

Resources Necessary for English Language Learners to Access Basic Education

Proposal Summary

Provide adequate funding for students who are English Language Learners (ELL) and who need require additional resources and support not only to become proficient in English, but also to learn the same academic content as English-only students.

The funding proposed remains a categorical program, and is based on a model of service to address the full resource needs that appropriately give ELL students the opportunity to meet academic standards.

The model contains six allocation components are:

1. Core staffing enhancement – smaller class sizes for ELLs with a teacher to student ratio of 1 to 18.
2. “Floor” funding for districts with few ELL students of 0.2 FTE.
3. High ELL/Multiple language enhancement – districts with 75% or greater ELL or who serve more than 9 languages.
4. Middle/High school enhancement – additional money for secondary schools with greater resource needs.
5. Professional development – for each funded teacher unit, an additional 2 days, plus additional days for all BEA funded staff when the ELL population exceeds 20% of total enrollment.
6. Instructional materials and assessments

Resource Proposal

The proposed funding remains a categorical program, with six components of the allocation. These six components address all aspects of a program that appropriately give ELL students the opportunity to meet academic standards. A base support is provided to districts serving ELL students to provide ELLs with smaller class sizes than generated by basic education funding.

When districts have a large number of languages, additional resources are needed to address each language. For example, having to hire interpreters for each language to accommodate the needs of each group of students requires extra resources. Therefore, the proposal includes a component to “supersize” the base support in these cases.

The ELL workgroup also identified that more resources needed at the middle and high school levels. Most students in the ELL program are in elementary school (see Figure 1) and enter the program in elementary school (see Figure 2):

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Figure 1

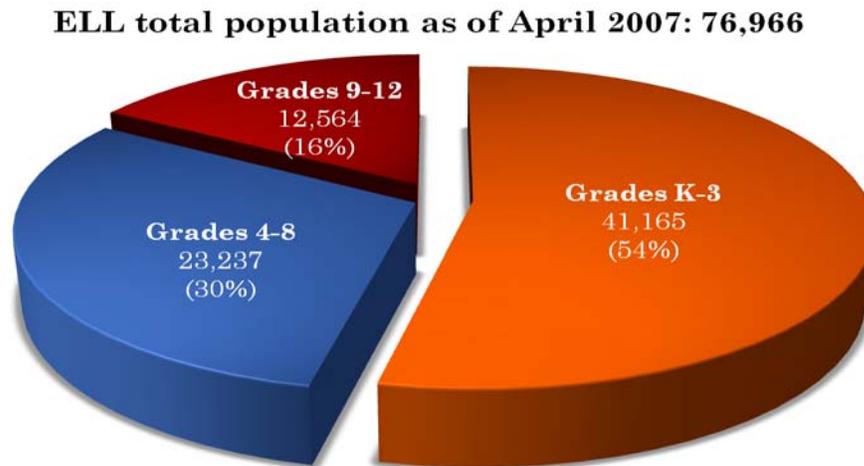
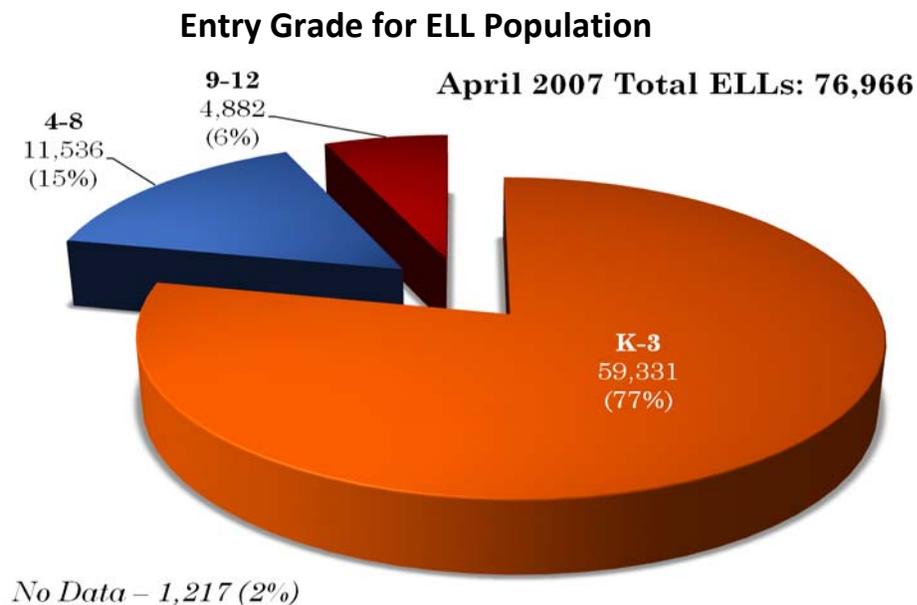


Figure 2



While a much smaller number of students in the ELL program are in middle and high school, these students need more resources than an elementary ELL student, as on average, they are further behind than their elementary counterparts in English language proficiency and have less formal education in their home language. The “gap” that middle and high school students have to close is simply bigger.

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To address the needs of districts with multiple languages and districts with middle and high school ELL students, this allocation funds program support and other necessary staff, such as:

- Intake/reception centers
- Parent/community liaisons
- ELL specialists to coordinate general education services with ELL services
- ELL assessment/data staff
- ELL administrator
- Interpreters

Table 1 identifies the number of staffing units generated by the following recommendations compared to current funding and that recommended by other researchers.

Table 1: Comparison of the number of staff units funded for ELL students:

Finance Study/Proposal	Number of Teacher Units (FTEs)
Current ELL Funding	1,074
Superintendent's Recommendation to Basic Education Finance Task Force	2,246
Picus and Odden for WA Learns*	1,074
Conley, 2007	3,220

*Picus and Odden recommend current funding level, given additional resources allocated in other components of their recommendation.

Components of the Resource Proposal Recommendation

1. Core Staffing Enhancement

Research has shown that smaller class sizes are beneficial for all students, but especially for ELL students.

- Smaller class sizes, with teacher to student ratios of 1 to 18.
- Funding would phase out as replaced by enhanced BEA.
 - Current BEA teacher to student ratio is approximately 1 to 24 for grades K-5 and 1 to 29 for grades 6-12.

2. "Floor" Funding for Districts with few ELL

This part of the allocation recognizes that districts need a minimum amount of resources to serve every ELL student and that districts must provide an appropriate program (and receive adequate state funding) even when there are very few ELL students.

- For districts that have least 1.0 FTE they would receive a minimum of 0.2 teacher unit FTE.

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3. High ELL/Multiple Language Enhancement

This part of the allocation recognizes the additional costs that districts incur when there are a large number of different languages (more than 10 languages), or more than 75% of the district is ELL.

- For every 36 ELL student FTEs, an additional 1.0 teacher unit FTE (Teacher to student ratio of 1 to 36) would be allocated for high need districts who meet the criteria of 75% or more of total enrollment is ELL, or have 10 or more languages.
- For qualifying districts, this factor increases base resources in part 1 by 50%, providing an additional 1.0 teacher FTE for every 2 base FTE provided.

4. Middle /High School Enhancement

To recognize the additional costs of middle or high school ELL students:

- Students in grades 6-8 would generate a 1.25 factor of the base allocation in part 1 (this is a 25% increase over the base).
- Students in grades 9-12 would generate a 1.50 factor of the base allocation in part 1 (this is a 50% increase over the base).
- These factors are built recognizing the vast majority of ELL students are in elementary school, that the average length of time in the ELL program is 3 years, and reflects actual resource needs in districts.

5. Professional Development

ELL teachers need specialized professional development to understand the structure of language, its development in the first and second languages, and how to support and enhance it. Teachers of ELL students must also know how to use assessments to measure language proficiency and to monitor student progress.

- All funded staff units would receive 2 additional days, for a total of 184 funded days.

Plus

- Additional days for all basic ed instructional staff, based on ELL enrollment.

District ELL Enrollment	Additional PD Days
20% – less than 50%	1 day
50% – less than 75%	2 days
75% or more	3 days

- Policy assumption – the additional days would be required to be used for the teacher units generated in the allocation.
- Policy assumption – As contract days for BEA are enhanced, the extra days for all basic ed instructional staff are phased out.

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6. Instructional Materials

This component funds the cost of additional instructional materials needed for ELL students. In addition to the core instructional materials, ELL students need both strong English Language Development materials and tests; and bridging material that allows them to access the core curriculum with their more limited vocabularies and knowledge of English language structure.

- The per student amount is based on current instructional material pricing lists¹ from OSPI's Master Price Agreements.
- Includes components for:
 - Student materials
 - Teacher materials
 - Classroom materials

Policy Proposal

The allocation for ELL students remains a categorical program due to federal requirements. Regardless of federal requirements, educators in the workgroup that developed this proposal felt strongly that the resources will not be directed to ELL students unless they are earmarked as such. Educators reported anecdotally that these students often get too few resources because these students have the fewest and least powerful advocates. This recommendation continues to define ELL as a categorical program, available only for assistance to English Language Learners, but does not mandate allocations by school.

Background and Historical Funding and Practice in Washington

Linguistic minorities represent one of the largest and fastest growing segments of the school-age population in the United States. Over the last 25 years, the linguistic minority population has exploded relative to the English-only populations. Between 1980 and 2005, the linguistic minority population in the United States more than doubled, while the English-only population actually declined.²

To earn a high school diploma, all students, including ELL students, must meet state standards in reading, writing and mathematics content areas of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) or demonstrate achievement of state standards in these same content areas using alternative assessments or methods. From educational, moral and legal standpoints, the state must provide all students a reasonable opportunity to learn the state standards.

¹ <http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/reading/ReadingProgMasterPriceAgrmnt.aspx>

² See Ladd and Fiske, Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy (2008)

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Historically Washington State has provided an allocation for ELL students, the State Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program (STBIP). The current allocation is based on the number of ELL students a district reports. The STBIP allocation for school year 2008-2009 is \$904. This funding assumption is driven by the assumption that each 75 ELL students need the support of 1 certificated teacher.

In Washington State, ELL children are given an annual English proficiency assessment, the Washington Language Proficiency Test (WLPT-II). Students are assessed in four areas: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The WLPT-II is not an academic test. Students who pass this assessment are considered “transitional”, and exit the ELL program. On average students exit the program in three years.

Components of Successful Programs for ELLs

To develop a new funding model, a workgroup comprised of school district staff, higher education staff and statewide experts on ELL students was convened. This workgroup reviewed research on effective ELL models, compiled a list of resources needed to provide services to students that give them the opportunity to meet state academic standards and developed an allocation to address students’ needs.

The key element of any educational program for English learners is at minimum an instructional program that addresses at least two goals: English language proficiency and access to the core curriculum. A key feature of the instructional program is ensuring that instructional services are specifically designed for English learners. To acquire English and master the core curriculum, English learners need additional instructional time. Another key feature of the instructional program concerns class size. Research has shown that small classes improve student achievement, especially for minority students (Finn, Gerber, Achilles & Boyd-Zaharias, 2001)³.

Meeting the educational goals for ELL students requires more than an instructional program, even an extensive program based on the primary language. ELL students, especially those who come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, may require other programmatic services beyond those found in the regular classroom during the regular school day. Such supplemental programs may include student support (counseling or intake centers) and family support (parent/community liaisons, interpreters). These additional programmatic services provide ELL students with critical resources.

Research tells us there are three crucial academic resources needed to educate ELL students: well qualified teachers, and appropriate instructional materials and assessments.

Teachers

³ See Ladd and Fiske, Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy (2008)

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ELL teachers need to know a great deal about the structure of language, its development in the first and second languages, and how to support and enhance it. Teachers of ELL students need to know how to use assessments to measure language proficiency and to monitor student progress (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). One study found that 40 percent of all teachers of English learners had received no in-service training in the previous five years.

Instructional Materials

A comprehensive and appropriate instructional program requires appropriate instructional materials. In addition to the core instructional materials, ELL students need both strong English Language Development materials and tests; and bridging material that allows them to access the core curriculum with their more limited vocabularies and knowledge of English language structure. National data show that relatively few ELL students receive appropriate materials. Only 57% of ELL district coordinators in a recent national survey reported that ELL teachers in their districts were provided curriculum materials for their ELL students to help them align their instruction to state standards (Zehler et al., 2003, p. 62).

Valid, Comprehensive Assessments

To provide an adequate education for ELL students requires valid diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. Diagnostic assessments are needed to evaluate their skills and abilities of ELL students when they first enter school, in both their primary language and English; formative assessments are needed to provide teachers with ongoing information on the progress of ELL students in both language development and subject matter competence; and summative assessments are needed to measure the progress of ELL students in reaching standards and other outcomes.

In addition to using to reviewing program research, other school finance research was reviewed. The following are recommendations made by other school finance studies for Washington State’s struggling students:

Research Summary	
School Finance Researchers	
Picus/Odden for Wa Learns	<p>ELL students need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified teachers • Adequate instructional materials and good school conditions • Good assessments of ELL students so teachers know in detail their English language reading and other academic skills • Professional development <u>for all teachers</u>, focusing on sheltered English teaching skills. <p>Additional assistance is needed when students are both low income and ELL (small classes, English as a second language classes and “reception” centers for districts with large numbers of ELL students who arrive at different times during the school year).</p> <p>These recommendations for ELL students assume that other recommended basic education and struggling students foundational resources are provided, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full day kindergarten; • Classes of 15-18 students for the first four years of school, K-3;

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Research Summary	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 90 minutes of regular reading instruction daily; • An evidence-based reading curriculum; and • Individual and small group tutoring for struggling students. <p>Therefore, no increase in funding is recommended, given the additional basic ed and struggling student resources already recommended.</p>
Conley, 2007	<p>Recommends :</p> <p>ELL student-teacher ratio of 25 to 1</p> <p>ELL student –classified ratio of 180 to 1</p> <p>\$170 per ELL student for materials and supplies</p>

The current STBIP allocation is equal to 17% of the average basic education allocation (BEA). Based on a survey of other states, Washington State’s ELL funding as a percentage of BEA is in the middle of other states surveyed.

Per Student Funding in School Year 2007-2008:

	Washington	Oregon	Texas	Colorado	NewJersey
ELL	\$846	\$1,993	\$344	\$96	\$4,825
ELL funding as % of BEA (WA) or general education	17%	50%	11%	1%	50%

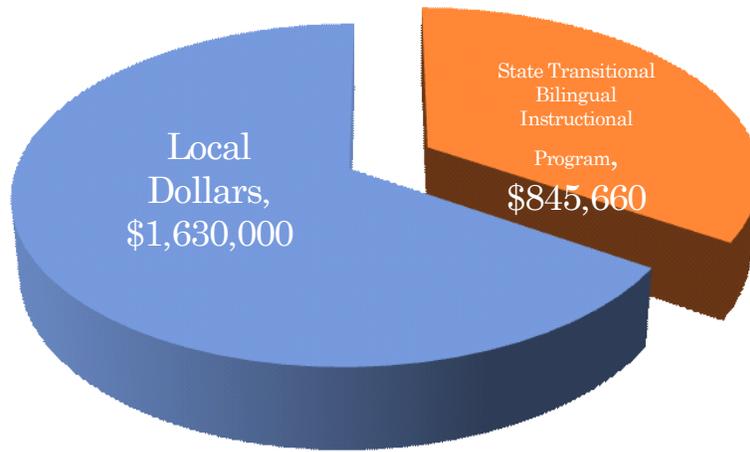
While we do not know how much districts spend in total on ELL students, due to accounting policies that require districts to match expenditures to categorical state and federal programs, we know based on data from school districts that districts are not able to provide the appropriate level of services to ELL students with current state ELL funding:

Spokane School District

- Serve more than 1,000 ELLs, out of a total district size of 29,000 students.
- 48 language groups represented in the district.
- Russian, Spanish, and Marshallese are the top three languages.

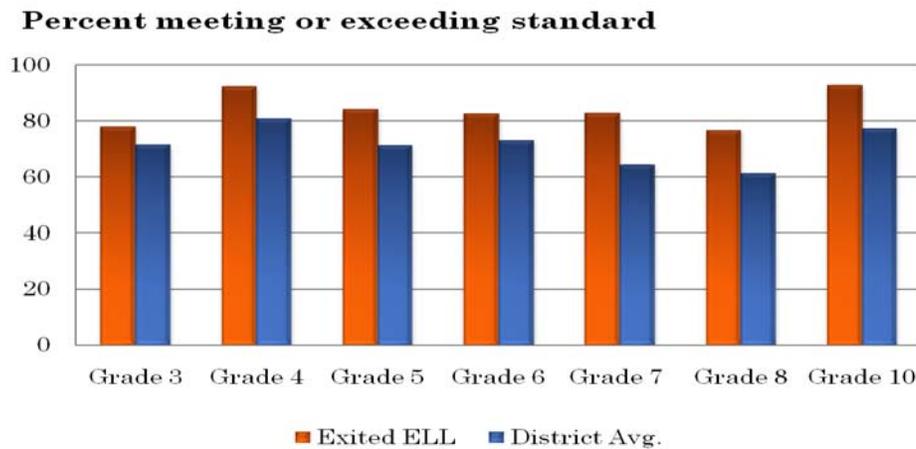
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Total ELL Program Budget for Spokane Public Schools: \$2.475 Million



And Spokane Public Schools are seeing a return on their investment; ELL students who exit the program meet standard on state assessments at higher rates than non-ELL students.

Spokane School District, Exited ELLs vs. District Average Achievement on 2007 Reading WASL



Spokane School District, Exited ELLs vs. District Average Achievement on 2007 Math WASL

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