

Educating Immigrant Children in North Carolina: The State-Local Connection

To illustrate how the legal requirements for immigrant children (see the article on page 35) translate into the work of public schools in North Carolina, we offer two views. An administrator in the state's department of public instruction provides information about (1) instructional approaches with students who have been identified as "limited English proficient" (LEP), (2) allowable accommodations for test-taking, and (3) state-level standardized test scores. Two administrators with Chatham County Schools describe their system's approach to instruction and testing of LEP students.

Consistent with the federal standard of access to educational resources, the focus is on providing effective, cost-efficient ways to build LEP students' English proficiency for

academic and career success. All immigrant students are not LEP. Many LEP students are U.S. citizens.

The main challenges for state educational authorities are to set standards for and compile results of statewide testing to track the progress of LEP students along with the progress of all students in North Carolina schools, and to assist local districts with information and professional development for LEP instruction. The main challenge for local districts is to choose an instructional approach that will help LEP students acquire academic English. In meeting this challenge, they administer the federal- and state-mandated tests and work with immigrant parents, nonprofit groups, and others.

—The Editors



State-Level Standards and Goals for LEP Achievement

Helga Fasciano

Even before the federal No Child Left Behind law, North Carolina required all school districts to

The author is section chief, K-12 Program Areas, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Contact her at hfascian@dpi.state.nc.us.

serve LEP students. According to the October 1, 2008, head count, 118,712 students in North Carolina's public schools are identified as LEP. The total number of North Carolina public school students is approximately 1.45 million.

The key terms are defined as follows:

- LEP: any student who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny him or her the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction

is English. North Carolina uses an English-language-proficiency assessment to identify students as LEP.

- English language learner (ELL): in North Carolina, another term for LEP.
- English as a second language (ESL): a type of program to help LEP students become proficient in English.

LEP is the term of choice in this article.

A number of models for working with LEP students are in use in North Carolina:

- The dual-language developmental bilingual program

- The dual-language two-way immersion program
- The transitional bilingual education program
- ESL
- Content-based ESL
- Sheltered English instruction/ sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP)
- Newcomer services
- ESL co-teaching

- Reading of the test aloud by the student to himself or herself
- Use of an English/native-language dictionary or an electronic translator

Determined by student need, the accommodations are intended to provide equitable treatment for LEP students, based on the nature of the examination and the student's degree of English proficiency. Alternative assessments are available to North Carolina students who meet specific criteria, including some LEP students.

the 2006–7 school year to the 2007–8 school year (from 2,225 to 2,765), yet the achievement level for the LEP group rose faster than the achievement level for all students taking the exam.

Of course, a variety of factors other than the school's program affect student achievement on these tests.

Detailed test results can be found on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction website.¹ The information is organized by school district, by individual school, and by subgroups of students, for several academic years.



For a summary of each program, see Table 1.

Students identified as LEP are permitted up to six accommodations on state-mandated tests:

- Testing in a separate room
- Scheduled extended time
- Multiple test sessions
- Reading of the test aloud in English by the test administrator (only possible on tests of skills other than reading)

On most standardized-test measures of achievement, there is a gap between LEP students and other students. I offer two illustrations: the results of the end-of-grade mathematics test for grades 3–8, comparing all students with LEP students (see Table 2); and the results of the high school U.S. history examination (usually taken in tenth grade), comparing the aggregate scores of all students with the scores of LEP students (see Table 3). The number of LEP students taking this examination increased by more than 24 percent from

North Carolina schools address the achievement gap in a number of ways, including increased LEP services, use of varied language-instruction programs, extended-day programs, tutoring, and summer programs.

As the number of LEP students has increased in North Carolina, so have professional development opportunities for ESL and content teachers. The state continues to provide extensive training in sheltered instruction through the North Carolina SIOP model as well as through literacy instruction for LEP

Table 1. LEP Approaches in North Carolina Public Schools

Name of Approach	Language of Instruction	Key Features	Comments
Programs Using Two Languages for Instruction			
Dual-Language Developmental Bilingual Program (Additive Bilingualism)	English and student's heritage language	Helps non-English-speakers learn English as well as maintain and improve their native- or heritage-language skills.	Students become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural in a way that honors their need to identify and communicate with their heritage or home culture and mainstream culture in which they live and will work.
Dual-Language Two-Way Immersion Program (Additive Bilingualism)	English and another language	Consists of about 50% native English speakers and 50% native speakers of target language. Both groups of students become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural.	Content instruction is provided in both English and target language.
Transitional Bilingual Education Program (Subtractive Bilingualism)	Student's primary (non-English) language and English, with focus on former	Is presented in LEP students' native language for at least 2 or 3 years, after which LEP students receive all-English instruction.	Primary purpose is to facilitate students' transition to all-English instructional program while giving them academic-subject instruction in native language to extent necessary.
English-Language Instructional Programs			
<i>Extra content support in English and native language may occur.</i>			
English as a Second Language (ESL)	English	Teaches English reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to LEP students, using program of techniques, methodology, and special curriculum.	Instruction is in English with little use of students' native languages. It may occur in pull-out session or at scheduled class time.
Content-Based ESL	English	Uses instructional materials, learning tasks, and classroom techniques from academic content areas as vehicle for developing language, content, cognitive, and study skills.	Instruction is in English with little use of students' native languages. It may occur in pull-out session or at scheduled class time.
Sheltered English Instruction/Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)	English	Adapts academic instruction in English to make it understandable to LEP students.	This approach can be implemented by content and ESL teachers in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and other subjects.
Newcomer Services	English	Meets academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrants through separate, relatively self-contained educational interventions.	Students usually attend these programs for limited time before they enter ESL program. Services may be provided at special site or school site.
ESL Co-Teaching	English	Provides for shared, collaborative teacher planning time so that teachers can implement strategies that integrate language acquisition, literacy, and academic content at same time.	Caution: Co-teaching is not the same as supplying ESL teacher who enters class and assists individual students. It requires professional development for both teachers so that grade-level and developmentally appropriate teaching from both ESL and content teacher occurs.

Source: Compiled by Title III/ESL Office, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

students. North Carolina universities have addressed this growth by adding ESL certification programs. Today fourteen institutions offer such certification.

In 2008–9, North Carolina public schools changed the test that all LEP students must take to determine their English-language proficiency. The new North Carolina English-language-proficiency standards and resource guide are taken from a guide published by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium. North Carolina joined this consortium of nineteen states to participate in its comprehensive education system. The WIDA test in English-language proficiency was first implemented statewide in February–March 2009.

Note

1. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/>.

Overview of LEP Instruction in Chatham County Schools

Mary Lee Moore and Helen Atkins

Like many areas of North Carolina, Chatham County has experienced a large influx of Hispanic adults and their children. Most of them probably are recent immigrants with varied federally designated immigration statuses. Federal law prohibits schools from inquiring about immigration status. However, federal law requires public school systems to serve these immigrants regardless of their parents' status (see the article on page 35).

Most immigrants do not speak English as their primary language. Thus the

Moore is director of federal programs, English-language learners, library media services, and pre-K programs, and Atkins is ESL coordinator, Chatham County Schools. Contact them at mlmoore@chatham.k12.nc.us and hjones@chatham.k12.nc.us.

Table 2. Percentage of Students Proficient on End-of-Grade Mathematics Test for Grades 3–8

	2006–7 School Year	2007–8 School Year
All Students	66.4%	69.9%
LEP Students	45.7%	51.9%

Source: Drawn from, but not the same as, data available at North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, <http://disag.ncpublicschools.org/2008/app/disag/disag-public.cgi>.

Table 3. Percentage of Students Proficient on End-of-Course U.S. History Examination

	2006–7 School Year	2007–8 School Year
All Students	64.6%	66.5%
LEP Students	36.8%	44.4%

Source: Drawn from, but not the same as, data available at North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, <http://disag.ncpublicschools.org/2008/app/disag/disag-public.cgi>.

primary interest of the Chatham County Schools (CCS) is to help LEP students learn the language and succeed in school.

This profile focuses on Hispanic LEP students. That designation does not cover all immigrants in CCS (or in other North Carolina school districts). Also, many of the Hispanic LEP students are U.S. citizens by virtue of birth or their parents' naturalization.

The Challenge of a Changing Student Population

The number of Hispanic students in CCS more than doubled from the 2000–2001 school year to the 2006–7 school year,

from 817 to 1,642. This increase resulted in a change in the overall percentage of Hispanic students in the student population, from 11.75 percent of all CCS students to 21.71 percent.

The proportion of LEP students ranges widely across schools, however. At Virginia Cross Elementary School, LEP students (largely of Hispanic heritage) account for 321 of 490 students; at Bennett Elementary School, they account for 4 of 246.¹

A New Assessment System in 2009

As well as providing new assessment procedures and levels of identification,



the WIDA Consortium's system (see the article on page 40) provides teachers and administrators with tools for designing curriculum, instruction, and assessments for LEP students. This change in testing and English-language-proficiency standards involves two K–12 tests in English-language proficiency. The first test is a screening assessment that is administered to students new to the district (or the state). The results are used to determine program eligibility, language proficiency, level of services, and classroom placement. The second test is administered to all LEP students in the spring. This test helps gauge a student's progress in English-language proficiency from one year to the next. It assesses four domains—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—and also measures academic language in science, math, and social studies.

The WIDA Consortium's system identifies a continuum of second-language acquisition. The process of acquiring a second language involves movement along the continuum, from Entering (Level 1) to Reaching (Level 6).²



Acquiring an additional language is a complex undertaking. LEP students are a diverse group. They vary in age; grade level; diagnosis, such as learning disabilities; linguistic and cultural backgrounds; and life and educational experiences.

Main Focus: Instruction in English

The overall CCS approach to teaching ESL stresses instruction in English. It uses a stu-

dent's native language for clarification purposes but not as a means of primary instruction. CCS offers a Newcomers Program (K–12) taught by bilingual teachers. Much of the instruction is in English, and measurement of progress is in English, but the native language may be used at times to enable the students to understand rules and academic concepts better.³

CCS must follow North Carolina Department of Public Instruction stan-

Measuring the Progress of LEP Students in Chatham County

Annual measurable achievement objectives are based on LEP students achieving proficiency in English as measured by the Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) and on LEP students' results on grades 3–8 end-of-grade and 10th-grade comprehensive tests.

To meet the achievement objectives, a district must make three separate goals. The goals and the results for 2004–5 and 2005–6 were as follows:

- **Goal 1: Progress (% of LEP students who advance at least one proficiency level)**

2004–5	2005–6
Goal = 45.0%	Goal = 50.0%
CCS results = 74.2%	CCS results = 68.1%
State average = 81.0%	State average = 66.4%

- **Goal 2: Proficiency (% of LEP students who attain full proficiency within five years)**

2004–5	2005–6
Goal = 25.0%	Goal = 30.0%
CCS results = 47.9%	CCS results = 5.0%
State average = 53.3%*	State average = 10.3%

- **Goal 3: Average yearly progress (Did the districtwide LEP subgroup meet the state-set goals for average yearly progress goals?)**

2004–5	2005–6
Math 3–8: met	Math 3–8: met
Reading 3–8: did not meet	Reading 3–8: did not meet
Tenth-grade math: insufficient numbers	Tenth-grade math: met
Tenth-grade reading: insufficient numbers	Tenth-grade reading: did not meet

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Accountability Services, unpublished data (2006), www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability.

*The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction changed the calculations for annual measurable achievement objectives in 2004–5, so the state and district numbers look askew.

Table 1. Chatham County Schools Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Results, 2008

School	Made AYP	Goals Met
Bennett Elementary	Yes	9/9 (100.0%)
Bonlee Elementary School	Yes	13/13 (100.0%)
Chatham Central High School	Yes	9/9 (100.0%)
Chatham Middle School	No	28/29 (96.6%)
Horton Middle School	No	13/17 (76.5%)
J. S. Waters Elementary School	Yes	13/13 (100.0%)
Jordan Matthews High School	No	16/17 (94.1%)
Moncure Elementary School	Yes	13/13 (100.0%)
North Chatham Elementary School	Yes	29/29 (100.0%)
Northwood High School	No	15/17 (88.2%)
Perry W. Harrison Elementary School	No	20/21 (95.2%)
Pittsboro Elementary School	No	14/17 (82.4%)
SAGE Academy*	—	—
Siler City Elementary School	No	16/21 (76.2%)
Silk Hope Elementary School	Yes	13/13 (100.0%)
Virginia Cross Elementary School	No	9/17 (52.9%)

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, <http://ayp.ncpublicschools.org/2008/app/nclb/AypLeaSummary.cgi>.

*Status is not yet available. Sage Academy, an alternative school, is labeled as a Special Evaluation School because it did not meet the membership requirement of forty students across the tested grade levels for reporting of AYP.

dards for students gaining proficiency in English. The state of North Carolina sets the guidelines with regard to students exiting from LEP status. In most cases, a student may exit from LEP status when he or she is able to work successfully and independently in mainstream classes and does not require ESL services. In some instances, however, a student (or his or her family) wishes to continue receiving services. If a child has exited from LEP status but shows a need for continued services, the ESL teacher will continue to serve him or her directly or on a consultative basis.⁴

A full description of the CCS approach for teaching ESL is available on the CCS website.⁵

LEP Student Achievement on Standardized Tests

On the basis of 2004–5 and 2005–6 results, CCS needed to develop a plan to boost LEP achievement, and submit it to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for review. Although

many students were becoming more proficient in English, the scores were below the goals for full proficiency and for reading proficiency across several grades (see the sidebar on page 44).

The two CCS schools with the largest proportion of Hispanic students are “priority schools,” meaning that fewer than 60 percent of their students are scoring at or above Achievement Level III. Six other CCS schools have not met the state-level goals for average yearly progress (AYP) on standardized tests. (For a summary of each CCS school and the number of AYP goals it has met, see Table 1.)

Other Challenges

Many immigrant students are in low-income households. The concentration of students from poor families, regardless of country of background, typically poses challenges for attendance, progress from grade to grade, and overall achievement in schools. Many programs in the school system



assist families experiencing financial challenges.

Approximately one-third of LEP students in CCS are defined as immigrants by federal guidelines. The parents of some immigrant students are migrant laborers, and the movement of the family creates challenges for consistent teaching and learning.

Over the past few years, the LEP population in CCS has been far less transient, for the most part, staying in the county. There still is a bit of movement across schools in the Siler City area, evidenced by the number of older LEP students who now are in CCS’s middle and high schools. Middle and high school teachers who have not typically had English-language learners in their classrooms now are experiencing an increase in the number.

Notes

1. Chatham County Schools, <http://ds1.chatham.k12.nc.us/profiles.nsf/profiles?OpenFrameSet>.

2. For details, see Margo Gottlieb, M. Elizabeth Cranley, and Andrea R. Oliver, *The WIDA Consortium English Language Proficiency Standards and Resource Guide, 2007 Edition, Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12* (Madison, WI: WIDA Consortium, 2007). A brochure on the guide is available at www.wida.us/events/TESOL/ELP_Standards_4.08.pdf.

3. Chatham County Schools, Chatham County Schools ESL Program Guiding Principles, http://policy.chatham.k12.nc.us/mediawiki/index.php/ESL_Plan#Chatham_County_Schools_ESL_Program_Guiding_Principles.

4. Ibid.

5. Chatham County Schools, English as a Second Language Plan, 2007–8, http://policy.chatham.k12.nc.us/mediawiki/index.php/ESL_Plan