazine and its *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook*.

Before joining EPE, Ms. Edwards worked for two years for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and, for the nearly 10 years before that, was an editor and reporter for *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Ky.

A frequent speaker on education policy issues, Ms. Edwards serves on the boards of several nonprofit organizations, including the Center on Education Policy, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the Student Press Law Center, and Learning Matters.

Christopher B. Swanson

Director, EPE Research Center
Editorial Projects in Education



Christopher B. Swanson, Ph.D., is the director of the EPE Research Center, a division of Editorial Projects in Education, the nonprofit organization that publishes *Education Week*. In this capacity, he oversees a staff of full-time researchers and interns who conduct annual policy surveys, collect data, and perform analyses that appear in the *Quality Counts*, *Technology Counts*, and *Diplomas Count* annual reports of *Education Week*. The Center also contributes data and analysis to special coverage in *Education Week*, the *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook*, and *edweek.org*, publishes the monthly *Research Connections e-Newsletter*, hosts live Web chats on research topics, and maintains the Education Counts and EdWeek Maps online data resources.

Among the EPE Research Center's major projects is *Quality Counts*, an annual special issue of *Education Week* supported throughout its 13-year history by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Pew Center on the States. In 2006, the EPE Research Center and *Education Week* launched a four-year project to examine graduation rates and related issues facing the nation's high schools. The project's major releases include the annual *Diplomas Count* report and EdWeek Maps, a powerful GIS-based online data tool that allows users to map out information on graduation rates and generate customized reports for any school district in the nation.

Prior to joining EPE in 2005, Swanson was a senior research associate at the Urban Institute, where his work focused on issues of federal policy and urban high school reform involving small-school restructuring. During the past few years, much of Swanson's research has examined the implementation of accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. In particular, he has extensively investigated the persistent challenges associated with accurately measuring high school graduation rates, a required element of the performance-based accountability mandated under the federal law. Swanson's body of research on this topic has been widely profiled in the national and regional media and has provided policy leaders important insights into this critical issue.

Swanson's work on a variety of educational policy issues—among them, standards and accountability, instructional reform, high school dropout and completion, student mobility, and public school choice—has been presented at national conferences and published in leading scholarly journals and edited volumes. He is a frequent speaker and commentator on these and other topics and has advised the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Government Accountability Office, the National Governors Association, the U.S. Department of Education, and other organizations and foundations.

Amy M. Hightower

Deputy Director, EPE Research Center
Editorial Projects in Education



Amy M. Hightower, Ph.D., is project director of *Quality Counts 2009* and the deputy director of the EPE Research Center, a division of Editorial Projects in Education, the nonprofit organization that publishes *Education Week*. In this capacity, she coordinates a staff of full-time researchers and interns who conduct annual policy surveys, collect data, and perform analyses that appear in the *Quality Counts*, *Technology Counts*, and *Diplomas Count* annual reports of *Education Week*. The Center also contributes data and analysis to special coverage in *Education Week*, the *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook*, and edweek.org, publishes the monthly *Research Connections e-Newsletter*, hosts live Web chats on research topics, and maintains the Education Counts and EdWeek Maps online data resources.

Prior to joining EPE in 2007, Hightower was an associate director for the American Federation of Teachers' Educational Issues Department, where her work focused on issues of federal policy, accountability, school improvement, and data use. She wrote policy papers on these and other topics, and co-designed a professional-development course for teachers and administrators in how to use data to improve student learning. During the past few years, much of Hightower's research has examined the implementation of accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Hightower has an extensive research background in educational policy. While pursuing her Ph.D. at Stanford University's School of Education, she served as a researcher for two national centers—the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement and the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. In those roles, she conducted research on school district reform, teacher quality, and P-16 transitions. Prior to pursuing her Ph.D., she was a researcher at Policy Studies Associates Inc., where she specialized in state policy, school-to-work transitions, and professional development. She also holds a master's degree in public policy from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

Mary Ann Zehr

EDUCATION WEEK

Assistant Editor
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Mary Ann Zehr has been a reporter for *Education Week* for 11 years. For nine of those years, she has specialized in writing about English-language learners. She regularly posts news about English-language learners on her blog, *Learning the Language*, on edweek.org. Ms. Zehr taught English as a second language at universities in China for two years. She has an undergraduate degree in English from Goshen College, a secondary education degree from Westminster College, and a master's degree in journalism from Indiana University, Bloomington.