

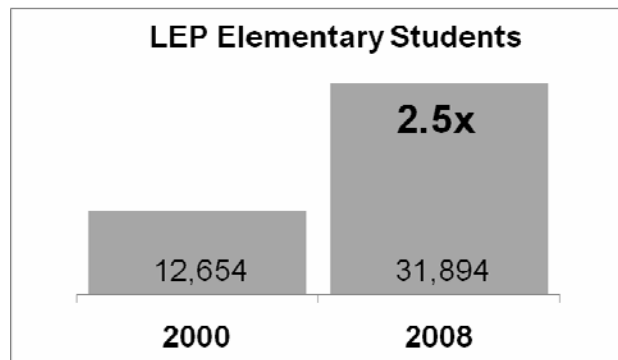
Limited English Proficient Students Spread Across State *Funding Increases But Achievement Gaps Persist*

Executive Summary

There are significantly more Limited English Proficient students in Maryland's school districts. They are no longer as concentrated. Prince George's County has seen particular growth. State funding for these students has increased six-fold under the Thornton legislation; however, achievement gaps persist, and it is unclear whether school districts are providing the targeted interventions needed by this growing segment of their student population.

Demographic Changes

An increasing number of Maryland's students enter school having spoken another language throughout their childhood. In Maryland, the number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) elementary school students has risen from 12,654 in 2000 to 31,894 in 2008, as shown below.¹

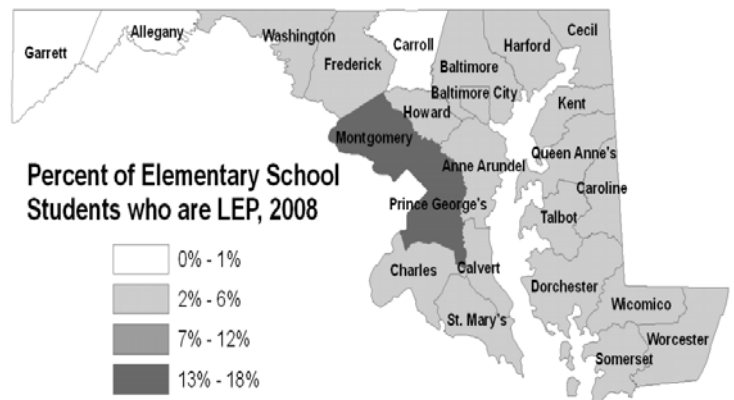
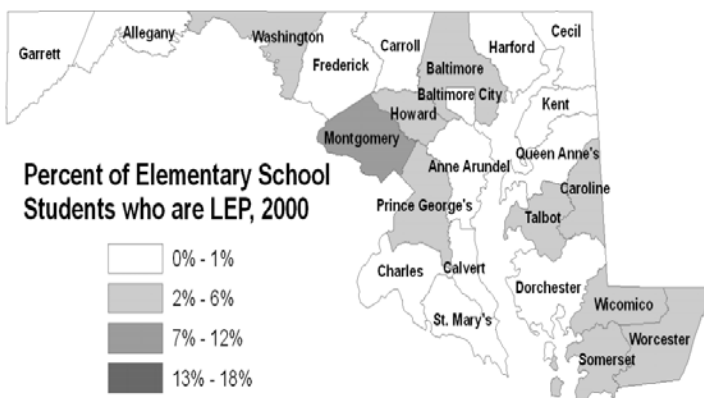
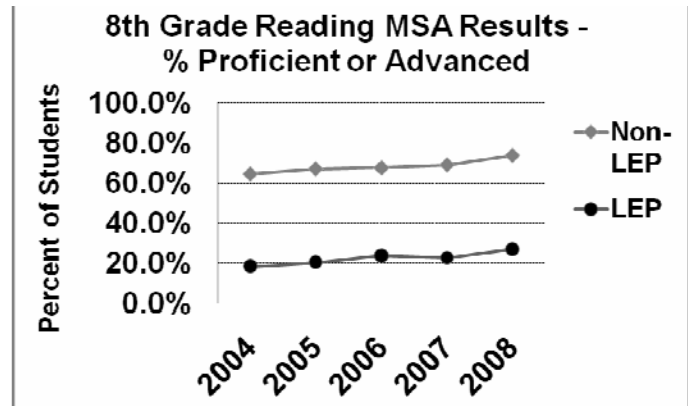


Challenges for Schools and Districts

Non-native speakers used to be heavily concentrated in Montgomery County, which had 43 percent of the State's LEP students in 2000. Recently, however, the LEP population has grown across the State. For example, 5 percent of Prince George's County elementary school students were LEP in 2000, compared to 15 percent today. The maps at the bottom show the concentration levels in 2000 and 2008.

Student Performance

LEP students consistently perform worse than native English speakers. For example, there was a 47 percentage point gap in proficiency between LEP and non-LEP students on the 2008 8th Grade Reading Maryland School Assessment (MSA).

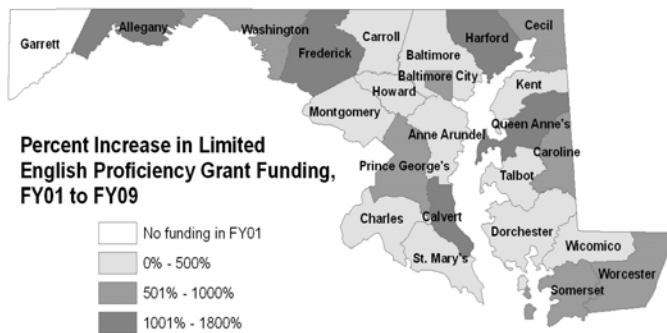


Students continue to struggle in high school. On the 2007 English 2 High School Assessment, 72 percent of non-LEP students were proficient or advanced, compared with only 23 percent of LEP students.

The poor performance of LEP students is a major factor in schools failing to meet the standards of the federal No Child Left Behind act. In Prince George’s County, 11 of 16 middle schools failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress requirements based in part on the weak performance of LEP students.²

Funding

State aid to help districts teach LEP students has increased dramatically in recent years. Limited English Proficiency Grants funding increased from \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2001 to \$144 million in Fiscal Year 2009.³



Prince George’s County now receives the most funding from this grant—about \$55 million or one-third of the total state grants. Baltimore City receives ten times more grant funding than in Fiscal Year 2001.

Discussion and Recommendations

Unfortunately, students across the State are still lagging behind and need additional supports. While some districts like Montgomery County have taught large numbers of LEP students for decades, the rapidly growing, high-need LEP population is challenging virtually every Maryland school district. The continuing achievement gap suggests that increased funding alone will not ensure student success. LEP students require targeted, research-based supports starting at a young age to perform on par with their peers.

Effective Interventions and Individualized Instruction

Students need effective interventions that address the roots causes of their poor performance. While all districts offer bilingual education or English as a

Second Language programs, there is limited data on the effectiveness of different approaches.

Instruction of young LEP students can include screenings for reading difficulties, frequent assessments to monitor progress and intensive small-group instruction.⁴ Some schools may be able to effectively implement these approaches during the school day. Other schools may need additional interventions like tutoring and summer school to give students the individualized attention they need to improve their language and literacy skills.

Maryland must ensure schools have adequate funding and technical assistance to implement effective interventions for LEP students.

Principal Bonuses

Challenging districts need proven principals, but attracting and retaining a quality principal in a “hard-to-staff” school is not easy.

Recent studies by Advocates for Children and Youth found rampant principal turnover in many of the same districts that face the greatest increases in LEP students. For example, the 14 lowest performing and highest poverty middle schools in Prince George’s County saw 22 principal changes over five years.

As a candidate, Governor O’Malley proposed significant bonuses to attract principals with proven track records to challenging schools. Prince George’s County Public Schools recently received a federal grant to provide \$12,500 in incentives to certain principals. Most districts still lack the ability to attract and retain the principals needed to support LEP students’ success.

¹ Elementary school students account for over 75 percent of the total LEP population and are the fastest growing group. Maryland State Department of Education, *Maryland Report Card*.

² Only schools with data for LEP students are included. Several schools had too few LEP students to present data. *Maryland Report Card*.

³ Department of Legislative Services, *90-Day Reports* (2001-2008).

⁴ Gersten *et al.*, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide* (2007).