



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR EQUITY AND  
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Evaluation of Arlington Public Schools Programs for English Language Learners

FINAL REPORT  
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The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education

The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education's mission is to advance education reform so *all* students achieve to high standards. GW-CEEE conducts policy and applied research, designs and implements program evaluations, and provides professional development and technical assistance for clients in state education agencies, school districts, schools, foundations, and federal agencies.

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## Executive Summary

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The purpose of this study was to provide a comprehensive program evaluation to assist the Arlington Public Schools (APS) School Board, the Superintendent, administrators responsible for ESOL-HILT, and others in making future program decisions to ensure services address the needs of English language learners (ELLs).

The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (GW-CEEE) examined five questions in regard to student outcomes for ELLs (i.e., time until attainment of state exit criteria; time in LEP status; achievement gap closure on math and reading SOLs; enrollment and pass rates in advanced coursework; and high school completion rates). In addition, evaluators examined how APS' policies, practices, and procedures support ELLs (a) *as they develop English language proficiency*, and (b) *as they exit from the program* and move into the regular classroom for content instruction. In addition, they assessed the degree to which this support is occurring.

Data for student outcomes were compiled by the Offices of Planning and Evaluation and English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training (ESOL/HILT). In addition, GW-CEEE evaluators collected and analyzed data for policies, practices, and procedures for each of the seven dimensions of the Promoting Excellence Appraisal System (PEAS): Instructional Program Design, Instructional Program Implementation, Leadership, Personnel, Professional Development, Assessment and Accountability, and Parent and Community Outreach. These data were collected across multiple stakeholder groups, including relevant APS division offices, school administrators, ESOL/HILT teachers, content teachers, Bilingual Family Resource Assistants, HILT Resource Counselors, families, and students. Based on the findings, GW-CEEE provides recommendations, including steps for improving the organization, management, and processes for providing services for limited English proficient (LEP) students.

Table 1 summarizes strengths and areas for improvement for student outcomes as well as for each of the seven PEAS dimensions of practice.

Table 1. *Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement*

PEAS Dimension	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
Student Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most ELLs and former ELLs are making progress toward closing achievement gaps on the reading and math SOLs.</li><li>• Once they attained advanced levels of proficiency, ELLs who entered APS in secondary grades enrolled in advanced coursework at higher rates than students with no history of LEP status.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nearly half of middle school students have been in LEP status for more than six years.</li><li>• Secondary ELLs who were at English proficiency Level 3 in 2008 showed stagnating growth rates on reading and math SOLs.</li><li>• Few ELLs who entered APS in elementary school enrolled in advanced coursework at the secondary level.</li><li>• Students in APS with no history of LEP status are more likely to complete high school than students with a history of LEP status.</li></ul>

PEAS Dimension	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
Instructional Program Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaches to educating ELLs are research-based.</li> <li>The Division's ESOL/HILT department has developed high quality curriculum guides that integrate language arts and content aligned with WIDA standards and SOLs.</li> <li>APS is taking steps to reduce dropout rates for Hispanic and language minority students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESOL/HILT services do not adhere to a cohesive design across APS schools or grade levels.</li> </ul>
Instructional Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers who serve ELLs received moderately high ratings on several measures of quality teaching.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers who serve ELLs varied in the extent to which they made instruction comprehensible to these students.</li> <li>English language instruction is not sufficiently focused on supporting the development of academic language ELLs need to meet grade level content expectations.</li> <li>Elementary reading instruction does not consistently address the needs of ELLs.</li> <li>APS does not have strategies to ensure collaborative teaching follows best practices for inclusive classrooms.</li> </ul>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APS' vision, mission, and goals are inclusive and convey high expectations for ELLs.</li> <li>Educators across Division offices share responsibility for educating ELLs.</li> <li>Educators, parents, and students describe most schools as welcoming of diversity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The work of educating ELLs is not always focused, sustained, and coordinated within and across schools.</li> </ul>
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to instructional staff, the Division has created several key positions to support ELLs and their families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools lack adequate numbers of instructional staff to meet the needs of all groups of ELLs.</li> <li>Some mainstream teachers who serve ELLs do not have the expertise to address their needs.</li> <li>Some ESOL/HILT teachers do not have expertise in the content areas they teach.</li> </ul>
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APS is making progress in preparing all educators of ELLs to implement best practices for these students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Division does not have a systematic means of ensuring instructional changes for ELLs are fully implemented.</li> </ul>
Assessment and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APS carries out a system of continuous improvement for its ELL programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Division lacks an effective system that holds school administrators accountable for the quality of instructional programs for ELLs.</li> <li>The current student data system does not have the capacity to monitor ELL students' progress in meaningful ways.</li> </ul>
Parent and Community Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APS has a well-developed parent and community outreach program for the families of ELLs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not all parents are aware of and can take advantage of opportunities for training and support.</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

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Based on findings from this evaluation, reforms are needed in regard to four critical issues: (a) *fostering school-level accountability for the quality of instructional programs for ELLs*; (b) *enhancing program design to ensure the needs of all groups of ELLs are addressed*; (c) *sustaining ongoing, job-embedded professional development for all educators of ELLs*; and (d) *improving the availability of meaningful data that can support instructional and programmatic decisions for ELLs*. Recommendations are integrated to address the areas of improvement across multiple PEAS dimensions. These are summarized below and described in the Recommendations section of the report.

*Foster school-level accountability for the quality of instructional programs for ELLs.*

- (1) Hold school leaders accountable for the quality of instructional programs for ELLs.
- (2) Plan each school's service delivery tailored to the needs of diverse groups of ELLs.
- (3) Strengthen collaboration among ESOL/HILT/HILTEX and general education teachers.

*Enhance program design to ensure the needs of all groups of ELLs are addressed.*

- (1) Offer Pre-K designed to support the needs of ELLs.
- (2) Allocate staff responsible for monitoring and supporting ELLs at ELP Level 5.
- (3) Strengthen guidance and expectations of teachers to explicitly teach academic English.
- (4) Revitalize the concept-based reading instructional approach for ELLs.
- (5) Pursue policies and practices that support secondary ELLs to enroll in and succeed in advanced coursework.

*Support implementation of ELL-responsive instructional practices through ongoing, job-embedded professional development for all educators of ELLs.*

- (1) Ensure professional development for all educators of ELLs is sustained and leads to desired improvements.
- (2) Enhance the system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of professional development.

*Improve the availability of meaningful data that can support instructional and programmatic decisions for ELLs.*

- (1) Continue efforts to improve the student data system so it can be used by educators to make data-based instructional decisions for ELLs.
- (2) Make demographic, English language proficiency, and achievement data on ELLs readily available.

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