English Learner Study
Year One Report

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Background

- Over the last ten years, FCPS’ EL population has grown from approximately 32,000 students in SY 2004-05 to approximately 36,000 students in SY 2014-15, with a spike to approximately 39,000 students in SY 2009-10.
- EL students are among the group of students most challenged to reach their full potential and, thus, in particular need of enhanced practices and supports at Kindergarten through Grade 12 to meet their needs.
- During SY 2015-16, in response to growing numbers of EL students, the school division began implementation at two high schools (Lee and Stuart) of a new approach to serving students with the most limited English skills.

Report Purpose

- This Year 1 study investigated the quality of services for FCPS’ EL students in terms of: (a) Design of EL services; and (b) Outcomes (Historical Performance). A second report, scheduled for release in December 2016 will look at implementation, additional outcomes, and costs. Findings from both years will allow evidence-based judgments about the services provided to EL students in FCPS as whole and in the ESOL High School Pilot program.

Findings from the Year 1 Study

What does research indicate schools and school divisions should do to promote the success of EL students?

- Research indicates that EL students have the greatest likelihood of overall success when engaged in the following three educational experiences: (a) inclusive, supportive and respectful climate that makes EL students feel a part of the school community; (b) explicit instruction in English-language not only during English language arts but in all content areas; and (c) challenging curriculum using differentiated instructional approaches directed specifically towards EL needs.
- Research also indicates it is equally important for schools to manage the organizational structures of time, space, and personnel to facilitate effective educational experiences for EL students: (a) use space to include, rather than isolate EL students and their teachers, (b) use time to ensure collaboration among ESOL and regular content teachers, (c) ensure high quality personnel with strong interpersonal and instructional skills, and (d) adjust time, space and personnel to fit the changing needs of EL students as they gain language skills.
- “Newcomers” (immigrant) students are especially vulnerable to the absence of a focus on the use of time, space, and personnel to meet their unique needs.
- School districts serving EL students effectively have clear EL expectations for all schools and strong centralized authority to support compliance with expectations.
Findings from the English Learner Study: Year 1

To what extent has FCPS designed EL services and organized itself to align with research?

♦ Of the three experiences research supports as critical to EL student progress, FCPS has historically focused on providing the English-language development experience. FCPS has not addressed the other two experiences (inclusive climate, challenging and differentiated content) at all grade levels.

♦ FCPS’ new high school ESOL pilot, which started in SY 2015-16, is designed to address all three experiences for EL students.

♦ FCPS’ existing policies, regulations and practices may not be sufficient to maximize the use of time, space, and personnel structures for serving EL students effectively.

How has EL students’ attainment of English proficiency varied over the past ten years?

♦ Although FCPS has met state-required targets for EL performance over the last three years, the progress demonstrated by EL students at the high school level has been substantially below that of elementary and middle school students.

♦ FCPS students attain proficiency relatively quickly compared to rates described in research, and a greater percentage are doing so within five years than attained proficiency that quickly ten years ago.

How has EL students’ core content performance varied in relation to changes in the EL population over the past ten years?

♦ Variations in FCPS EL student performance over the past ten years can be attributed more to changes in the state testing program than changes in the EL population.

♦ As the number of EL students who have exited ESOL services has grown, their pass rates on the higher rigor SOL Reading tests have been similar to or higher than those in the division overall.

Implications

♦ The relatively quick English-language acquisition by most EL students in FCPS suggests the school division should continue its practices towards this goal.

♦ Expanding the design of services to focus more on the school climate and challenging content-based curriculum will be critical to increased growth in academic performance for EL students.

♦ Current FCPS staffing models may not be sufficient to allow schools to develop master schedules that promote adequate staff collaboration for offering all three types of research-based educational experiences to EL students.

♦ Ensuring a balance between strong instructional skills and interpersonal skills for teachers during recruitment and professional development is critical for the success of EL students in any school division.

♦ Clearer centralized practices and stronger authority to ensure fidelity to division expectations are key to equity in the quality of services provided to EL students across FCPS.

Recommendations

♦ For Superintendent: Direct staff to review and develop a plan of action for bringing services for ELs at all school levels into alignment with the three areas of research-based educational experiences described in this report.

♦ For School Board: Request a staff review of relevant division policies and associated regulations that may unintentionally limit how schools are able to use organizational structures (time, space, and personnel) to provide the research-based educational experiences to EL students.

The complete English Learner Study report is available at http://www.fcps.edu/pla/ope/multi_year_oep/benchmark_study_ESOL.shtml
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Report Overview

The English Language Learner (EL) Study Year 1 report is organized into five sections:

**Introduction** provides background information about the EL student population in FCPS, how EL students are identified in the school division, and a brief description of the services FCPS currently provides for EL students.

**Study Background** details the purpose of the study (context and design) as well as the data sources used to answer the study questions.

**Study Findings** presents the available evidence gathered during the first year of the study in two general areas: (1) **Design of EL Services** and (2) **Historical Outcomes**, focusing on performance trends over the past three to ten years for EL students in FCPS.

The final Year 2 report planned for December 2016 will provide additional findings: (3) **Outcomes for EL students’ academic and non-academic performance related to school organizational structures**, (4) **Implementation of Services for EL Students** and (5) **Costs related to serving EL students in FCPS**.

**Recommendations to Decision Makers** details the Office of Program Evaluation’s (OPE) recommendations to the Superintendent and School Board for improving services offered to and outcomes for EL students.

In addition to the full Year 1 report, an Executive Summary is available that highlights key findings, implications and recommendations.
Introduction

One of the belief statements articulated by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is “Each student is entitled to an excellent education that meets his or her individual needs.”¹ This statement is supported by the division’s overarching strategy, articulated in FCPS’ Strategic Plan, Ignite, to “enhance instructional practices to ensure that all students receive an education in a dynamic environment designed to foster life-long learning and support them in achieving their full potential.”² Among the student groups who are most challenged to reach their full potential are English Learners (ELs, formerly referred to English Language Learners [ELLs] or Limited English Proficient students [LEPs]).

Who are EL students?

In general, ELs are students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.³

How large is the EL population?

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, EL students are the fastest growing segment of the public school population. Over the past 15 years, the number of EL students in the United States has nearly doubled—to about 5 million.⁴ As the U.S. Department of Education explained in a January 2015 memorandum,⁵ “EL students are now enrolled in nearly three out of every four public schools in the nation, they constitute nine percent of all public school students, and their numbers are steadily increasing. It is crucial to the future of our nation that these students, and all students, have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential.”

In Virginia, there are approximately 100,000 EL students enrolled in public schools with FCPS serving the largest proportion.⁶ Over the last nine years, FCPS’ EL population has grown from approximately 32,000 students in SY 2006-07 to approximately 36,000 students in SY 2014-15, hitting a high of approximately 39,000 students in SY 2009-10⁷ (red area in Figure 1).⁸ The pink area in Figure 1 depicts the shift from approximately 5,800 former EL students in SY 2006-07 to a peak of 23,000 former EL students in SY 2014-15 and represents the increasing number of the division’s students who have attained English proficiency while attending FCPS.

Trend patterns of EL enrollment in FCPS also differed by school level. At the elementary level, most FCPS schools fell into one of two groups—those with relatively small (i.e., averaging 13 percent or less) and decreasing EL populations (68 elementary schools) and those with large (averaging 47 percent or greater) and growing EL populations (44 elementary schools). Middle and high school EL populations showed small increases in the percentages of ELs they served, mostly because they experienced less growth in overall

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¹ http://www.fcps.edu/schlbd/bmv.shtml
³ http://edglossary.org/english-language-learner
⁴ http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_204.20.asp
⁵ http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf
⁶ http://www.ncela.us/t3sis/Virginia.php
⁷ SY 2009-10 was the first year WIDA ACCESS for ELLs was the determiner of English Language proficiency in Virginia, and therefore in FCPS as well. http://commweb.fcps.edu/programprofile/dataNarrative.cfm?ProgramID=69
⁸ This growth in ELs has also resulted in larger numbers and percentages of FCOS students who have exited ESOL services. In SY 2006-07, FCPS had 5,751 (4 percent of membership) students who had exited ESOL services, while in the most recently completed school year (2014-15) FCPS had 23,295 (13 percent of membership) such students, more than a four-fold increase.
student population. However, some high schools also have experienced growth in their percentage of ELs. Further details on membership at schools are provided in Appendix A.

**Figure 1: Historic EL Membership Trends**

![](image)

**How are EL students identified?**

In the United States, students are identified for EL services using a state and federally approved assessment. Since SY 2008-09, Virginia’s approved identification process for EL students has relied upon a standardized assessment called the WIDA Access for ELLs, which is also used by 35 other states. The WIDA Access for ELLs instrument assesses students’ English language proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Scores on this assessment are the sole criteria used to determine an EL's English Language Proficiency (ELP) level, with WIDA categorizing students into Levels 1 through 6 (1, known as “entering,” being least proficient; and 6, known as “reaching,” being English proficient). Students’ ELP levels must be assessed once a year to meet federal requirements.

In FCPS, students who live in a home where a language other than or in addition to English is spoken take a WIDA screener assessment upon entry into the school division to determine if the student has limited English language proficiency. FCPS assigns students scoring in ELP Levels 1 through 5 to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services. Once students reach Level 6, they are designated English proficient (i.e., no longer require ESOL services) and their academic performance is monitored for two additional years to ensure they are able to participate meaningfully in FCPS’ general education program. Following this monitoring period, students are categorized as ELP Level 10DM (which represents a student designated English proficient and who has been dismissed from (i.e., completed and no longer needs) ESOL services and is beyond the monitoring period).

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9 Prior to SY 2008-09, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) had approved FCPS to use locally-developed and selected assessments to make EL (formerly LEP or Limited English Proficient) determinations.

10 The WIDA MODEL assessment used for screening is not the same as the full WIDA Access for ELLs assessment that students take at the end of each year in which they received ESOL services. The MODEL assesses the same domains as the ACCESS for ELLs, but it is designed as a placement test that can be used several times per year and takes less time to administer than the ACCESS for ELLs. See [https://www.wida.us/assessment/MODEL/](https://www.wida.us/assessment/MODEL/). At the kindergarten level, Kindergarten World Class Instructional Design and Assessment Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State Placement Test™ (W-APT™) is used. See [https://www.wida.us/assessment/w-apt/](https://www.wida.us/assessment/w-apt/).

11 Parents have the right to refuse ESOL services for their child(ren), though few in FCPS do.

12 Students who, upon entry into FCPS, score as English proficient on the WIDA are designated ELP Level 10NR indicating they entered the school system proficient in English and did not require services to develop English language proficiency.
How are EL students served in FCPS?

The division’s strategic plan is specific about its intent to effectively educate EL students as reflected in the following commitment: “Evaluate current practices and programming for ELL students to ensure that the changing needs of our EL students are being met with unique, quality programming and services.” Currently the primary way FCPS serves its EL students is through the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, which focuses on developing EL students’ academic English language proficiency through integrated content-based language instruction. FCPS dedicates approximately $2,456 per EL student over and above other typical costs to provide ESOL services, for a total of $88.4 million budget in FY 2016 (the majority of which covers the 863 school-based staff positions dedicated to providing ESOL services to EL students).

At elementary schools EL students receive small group instruction both inside and outside the classroom to support classroom learning objectives and targeted content-based English language development. At middle and high schools EL students enroll in content-based ESOL courses; in general, Level 1 and 2 students (those with the lowest levels of English proficiency) take primarily ESOL core content courses, while Level 3 and 4 students take standard core content course offerings in all subjects but English. In addition to the ESOL program, schools may provide other services to support EL students. These services may be provided by the classroom teacher, other resource teachers, and/or support staff such as the school counselor.

During the current school year (SY 2015-16), in response to growing numbers of Level 1 and 2 EL students at some FCPS high schools, the school division began implementation of a new approach to serving students with the most limited English skills (sometimes referred to as “newcomers”) at two high schools (Lee and Stuart). The ESOL High School Pilot gives Level 1 and 2 EL students (i.e., those with the lowest English language skills) sheltered instruction on English and Social Studies SOL standards. The courses allow students to earn core content credit towards graduation while simultaneously developing English language skills. This contrasts with the approach that has been used historically in FCPS high schools, where students develop English language skills before enrolling in these standard courses. Students participating in the pilot program also enroll in a Strategies for Success elective course, which supports their transition into the high school environment by teaching learning strategies and understanding of how to participate in the school community. Lastly, the program relies on shared teacher teams across disciplines to help build relationships with students.

14 Details on typical progression of courses based on ELP level for middle school students is available at http://www.fcps.edu/is/esol/documents/MSESOLWIDALevelsFlowChart.pdf and for high school students is available at http://www.fcps.edu/is/esol/documents/FlowChartHSESOL.pdf.
15 In sheltered English classes, teachers use clear, direct, simple English and a wide range of scaffolding strategies to communicate meaningful input in the content area to students. Learning activities that connect new content to students’ prior knowledge, that require collaboration among students, and that spiral through curriculum material, offer ELs the grade-level content instruction of their English-speaking peers, while adapting lesson delivery to suit their English proficiency level. (Freeman & Freeman, 1988).
Study Background

What is the purpose of the study?

In keeping with the strategic action to evaluate practices and programming for ELs, this study is designed to investigate the quality of four characteristics of services for FCPS' EL students: (a) Design of EL services; (b) Implementation of EL services at schools; (c) Outcomes; and (d) Costs. Findings about any of these individual characteristics can provide insights for modifications to enhance the services offered to EL students in FCPS. Thus, the Office of Program Evaluation staff developed the initial set of study questions based on the information needs identified by the Superintendent. The questions were refined based on recommendations from an advisory team composed of representatives from central office and school-and region-based staff. Special attention was paid to the information needs related the ESOL High School Pilot at selected schools. The study will provide the FCPS School Board and Leadership Team with evidence-based judgments about the services provided to EL students in FCPS as a whole and in the ESOL High School Pilot program.

To ensure timely sharing of data as they become available, this study is designed in two parts. The Year 1 report contains answers to questions for which data were available by December 2015. These questions are related to (a) Design of EL services and (b) Outcomes (historical performance trends). The specific questions addressed in this Year 1 report are:

Design of EL Services
  o What does research indicate schools and school divisions should do to promote the success of EL students?
  o To what extent has FCPS designed its EL services and organized itself in keeping with research-based practices?

Outcomes (Historical Performance Trends)
  o How has EL students’ (Kindergarten - Grade 12) attainment of English proficiency varied over the past 10 years?
  o How has EL students’ core content performance (Grades 1 - 12) varied in relation to changes in the EL population over the past 10 years?

The Year 2 report is scheduled for release in December 2016. That report will look specifically at (a) Implementation of expected practices, (b) Outcomes (both academic and social-emotional) in relation to practices, and (c) Costs associated with the services and optimization efforts. The specific questions to be addressed in the Year 2 final report are:

Implementation of Services for EL Students
  o To what extent do FCPS schools implement organizational structures (space, time, personnel) that facilitate research-based learning experiences for EL students?

Outcomes Associated with Practices
  o To what extent do FCPS’ EL students demonstrate positive social-emotional outcomes (i.e., school belonging, motivation to achieve, academic self-efficacy)?
Which organizational structures and educational experiences are associated with the best outcomes for EL students in English language proficiency, academic performance, and social-emotional outcomes?

Costs of EL Services
- How do costs for FCPS’ EL services compare with other school divisions?
- How has FCPS optimized the use of funds in educating ELs?

Additional details on the design of the EL study are available in Appendix B.

What data sources were used?

Evidence in this report examining the Design of EL Services came from:
- review of the EL research literature (to summarize the plethora of research the study took a consensus approach looking for agreement among key researchers in the field, especially from national research panels and meta-analytic studies);
- review of ESOL program documents and webpages; and
- discussion with the director of the Office of ESOL Services, Rich Pollio, about the design of the new High School ESOL pilot.

Evidence in this report examining Outcomes (Historical Performance Trends) came from:
- extant student membership and performance data.

For further details about the study's methodology, including data sources that will be used to answer the study questions for the final report, see Appendix B and Appendix C.
Study Findings

Design of EL Services

Study Question: What does research indicate schools and school divisions should do to promote the success of EL students?  

Summary of Findings 1-4: Research highlights both educational experiences and organizational structures as critical to the success of EL students. Research supports three types of educational experiences that best support the learning of EL students: (a) inclusive, supportive and respectful climate that makes EL students feel a part of the school community; (b) explicit instruction in English language not only during English language arts but in all content areas; and (c) challenging curriculum using differentiated instructional approaches directed specifically towards EL needs.

Research further indicates that the use of space, time, and personnel by schools are key organizational structures that best support EL students. Schools that organize themselves to support EL learning (a) use space to include, rather than isolate, EL students and their teachers, (b) use time to ensure collaboration among ESOL and regular content teachers, and (c) ensure high quality personnel with strong interpersonal and instructional skills. Effective schools also adapt these structures to fit the needs of their EL students over the course of the year, rather than holding the structures constant and forcing students to fit within them. Additionally, “newcomer” (students, typically new immigrants with little English language skills and often little prior formal schooling) require schools and school districts to organize special, targeted support that differs from what other EL students need.

Lastly, research shows that school districts that ensure central office oversight and authority over EL instruction are organized to most effectively support EL students.

Finding 1: Research indicates that EL students have the greatest likelihood of overall success when engaged in the following educational experiences:

A. Inclusive, supportive, and respectful climate;

B. Explicit English language instruction that occurs not only during English language arts but within all content areas; and

C. Challenging and differentiated content-based instruction.

A large, and potentially overwhelming, volume of research exists on what EL students should experience to acquire the knowledge and skills of their counterparts in the school setting. This volume of research ranges from the work of individual researchers and national research panels to meta-analytic studies. Thus, the study focused on what was most common or validated by the most rigorous studies. Focused on these criteria, three sets of experiences emerged as most critical for EL student success.

References used to respond to this question and elsewhere in the report are cited in footnotes. The full reference for any cited work is available in Appendix D.

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First, to foster academic motivation, engagement and performance, EL students need an inclusive, supportive, and respectful climate that makes them feel that they belong to the school community.17 Second, research confirms that direct instruction in English language development is critical to attaining English proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking and that a mixture of explicit and direct language instruction along with integrated English language instruction within content areas is highly effective.18 Lastly, multiple researchers have established that EL students, like all students, benefit from being held to high expectations and receiving challenging content.19 Additional details on these three educational experiences are described in Appendix D.

**Finding 2:** Research indicates it is equally important for schools to manage the organizational structures of time, space, and personnel to facilitate effective educational experiences for EL students:

A. **Use time within master schedules to allow for collaborative planning, teaming, and co-teaching between ESOL and classroom instructional staff;**

B. **Arrange space so that EL students and ESOL staff are not isolated from English-speaking peers and other instructional staff;**

C. **Hire and deploy ESOL and classroom instructional personnel with strong instructional and interpersonal skills; and**

D. **Reflect on EL students’ changing needs as English language skills develop during the school year and adjust the use of time, space, and personnel accordingly.**

How schools organize to serve students is equally important as what instruction is provided to students.20 While not specific to EL students, Charlotte Danielson’s framework provides insights into core structures, including space, time, and personnel, which schools must organize appropriately for maximum effect on EL student learning. Each of these structures has an impact on a school’s ability to implement the practices in EL research. Effective schools intentionally manage the structures of time, space, and personnel to provide the research-based educational experiences discussed in Finding 1. Schools that do not intentionally attend to the structures of time, space, and personnel find that they become constraints to providing the effective instruction that research cites benefit EL students.

A. **Use time within master schedules to allow for collaborative planning, teaming, and co-teaching between ESOL and classroom instructional staff.** EL research indicates that the collaboration between the ESOL staff and other instructional staff is a key characteristic of effective schools for EL students.21 To make this collaboration a reality, schools must use the master schedule to allocate time for collaborative teaching, collaborative planning for EL instruction, and time for the ESOL teacher to guide and support classroom teachers’ instruction of EL students. It is through this collaborative work that teachers can plan to provide explicit English language instruction embedded within content-based instruction, group students to best provide opportunities for students to practice their English, and discuss adjustments necessary to instruction based on student performance. Schools effectively serving EL students allocate time within the master schedule to support these critical activities.

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17 August & Hakuta, 1997; Reeves, 2004.
B. Arrange space so that EL students and ESOL staff are not isolated from English-speaking peers and other instructional staff. Schools can intentionally use space to facilitate collaboration and a welcoming school climate. Isolating EL students and staff in a school or within a classroom not only places a physical barrier to collaboration but places an emotional barrier to developing an inclusive climate. EL students who are physically separated from their English proficient peers may not feel a sense of belonging to the school community. Thus, research supports the use of space by schools to include ESOL staff and students within the broader school community.

C. Hire and deploy ESOL and classroom instructional personnel with strong instructional and interpersonal skills. Providing EL students with an inclusive and respectful climate, explicit English language instruction across content areas, and challenging and differentiated instruction requires personnel who possess both strong instructional and interpersonal skills. The research indicates effective instruction requires both ESOL and regular classroom personnel who can modify instruction to support synchronized mastery of the English language and of content. However, research indicates that, because preparation programs do not typically prepare pre-service teachers in both English language and content instruction, ESOL and classroom instructional personnel need to be “cross-trained” to provide effective instruction for EL students. Furthermore, the collaboration needed between ESOL and regular classroom personnel requires strong interpersonal skills, as does the building of relationships between teachers and EL students.

D. Reflect on EL students’ changing needs as English language skills develop during the school year and adjust the use of time, space, and personnel accordingly. Danielson says, “The school’s approach to scheduling and deployment of staff must support the formation of short-term skill groups when needed. In addition, the school’s organization must allow for skill groups to be formed quickly and changed frequently; flexibility, in other words, is the key.” While she was speaking of grouping strategies for students broadly, the concept of flexibility indicates that schools should consider the progress of students’ levels of English language proficiency throughout the year. Schools need to reflect on the extent to which their master schedule, use of space, and deployment of staff meet the changing needs of EL students as their language proficiency increases. Stated another way, school organizational structures of time, space, and personnel that remain fixed for a year may undermine EL student’s academic progress by not shifting with students as their English proficiency improves.

Finding 3: “Newcomer” (immigrant) students are especially vulnerable to the absence of a focus on the use of time, space, and personnel to meet their unique needs.

School districts serving larger numbers of “newcomers” often provide targeted or intensive instruction to build foundational skills designed to help orient and prepare students for participation in the regular services for EL students. Exact definitions of “newcomer” vary by school and district but typically reflect students with lower levels of English proficiency, less time in the United States, and, sometimes, less prior experience with formal education. The use of time, space, and personnel are defining characteristics of these programs according to research. The most common newcomer configuration is a full-day program that lasts for one year, uses separate space to operate as a program within a school, and offers supported content instruction and American cultural orientation in addition to intensive English language development courses. Although the research does not speak to the use of personnel, the description of

22 August and Shanahan, 2008; Genesee et al., 2006.
the intended services within a limited timeframe implies the need for highly qualified staff who are strong in content, English language development, interpersonal skills to support EL students as they adapt to living and schooling in the United States, as well as skilled in providing an orientation to American culture. If the newcomer program is co-located within a school and plans to share staff with the base school, there will also be additional implications for the use of time within the master schedule as discussed above.

**Finding 4:** School Districts serving EL students effectively have clear EL expectations for all schools and strong centralized authority to support compliance with expectations.

Research by the Council of Great City Schools\(^\text{26}\) indicates that a characteristic of school districts that effectively served EL students is that these districts empowered their EL office with authority to establish districtwide EL practices and to work with other central office departments and schools to oversee fidelity and progress. The EL office had the leadership, capacity, and authority to establish “hybrid school governance models that combined instructional management by the central office with site-based empowerment. These effective school districts had a district-determined curriculum, clear models for EL programs, districtwide adoptions of instructional materials, district-supported, coordinated, and prioritized professional development, and strong accountability systems reaching down to the school level.”\(^\text{27}\)

**Study Question:** To what extent has FCPS designed EL services and organized itself to align with research (Findings 1-4)?

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**Summary of Findings 5-7:** Of the three experiences research supports as critical to EL student progress, FCPS services, embodied in the ESOL program, have historically focused on providing the English language development experience, but with varying degrees of embedding it within content areas. The design of ESOL services also partially (at the elementary and middle school levels) reflects providing EL students with differentiated and challenging content. While FCPS schools may be choosing to provide all three of the experiences research indicates students should receive, FCPS has not systematically addressed all three at a divisional level. FCPS’ new high school ESOL pilot, available for the first time this school year (SY 2015-16) is better designed to offer EL students all three experiences. Furthermore, at the division level, FCPS’ policies do not encourage school practices that align with the organizational structures that would support the most effective approaches to EL services. Thus, from a centralized perspective, FCPS has multiple areas where they can adjust policies, along with the design of programs and approaches, to better align with research.

**Finding 5:** FCPS’ current design of services for EL students fully addresses one of the three research-based experiences but has not addressed the remaining two experiences for all FCPS EL students.

As described under Finding 1, the three research-based educational experiences for EL students are (a) an inclusive environment, (b) explicit English language instruction across content areas, and (c) differentiating and challenging content. FCPS’ ESOL program, which is the primary method for serving EL students in FCPS, focuses on the second of these experiences: developing students’ academic English

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\(^{26}\) Horwitz, et al., 2009.

\(^{27}\) Horwitz et al., 2009, p. 21.
language proficiency through integrated content-based language instruction. At the elementary level, services for EL students are provided as an integrated part of classroom instruction. At the secondary level, EL students receive a scaffolded content-based curriculum that may or may not provide access to grade level content depending on the level of English language proficiency. At the elementary and middle school levels, the program also addresses differentiating and modifying content to provide challenging grade level curriculum to students, though program documents are inconsistent in reflecting this experience. Lastly, while current professional development offerings in FCPS do reflect a commitment to the last experience (inclusive, supportive, and respectful environment), this experience is not currently an easily discerned expectation from the program. Thus, FCPS’ current design is not universal, providing all three research-based experiences to all EL students in all sites and with the expectation clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

Finding 6: FCPS’ High School ESOL pilot is designed to address all three research-based educational experiences to EL students.

The Office of ESOL Services has designed and begun implementation of a new way of serving a targeted group of EL students (those with the lowest levels of English language skill) in high school. The design of the high school ESOL pilot reflects all three sets of educational experiences and manages the organizational structures to provide these experiences to a select set of EL students. The pilot provides for English language development instruction and content-based instruction such that EL students with initially low levels of English proficiency will have a better chance of graduating from high school in a timely fashion. The instruction students receive has been differentiated to allow students to access the challenging curriculum. And, the ESOL pilot was intentionally designed to provide additional social-emotional and academic support to aid EL students’ transition into the school community and to provide an inclusive, supportive, and respectful environment. The master schedule for these students has been modified, and personnel are strategically deployed to meet the social-emotional and academic needs of EL students in the ESOL pilot. The ESOL pilot was also designed to use space in such a way as to avoid unnecessary segregation of EL students from their high school peers.

Finding 7: FCPS’ existing policies, regulations, and practices may not be sufficient to maximize the use of time, space, and personnel structures for serving EL students effectively.

A general search of FCPS policies, regulations, and practices indicated that organizational structures that support delivery of the best research-based practices for ELs have not been codified in FCPS’ policies, regulations, and practices. For example, in relation to time, FCPS (as is typical in school districts) relies on staffing to drive the school master schedule rather than allowing the master schedule to drive staffing. Currently, the most direct way in which FCPS influences services to ELs is the policy-mandated staffing formula, which FCPS has crafted to give more weight to EL students, thus resulting in additional staffing to teach ELs. However, the formula does not connect the number of staff in schools to school capacity in order to implement a master schedule meeting the needs of its EL students. Staffing formulas are not based on a minimum number of ESOL and classroom teachers needed to create a master schedule that allows for collaborative planning and teaching as discussed in EL research.

As another example, FCPS’ hiring policies also limit schools’ capacity to follow the research-based organizational structures in that FCPS does not specifically channel teachers with the unique instructional
and interpersonal skills required for strong EL instruction to schools with the greatest need. Hiring practices benefit schools with higher proportions of EL students by allowing them to interview and select new hires before other schools, but there are no practices in place to keep experienced teachers in these schools. In fact, many of these FCPS schools have the most novice teachers on staff and have higher turnover rates as these teachers move to other schools in FCPS.

Outcomes (Historical Performance)

Study Question: How has EL students’ (Kindergarten - Grade 12) attainment of English proficiency varied over the past 10 years?

Finding 8: Although FCPS has met state-required targets for EL performance over the last three years, the progress31 demonstrated by EL students at the high school level has been substantially below that of elementary and middle schools students.

The VDOE has set two types of English language benchmarks (“progress” and “proficiency”), which school divisions must meet each year in order to satisfy their Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) for EL students. Overall, as a division, FCPS has successfully met both these targets over the last three years. Figure 2 shows EL students in the division made similar progress (between 81 and 82 percent) in learning English over the last three years (dark blue columns), surpassing the state target (the orange line) by as much as 15 percentage points (SY 2012-13). However, when “progress” of EL students is disaggregated by school level, two additional points can be seen in Figure 2. First, the performance of elementary and middle school EL students is above the divisional level, while performance by high school EL students is below the level. Second, elementary and middle school performance has been similar across the three years, while high school performance has decreased 10 percentage points over the last three years (from 57 percent in SY 2012-13 to 47 percent in SY 2014-15), resulting in a minority of high school EL students making “progress” during the most recent school year (2014-15). Additional details about EL performance on the progress and proficiency standards is available in Appendix E.

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31 Virginia’s Annual Measurable Achievement Objective (AMAO) 1 defines progress as students who show an increase in their WIDA ACCESS for ELLs composite scale score from the previous test administration that meets or exceeds the following targets by level: Level 1- increase of 29 points, Level 2- increase of 20 points, Level 3- increase of 14 points, Level 4- increase of 10 points, and Level 5- increase of 3 points. The WIDA ACCESS for ELLs composite scale score is an overall score of student’s performance across the four measured language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
Finding 9: FCPS’ EL students reach English proficiency faster than those in other studied school divisions.

Research has found that even in districts that are considered the most successful in teaching English to EL students, academic English proficiency (the type of proficiency needed to fully understand core content instruction delivered in English and to communicate in English without supports) can take four to seven years. More recent research from one WIDA consortium state indicates that about 67 percent of Level 4 students reach proficiency in five years, while about 10 percent of Level 1 students do so. Analyses of historical data indicate that FCPS’ students have surpassed these levels: as seen in Figure 3, the most recent data (green columns) finds larger percentages of FCPS’ ELP Level 4 students (75 percent) and Level 1 students (35 percent) reaching proficiency within five years than found in the WIDA study.

Thus, larger proportions of FCPS’ EL students, especially those entering the school division with the lowest level of English proficiency, are becoming English proficient at a pace that exceeds that of other school divisions. And, when comparing the division’s EL students from five and ten years ago, greater proportions of students receiving ESOL services during SY 2011-12 (green columns in Figure 3) became English proficient within five years than had done so five years earlier (SY 2006-07; blue columns in Figure 3). Simultaneously, however, a larger proportion of Level 5 students in SY 2011-12 (20 percent) were found to stay at that level for more than five years than had been true among Level 5 students in SY 2006-07 (8 percent). In fact, a small but important minority of EL students (11 percent; not shown in Figure 3) are taking more than seven years to attain English proficiency (a group the literature refers to as “long-term English learners”). For additional details about EL students reaching proficiency, see Appendix E.

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32 Cook and Zhao (2011), Hakuta et al. (2000).
Study Question: How has EL students’ core content performance (Grades 1 - 12) varied in relation to changes in the EL population over the past 10 years?

Summary of Findings 10-11: At the heart of this question is whether shifts in FCPS’ EL population were associated with shifts in core content performance. As described in the introduction to this report, while the number of EL students has grown from 10 years ago (peaking during SY 2009-10), the percentage of EL students has remained relatively constant. Performance has varied considerably over time with two periods of relatively stable performance: (a) from SY 2007-08 to SY 2011-12, when pass rates on the Reading SOL were approximately 80 percent; and (b) from SY 2012-13 to SY 2014-15, when pass rates were approximately 45 percent. These patterns appear associated with changes in the state testing program (e.g., increased rigor of the tests) rather than changes in the EL population. When the data are disaggregated by ELP level, the pattern still matches the testing program more so than the growth in the number of ELs.

Finding 10: Variations in FCPS EL student performance over the past 10 years can be attributed more to changes in the state testing program than to changes in the EL population.

Overall when looking at pass rates on the Standards of Learning (SOL) Reading tests during the SY 2006-07 to SY 2014-15 period for students receiving EL services (dark blue line in Figure 4), pass rates have varied considerably from a low of 45 percent in SY 2013-14 to a high of 81 percent in SY 2008-09. Generally, SY 2006-07 (55 percent pass rate) saw relatively low performance, the period from SY 2007-08 through SY 2011-12 saw relatively steady performance around 80 percent, and the period from SY 2012-13 to SY 2014-15 relatively steady performance around 45 percent. These pass rates represent values consistently at least 10 points lower than for the overall division (light blue line in Figure 4) throughout the years examined, with a far larger gap of at least 30 points over the last three years.
As discussed earlier and also shown in Figure 4 (red line), the number of EL students grew quickly from SY 2006-07 through SY 2009-10 and has since declined slowly. Thus, during the years of EL membership growth (SY 2006-07 through 2009-10), FCPS started with one year of low performance (SY 2006-07) and then relatively stable performance around 80 percent for the remainder of the growth period. During the period of decline in EL membership (SY 2010-11 through 2014-15), performance remained relatively high around 80 percent for the first two years (SY 2010-11 and SY 2011-12) but then dropped to approximately 45 percent in the final three years (SY 2012-13 through SY 14-15). Rather than varying with EL membership, EL performance at the division level appears to vary in relation to changes in the testing program. The low performance in SY 2006-07 coincided with no approved alternate assessments for EL students. Further, performance decreased both for the division overall and for EL students after the SOL Reading tests were redesigned to increase rigor (SY 2012-13).33 (Similar patterns are seen for most other SOL content areas, other than History (which demonstrated a relatively consistent pattern of performance across all years); see Appendix E for details on the different content areas.)

**Finding 11:** As the number of EL students who have exited ESOL services has grown, pass rates among these students on the higher rigor SOL Reading tests have been similar to or higher than those in the division overall.

Overall in FCPS, EL pass rates among students currently receiving ESOL services (i.e., ELP Levels 1 through 5) have historically been lower than those of the overall school division. However, as shown in Figure 5, among students with ELP Level 6 (the monitoring phase following reaching English proficiency) and 10DM (former EL students beyond the monitoring phase), EL student performance (dark blue line) is at least as high as that of the school division (light blue line) and has remained so even after the introduction of more rigorous SOL reading tests in SY 2012-13. Thus, EL students who have exited services have demonstrated equivalent or better performance to that of the division as a whole. Also shown in Figure 5, for students

receiving ESOL services, the gap between EL and division performance has increased following the introduction of more rigorous SOL reading tests.

Given the special focus of this report on high school students, performance was also disaggregated by ELP levels for high school EL students (see Appendix E for data figures). There is a general downward trend across the 10-year period at most ELP levels that does not appear related solely to changes in the testing program. Due to the complexities of how grade level is determined at the high school level and when high school EL students access Grade 11 English (the course associated with the Reading SOL test) it is not possible to determine definitively whether the shifts in EL’s performance at the high school level reflects shifts in the EL population. What can be determined from data on who is testing on the EOC reading standards is that currently few Grade 11 and Grade 12 EL students in FCPS are attempting an SOL Reading test (a high school graduation requirement) while receiving ESOL services (634 ELP Level 1 through 5 students took SOL EOC Reading test in SY 2014-15) but rather most do so only after having exited ESOL (3,107 ELP Levels 6 and 10DM students took SOL EOC Reading in SY 2014-15).

Figure 5: Historic Membership and Reading SOL Performance (Grades 3-12) for SY 2006-07 through SY 2014-15, Disaggregated by ELP Level

See Appendix E for additional details on SOL performance, as well as other outcomes, such as DRA and graduation rates.
Implications

This section of the report highlights implications considering all the findings from this Year 1 report.

The relatively quick English language acquisition by most EL students in FCPS suggests the school division should continue its practices towards this goal. Since FCPS services for EL students focus primarily on development of English language skills, EL students should be demonstrating strong English language performance if the services are effective. The findings of this study show that in comparison to rates reported in research, FCPS students are attaining English language proficiency relatively quickly and that currently more are attaining proficiency within five years than in the recent past. Furthermore, once students become proficient, they perform on core content SOLs at least as well as the division overall. Nonetheless, a small but sizeable minority of “long-term English learners” who require up to 10 years or more to acquire English proficiency may need different or more innovative approaches not currently being implemented throughout the division.

Expanding the design of services to focus more on the school climate and challenging content-based curriculum will be critical to increased growth in academic performance for EL students. FCPS’ Student Success goals in the Strategic Plan rest on the Portrait of a Graduate characteristics, which require all students to obtain 21st century skills and knowledge (i.e., beyond English proficiency) by the time they graduate high school. The findings from this study indicate that until EL students reach ELP Level 6 (i.e., dismissal from all services and supports), their mastery of core content, a foundation for 21st century skills, is limited. The EL research consistently states that EL students should receive explicit English language development instruction within content-based instruction, which is the core of FCPS’ ESOL program design. However, the research also identifies an inclusive, supportive, and respectful climate as well as challenging and differentiated content-based instruction as critical for the success of EL students. While the ESOL program is moving to incorporate these latter two experiences and individual schools may be choosing to do so already, the two experiences do not appear as explicit and universal parts of the design of divisionwide EL services, nor are they communicated as expectations for schools to meet when providing content-based instruction to EL students. The exception is the High School ESOL Pilot that is designed to address all areas of educational experiences for Level 1 and 2 EL students. Without the consistent design and implementation of services that include all three sets of educational experiences for EL students, core content performance of EL students will likely not surpass the trends observed over the past decade. This will make the attainment of the Student Success goals within the Strategic Plan unlikely, resulting in continued lower graduation rates and less preparation for college and career readiness for EL students.

Current FCPS staffing models may not be sufficient to allow schools to develop master schedules that promote adequate staff collaboration for offering all three types of research-based educational experiences to EL students. As discussed in the research, the use of time and staff set the foundation for providing research-based educational experiences. Therefore, if schools are not staffed sufficiently, creating a master schedule that allows ESOL and general education teachers to work together to provide the three sets of educational experiences will be a challenge. Ideally, the implementation of research-based educational experiences would determine the necessary master schedule (given the size and language needs of the EL population) and then the levels of staffing would follow instead having staffing models drive or limit the master schedule, which may or may not accommodate research-based educational experiences. Year 2 of the EL study will probe how FCPS schools use staffing and scheduling to implement the research-based educational experiences and the extent to which that impacts performance of EL students. Data will also help FCPS understand whether a gap exists between staffing
levels stemming from the staffing formula and the staffing needs of implementing a master schedule that facilitates the provision of research-based educational experiences for EL students.

**Ensuring a balance between strong instructional skills and interpersonal skills for teachers during recruitment and professional development is critical for the success of EL students in any school division.** FCPS has made a commitment, via the Premier Workforce goal in the Strategic Plan, to recruit and retain high-quality employees, as well as to invest in growth opportunities for employees. These commitments are critical for the success of the division’s EL students. Priority should be given to placing and retaining in placement ESOL, classroom, and resource staff with especially strong instructional and interpersonal skills in schools with the highest EL students. Ideally, FCPS would recruit and hire new instructional staff with this key skill set and prioritize placement and retention of these teachers in schools where they can have the greatest impact on EL students. However, research shows that most pre-service programs do not provide sufficient coursework and experience to have strong instructional and interpersonal knowledge and skills to meet the needs of EL students. Nor do pre-service programs routinely provide experience in the collaborative work needed to support EL students. Therefore, FCPS will most likely need to develop current instructional staff (ESOL teachers, general education teachers, resource teachers, and administrators) with strong instructional and interpersonal knowledge and skills to provide the research-based educational experiences to EL students. Because it will take time to develop all staff serving EL students, FCPS’ immediate efforts should focus on retaining in place highly-skilled staff in the schools with large or growing EL populations.

**Clearer centralized practices and stronger authority to ensure fidelity to division expectations are key to equity in the quality of services provided to EL students across FCPS.** FCPS has a long history of school autonomy. However, research shows that a strong and authorized central office entity can lead and guide the work of schools in the best interest of EL students. FCPS may need to engage in a conversation regarding who should have authority to influence the work of schools and staffs and the limits of that authority. The selected entity should be positioned to focus broadly around providing consistent experiences for EL students across FCPS and be positioned to oversee and ensure the implementation of a set of non-negotiable educational experiences for serving EL students. To support greater centralized practices and authority in how schools organize may also require changes to FCPS policies, regulations, and standards (such as the Educational Specifications, which guide space allocation in FCPS).
Recommendations to Decision Makers

Information in the Implications section guided the development of recommendations for the Superintendent and School Board.

Recommendations for the Superintendent

• Direct staff to review and develop a plan of action for bringing services for ELs at all school levels into alignment with the three areas of research-based educational experiences. The plan should:
  o ensure school-based ESOL and general education staff both have the knowledge and skills needed to address all areas of research-based educational experiences;
  o adjust the ESOL program design to reflect all three educational experiences described in Finding 1 at all grade levels;
  o demonstrate strengthened authority of the ESOL Office to centralize practices, monitor fidelity, and correct the actions of schools, if needed, to ensure effective education of EL students across the division; and
  o address relevant division policies and associated regulations that may unintentionally limit how schools are able to use organizational structures (time, space, and personnel) to provide the research-based educational experiences to EL students.

Recommendations for the School Board

• Request a staff review of relevant division policies and associated regulations that may unintentionally limit how schools are able to use organizational structures (time, space, and personnel) to provide the research-based educational experiences to EL students. The review should:
  o identify the relevant policies and regulations;
  o determine potential negative or limiting impacts; and
  o propose new language for the policies and regulations, as well as the steps, timeline, and estimated costs implied by the new language.

Note: The Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) invites staff to respond to recommendations presented in study reports in order to gauge the level of understanding of, agreement with, and commitment to proposed next steps. Staff responses are written by and represent the perspective of the central office and/or parent department. Instructional Services Department’s (ISD) staff response to the study findings and recommendations for the OPE will be available as Appendix F to the English Language Learner Year One Report.
Appendix A

EL Membership Trends
Across the division, the number of EL students has increased while the percentage of EL students has remained stable.

EL membership data were analyzed over a 10-year period, from June of the 2004-05 school year through June of the 2014-15 school year. The EL population grew from approximately 32,000 students in June 2005 to approximately 36,000 students in June 2015, hitting a high of approximately 39,000 students in June 2010.

During this same time period, FCPS experienced growth in the overall student population. Therefore, data were analyzed to see whether the growth in the EL population was related to this overall growth or whether it represented an increase in the proportion of FCPS students who were Limited English Proficient (LEP). Data showed that while there was growth in the overall number of EL students, there was not a significant increase in the proportion of FCPS students who were limited English proficient. FCPS began and ended this 10-year time period with 19% of the student population being limited English proficient (represented by the red line in Figure A-2). FCPS did experience an increase in the percentage of students who were EL approximately five years ago (June 2010: 23%), which has since declined. There was growth in numbers and stability in percentages for most levels of English language proficiency as shown in Figures A-1 (numbers) and A-2 (percentages). Specifics of FCPS’ EL population by grade during SY 2014-15 is available in Table A-1.

Figure A-1: 10-Year EL Trends by ELP Level (population)34

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34 Changes were made in ELP levels at two time periods in this trend, in June 2006-07 and in June 2011-12. The system in place prior to June 2006-07 cannot be equated with the following classification systems.
Figure A-4: Historic Middle School ELP Membership

Figure A-5: Historic High School ELP Membership
Table A-1
EL (ELP Level 1 – 5), Former EL (6a, 6b, 10DM) and Non-EL (10NR, English Proficient) Membership by Grade Level, June 2015 (Counts and Percentages)

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within grade</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>13458</td>
<td>14409</td>
<td>14347</td>
<td>14233</td>
<td>13923</td>
<td>13943</td>
<td>13639</td>
<td>13544</td>
<td>13616</td>
<td>15160</td>
<td>14125</td>
<td>14425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fairfax County Public Schools, Office of Program Evaluation
January 2016

A-4
Some individual schools have experienced significant growth in the proportion of EL students, while others have seen decreases.

Although the division did not experience a significant increase in the percent of students with limited English proficiency, school level data showed a different picture over the 10-year period. Two variables were used to describe the EL populations at the school level—the overall proportion of the school population that were EL students and the amount of change in the EL proportion in the past 10 years.

Most elementary schools fell into one of two groups—those with large and growing EL populations and those with small and decreasing EL populations. Table A-2 shows that at the elementary level approximately half (Group 1, n=68) of the schools have small (13%) and decreasing EL populations (-4 percentage points). However, another third of elementary schools (Group 4, n=44) have large (47%) and increasing EL populations (10 percentage points). This shows a different picture from the stability seen at the division level.

### Table A-2
**Distribution of Elementary Schools by Overall EL Proportion and 10-Year Change in EL Proportion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall EL Proportion</th>
<th>Change in EL Proportion</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Group 1 N=68 schools</td>
<td>Group 3 N=18 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change: 3.8 pp decrease</td>
<td>Change: 5 pp increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion EL: 13%</td>
<td>Proportion EL: 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Group 2 N=9 schools</td>
<td>Group 4 N=44 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change: 1.6 pp decrease</td>
<td>Change: 10 pp increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion EL: 35%</td>
<td>Proportion EL: 47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table A-3
**Average Percentages of EL Students by ELP Level by Elementary School Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Level</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Proficient</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

36 Percentage points
Middle and high schools EL populations showed some diversity but not to the extent seen at the elementary level. Most middle (Table A-4) and high school (Table A-5) EL populations were stable or decreasing. The variable that separated schools at the secondary level was the overall EL proportion in their school populations.

### Table A-4

**Distribution of Middle Schools by Overall EL Proportion and 10-Year Change in EL Proportion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall EL Proportion</th>
<th>Change in EL Proportion</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
<td>Maintaining or Increasing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>N=8</td>
<td>Change: 7.4 pp decrease Proportion EL: 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>N=9</td>
<td>Change: 2.4 pp decrease Proportion EL: 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>N=5</td>
<td>Change: 12 pp decrease Proportion EL: 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>N=5</td>
<td>Change: 1.3 pp increase Proportion EL: 21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table A-5

**Distribution of High Schools by Overall EL Proportion and 10-Year Change in EL Proportion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall EL Proportion</th>
<th>Change in EL Proportion</th>
<th>High</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
<td>Maintaining or Increasing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>N=12</td>
<td>Change: 4.6 pp decrease Proportion EL: 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>N=5</td>
<td>Change: .7 pp decrease Proportion EL: 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>N=5</td>
<td>Change: 3.5 pp decrease Proportion EL: 27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>Change: 1.6 pp increase Proportion EL: 23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Study Design
ENGLISH LEARNER STUDY
I. GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: English Learner (EL) Study
Projected Start Date: July 2015
Projected Completion: January 2017
Expected Deliverables: Year 1 Report – January 2016
Year 2 Report – December 2016

OPE Lead Evaluator(s): Michelle Ferrer, Specialist, OPE
Janine Lacina, Specialist, OPE

Study Team Members
Richard Pollio, Director, ESOL
Darina Walsh, Coordinator, ESOL
Jay Nocco, Principal, Lynbrook ES
Bianca Aiello, DSS, Poe MS
Karen Kleiber, Coordinator, ESOL
Jay Pearson, Exec. Principal,
Bianca Aiello, ESOL
Katherine Wolling, Instructional Coach, Westlawn ES
Recardo Sockwell, Director, OPE
Lidi Hruda, Manager, OPE

Source of Study Request: Division Superintendent

Background/History: Currently, English Learners (ELs) in English Language Proficiency (ELP) Levels 1-5 underperform their English-speaking counterparts on standardized assessments in FCPS and other school divisions. All students, including ELs, are expected to perform at high levels on these assessments. Over the past decade the increases in this population in FCPS have been substantial: June 2004-05=32,333; June 2009-10=39,311; and June 2014-15=35,950. Given this pattern of growth within the school division, the unique educational needs of this population, and the budget deficits projected for the upcoming years, it is critical to understand how to educate these students most effectively.

Purpose of Study: The study is designed to provide information in four areas.

- **Design of EL Services** – whether FCPS’ practices and programming are designed in alignment with research on what works best for EL students (Year One);
- **Implementation of EL Services at FCPS Schools** – how FCPS schools serve EL students (Year Two);
- **Outcomes for EL Students** – historical performance trends in EL English language skills development and core content achievement (Year One), as well as the impact implemented school approaches on EL student outcomes (Year Two); and
- **Costs of EL Services** – EL service costs and how staff optimize the use of available funds (Year Two).
## II. STUDY DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Collection Time Line</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Reporting Time Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. What does research indicate schools and school divisions should do to promote the</td>
<td>Research articles EL experts</td>
<td>Literature review interview</td>
<td>July-September 2015 September 2015</td>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>Year 1 Report, Jan 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. To what extent has FCPS designed its EL services and organized itself in keeping</td>
<td>ESOL and other central office program staff</td>
<td>Literature review interview</td>
<td>July-September 2015 September 2015</td>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>Year 1 Report, Jan 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with research-based practices?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To what extent do FCPS schools implement organizational structures (space, time,</td>
<td>Sample of school-based ESOL and general</td>
<td>Survey based on PEAS and IMS</td>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
<td>Year 2 Report, Dec 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personnel) that facilitate research-based learning experiences for EL students?</td>
<td>classroom instructors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Across schools (sample(^{37}))</td>
<td>Perceptions of EL service delivery models and</td>
<td>PEAS and IMS rubric completed by</td>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>Descriptive and Comparative Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experiences from a sample of schools’ administrative teams</td>
<td>administrative team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School-based ESOL and general classroom</td>
<td>Observations of experiences using PEAS</td>
<td>March 2016</td>
<td>Descriptive and Comparative Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>instructors</td>
<td>and IMS observation protocol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{37}\) Sample across all 5 regions, with approximately 1 HS, 1 MS, and 4 ES from each region plus the two ESOL Pilot HS - Stuart and Lee.
### Evaluation Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Collection Time Line</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Reporting Time Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. How has EL students’ (Kindergarten through Grade 12) attainment of English proficiency varied over the past 10 years?</td>
<td><strong>English Proficiency outcome:</strong> WIDA 2008-09 to 2014-15</td>
<td>Data request from OST</td>
<td>September 2015</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA</td>
<td>Year 1 Report, Jan 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How has EL students’ core content performance (Grades 1 through 12) varied in relation to changes in the EL population over the past 10 years?</td>
<td><strong>EL Demographic data:</strong> Membership data <strong>Student Academic outcomes:</strong> DRA SOL (Math and Reading) On-time Graduation Rate</td>
<td>Data request from IT</td>
<td>July 2015</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics to determine trends in population and outcome data</td>
<td>Year 1 Report, Jan 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To what extent do FCPS’ EL students demonstrate positive social-emotional outcomes (i.e., school belonging, motivation to achieve, academic self-efficacy)?</td>
<td>Sample of 5th, 7th, 10th, and 12th grade ELs and non-EL students</td>
<td>Surveys (translated for Level 1 and 2 students) adapting established scales (i.e., Self-Efficacy in School Scale, Social-Relational Support for Education Instrument &amp; “Sense of Belonging to School” Scale and Intrinsic Motivation Scale)</td>
<td>February- March 2016</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics Disaggregate for ESOL pilot High Schools</td>
<td>Year 2 Report, Dec 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

38 We plan to conduct analysis at the division and school level, examining changes in the EL population and outcomes.

39 The intent is to examine the sense of belonging, motivation to achieve, and self-efficacy at each school level. 12th grade students are included to determine whether EL students who stay in school are different from those who may have dropped out and to determine whether these 12th graders will be compared to 10th graders.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Collection Time Line</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Reporting Time Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Which organizational structures and educational experiences are associated with the best outcomes for EL students in English-language proficiency, academic performance, and social-emotional outcomes?</td>
<td><strong>Organizational structures and educational experiences from Q2</strong></td>
<td>Data gathered by Q2</td>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics and Nested Model regression analysis used to predict performance</td>
<td>Year 2 Report, Dec 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Academic outcomes:</strong></td>
<td><strong>DRA</strong></td>
<td>Data request</td>
<td>September 2016</td>
<td>Path Analysis: Models and experiences, belonging/motivation, attendance, performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOL (Math and Reading)</strong></td>
<td><strong>On-time Grad Rate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covariates:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attendance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belonging, motivation, and efficacy data from Q5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Proficiency outcome:</strong></td>
<td><strong>WIDA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| IV. Costs                                                                            |                                                      |                                |                           |                                                                                                     |                     |
| 7a. How do costs for FCPS' EL services compare with other school divisions?          | FCPS EL program costs and per pupil allocation      | Data from Budget Services      | July 2016                 | Cost description                                                                                     | Year 2 Report, Dec 2016 |
| 7b. How has FCPS optimized the use of funds in educating ELs?                        | EL program staff                                      | Interview                       | July 2016                 | Content Analysis                                                                                   |                     |
|                                                                                     | Other districts' EL program costs and per pupil allocation | Interview and budget data      | June 2016                 | Cost description                                                                                   |                     |
Appendix C

Methodological Notes
In order to answer the study questions about outcomes, data used in this report were taken from extant student membership and performance data provided by the Office of Student Testing and the Department of Information Technology.

The data sources used include:

- Student membership data from the Department of Information Technology, including ELP status, LEP date, and LEP semesters (June of SY 2004-05 through June of SY 2015-16);
- Developmental Reading Assessment\(^{40}\) data from the Office of Student Testing for students at Grades 1 and 2 (June of SY 2006-07 to June of SY 2014-15);
- Standards of Learning test data from the Office of Student Testing for students at Grades 3 through 8 and End of Course test (June of SY 2006-07 to June of SY 2014-15);
- Graduation rate data from the Virginia Department of Education (Class of 2008 – Class of 2015); and
- WIDA Access for ELLs data from the Office of Student Testing (June of SY 2011-12 through June of SY 2014-15).

The following provides more specific information on each of the assessments named above:

**Developmental Reading Assessment, Second Edition. (DRA2).** The DRA2 Benchmark Assessment measures each student’s reading proficiency through systematic observation, recording, and evaluation of performance.

**Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.** The Standards of Learning (SOL) for Virginia Public Schools establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in English, mathematics, science, history/social science and other subjects.

SOL tests in reading, writing, mathematics, science and history/social science measure the success of students in meeting the Board of Education’s expectations for learning and achievement.

**WIDA Access for ELLs.** The Virginia Board of Education (VDOE) selected the WIDA Consortium’s Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test in 2007 as the state-approved English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment. The ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test is an English Language Proficiency assessment based on the Model Performance Indicators (MPIs) of the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards for Kindergarten through Grade 12. The ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test assesses social and instructional English used within the school context as well as academic English associated with language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies across the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test measures...
administered annually to LEP students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 to monitor their progress in acquiring English proficiency.

**Methodological Notes for English Progress and Proficiency Analyses:**

VDOE has proposed English Language Progress and Proficiency targets which Virginia school divisions must meet each year in order to satisfy their Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO). The percentage of LEP students who must make progress in learning English each year has increased by one from 67 percent in SY 2012-13 to 69 percent in SY 2014-15. Similarly, the percentage of EL students who must attain English proficiency has increased each year from 18 percent in SY 2012-13 to 20 percent in SY 2014-15.

In analyzing FCPS progress and proficiency rankings, ESOL program staff recommended OPE not include students who took the alternative WIDA ACCESS test (the WALTAC) because their progress and proficiency levels cannot be equated to those of students who took the standard WIDA ACCESS. Therefore, this analysis did not include students who took the alternative WIDA test.

In addition, though the State (and therefore FCPS) adopted WIDA in SY 2009-10, all EL students in the division were tested using this instrument only starting in SY 2011-12. ESOL program staff cautioned OPE against using the SY 2010-11 WIDA test file as it was a transition year, and that progress and proficiency for the division could be reliably calculated starting with the SY 2011-12 WIDA file. Accordingly, the analyses conducted as part of this report were done using the WIDA test files between SY 2011-12 and SY 2014-15.
Appendix D

Additional EL Research and Reference List
Research on Providing Support to EL Students
Consensus research was used to address study questions in this area. The study looked across multiple research articles to identify the practices on which there was agreement among key researchers in the field. Moreover, the study included research from national research panels and meta-analytic studies seeking to identify a set of practices that were most effective with EL students.

Educational Experiences
These three sets of educational experiences emerged across multiple research articles and meta-analytic syntheses of the practices that are the most effective with EL students.

**An inclusive, supportive, and respectful climate.** August and Hakuta (1997) say, “a positive school-wide climate was a feature of the effective or exemplary schools they studied. The schools varied in their particular manifestations of such a climate, but overall emphasized three things: value placed on the linguistic and cultural background of English Language Learners, high expectations for their academic achievement, and their integral involvement in the overall school operation.” This research is reinforced by a 2012 report from the U.S. Department of Education which found that an environment that is welcoming and respectful of different cultures is a commonly cited trait in well-implemented Language Instruction Education Programs (LIEPs) (Reeves, 2004). Boston Public Schools (BPS) research identifies cultural competence as a key to EL success. The research literature on cultural competence among school staff supports the incorporation of students’ culture and background into the curriculum and instruction (August & Pease-Alvarez, 1996; August & Shanahan, 2006; Waxman et al., 2007). BPS found that schools which were high on cultural competence were most effective with EL students.

**Explicit English language development instruction that occurs not only in ELA but within all content areas.** Research on EL students confirms that explicit instruction in English language development is critical to attaining English proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In fact, this aspect of EL instruction is mandated by the federal government. However, research also shows that the most effective methods for EL students does not isolate English language development from content-based instruction. In a 2012 report from the U.S. Department of Education regarding LIEPs, researchers state that “models under the ESL approach may focus on language instruction in itself, or they may integrate language and content instruction. Experts have argued that the strongest programs include both types—that is, dedicated language instruction (ESL, ELD, or ESOL) in addition to specialized content instruction such as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), Sheltered Instruction or Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) (Saunders and Goldenberg, 2010).” Moreover, research from the College Board indicates that EL students do best when vocabulary is taught within multiple contexts. EL students retain vocabulary when it is learned within the context of content-learning. Vocabulary taught in isolation is retained less frequently.

When researching the details of the English language development instruction, August et al. (2008) indicate that the most effective methods provide explicit instruction on five key components of literacy—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension—and found that direct instruction in these areas may help EL students make academic gains.
A critical practice for developing English proficiency is grouping to provide EL students with opportunities for oral interaction and practice with their EL peers, their English proficient peers, and their teachers within English Language Development (ELD) and content-based instruction. However, some researchers cautioned that not all interactive activities are equally beneficial, i.e., not all students participate equally, or English-speaking students may not understand how to include EL students appropriately based on their language needs. Effective schools very carefully structure activities to ensure they are actually providing EL students with the appropriate opportunities to communicate and interact, and they use groupings that are fluid.41

**Challenging and differentiated content-based instruction.** Research says that effective schools provide EL students with rigorous and challenging content, whiledifferentiating it to support their developing English proficiency. The 2012 report from the U.S. Department of Education states, “Multiple examples of descriptive studies, expert opinion pieces and quasi-experimental studies suggest that high standards and challenging content are good for EL students (August and Pease-Alvarez, 1996; Dalton, 1998; Gersten, 1996; Rubinstein-Avila, 2003; Saunders, 1999; Thomas and Collier, 2002; Callahan, 2005; Zetlin, MacLeod, and Michener, 1998). These authors and others in the field (Henze and Lucas 1993; Collier and Thomas, 1997; Minaya-Rowe, 2004; Ray, 2009) found that EL students, like all students, benefit from being held to high expectations and challenging content and achievement standards.” Hakuta and August define effective schools’ climate as having high expectations for EL students’ achievement.

Providing rigorous and challenging content for students who are not yet English proficient requires differentiation and modification of instruction by teachers. Two large research reviews on instruction (August and Shanahan 2008; Genesee et al., 2006) found that instruction that is modified or that accommodates the special needs of EL students is more likely to help these students progress than is instruction that is not modified. Although there is no reason to believe that what counts as good instruction for English speakers is harmful for EL students, studies and reviews have found that such practices may be less effective for EL students than for native speakers (O’Day, 2009; August et al., 2008; August and Hakuta, 1998; D’Angiulli, Siegel, and Maggi, 2004; Gersten, 1996). Thus, providing well-designed and well-delivered general instruction for EL students is a good start but is not sufficient, nor is it likely to be so effective for these students as modified and differentiated instruction.

The effective practices cited in research for modifying or differentiating instruction for EL students include adjusting the level of vocabulary to their current level of proficiency, building on students’ previous knowledge, using manipulatives, pictures and other visual cues, scaffolding instruction, directly teaching meta-cognitive learning strategies, and providing feedback.

August and Hakuta (1997) reviewed bodies of research that discussed practices that were effective at making instruction comprehensible to English-language learners. These practices included adjusting the level of English vocabulary and structure so it is appropriate for the students given their current level of

41 Genesee (2006); Saunders & Goldenberg (2010).
proficiency in English. The specific practices were using explicit discourse markers such as ‘first’ and ‘next’; calling attention to the language in the course of using it; using the language in ways that reveal its structure; providing explicit discussion of vocabulary and structure; explaining and in some cases demonstrating what students will be doing or experiencing; providing students with appropriate background knowledge; building on students’ previous knowledge and understanding to establish a connection between personal experience and the subject matter they are learning; and using manipulatives, pictures, objects, and film related to the subject matter (Wong Fillmore et al., 1985; Gersten, 1996; Mace-Matluck et al., 1989; Saunders et al., 1996; Short, 1994).

**Vocabulary.** August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow (2005) found that to help increase EL vocabulary development, educators should utilize the student’s first language; ensure that ELs know the meaning of basic (Tier 1) words that English-proficient students already know; and review and reinforce vocabulary, using read-alouds as a strategy. In addition, providing definitional and contextual information about each word’s meaning; involving students in word learning through talking about, comparing, analyzing, and using target words; providing multiple exposure to meaningful information about each word; and word analysis.

**Scaffolding instruction.** Scaffolding instruction, which directs teachers to guide student learning by providing structures or frameworks that are gradually removed, was also identified as an effective practice in the literature (Dutro and Kinsella, 2010; Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2004; Gersten, 1996; Rubinstein-Avila, 2003). The recommendations included visual scaffolding (Rubinstein-Avila, 2003), writing scaffolds (Carrier and Tatum, 2006), vocabulary scaffolds (Dutro and Kinsella, 2010), oral scaffolds (e.g., think alouds; Echevarria and Short, 2010), and scaffolds in science instruction (Case, 2002).

**Directly teaching meta-cognitive learning strategies.** Several studies provide evidence for directly teaching learning strategies to help students attack language or content tasks (Shih, 1992; Gersten, 1996; Knight and Wiseman, 2006; Saunders and Goldenberg, 2010). The authors listed strategies that ELs may be taught to use before, during, and after reading to aid their comprehension to include previewing and background building (before), self-questioning and setting vocabulary priorities (during), and summarizing and conceptual mapping (after). Multiple authors also advocated for the use of clear language objectives in lesson delivery, in addition to content objectives (if applicable) (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2004; Teale, 2009; Saunders and Goldenberg, 2010).

**Providing feedback.** Feedback is also an instructional practice that appeared repeatedly in the literature reviewed with the general consensus that explicit, direct feedback is likely to be helpful to students’ English language development (Aguirre-Munoz et al., 2001; Lyster, 2004b). Feedback is also a key component of the SIOP model as part of the “review and assessment” component (Echevarría and Short, 2010).
Organizational Structures
School organization is described as “how schools arrange the resources of time, space, and personnel for maximum effect on student learning.” Each of these structures has an impact on a school’s ability to implement the practices in EL research.

Schools effectively serving EL students use time within master schedules to allow for collaborative planning, teaming, and co-teaching between ESOL and classroom instructional staff. At the school level, “the master schedule structures the pace of the interactions between students and teachers, and the class length affects the nature of instruction and the depth to which students are able to go at any given time.” EL research (Great City Schools, Boston Public Schools) indicates that the collaboration between the ESOL staff and other instructional staff is a key characteristic of effective schools for EL students. Schools often consider time for instructional staff to interact with each other as a part of the master schedule including the time during the school day as well as the time before and after school when staff are on contract. To make this collaboration a reality, schools must use the master schedule to allocate time for collaborative teaching, collaborative planning for EL instruction, and time for the ESOL teacher to guide and support classroom teachers’ instruction for EL students. This guidance and support may include classroom observation and consultation or provision of professional development. Schools effectively serving EL students use time within the master schedule to support these critical activities.

Schools effectively serving EL students arrange space so that EL students and ESOL staff are not isolated from English-speaking peers and other instructional staff. EL research indicates that a collaborative culture and a respectful and inclusive climate for both staff and students are key characteristics of effective schools for EL students. Schools can intentionally use space to facilitate collaboration and a positive school climate. Isolating EL students and staff in a school facility not only places a physical barrier to collaboration but also places an emotional barrier to developing an inclusive climate. EL students who are physically separated from their English proficient peers may not feel a sense of belonging to the school community. Educational research has shown that a sense of belonging relates to motivation, student engagement, and student performance for all students, including EL students.

Schools effectively serving EL students hire and deploy ESOL and classroom instructional personnel with strong instructional and interpersonal skills. The hiring and deployment of personnel is the last of the three resources that impact organizational structure. The deployment of staff is described as having enough qualified teachers (those that are able to integrate ‘special’ subjects with more ‘academic’ disciplines) to serve the student population (based on research on class size and instructional grouping). For EL students, the research indicates the need for instructional staff with strong instructional skills to support mastery of the English language as well as mastery of content. The challenge is that preparation programs do not typically prepare pre-service teachers with skills in both areas while the research indicates that ESOL and classroom instructional personnel need to be ‘cross-trained’ to provide the most effective instruction for EL students. This implies that school districts will need to recruit teachers with

the key skill set and prioritize placement of the teachers in schools where they can have the greatest impact on EL students.

Moreover, the development of a master schedule that allows time for collaborative work will likely have implications for personnel. Schools and school districts may need to increase the staff levels to make the schedule work, particularly at the elementary level.

**Schools effectively serving EL students reflect on EL students’ changing needs as English language skills develop during the school year and adjust the use of time, space, and personnel accordingly.** Danielson (2002) says, “The school’s approach to scheduling and deployment of staff must support the formation of short-term skill groups when needed. In addition, the school’s organization must allow for skill groups to be formed quickly and changed frequently; flexibility, in other words, is the key.” While she was speaking of grouping strategies for students broadly, the concept of flexibility relates to the EL research in how schools must consider student’s level of English language proficiency as it progresses throughout the year. As language proficiency increases, schools will need to reflect on the extent to which their master schedule and deployment of staff meet the needs of EL students.

**Effective newcomer programs must address the use of time, space, and personnel to meet the unique needs of new immigrant students.** The newcomer model is generally intended for new immigrant students who enter schools in Grades 6 through 12. Many school districts offer the newcomer option to provide targeted or intensive instruction to build foundational skills designed to help orient and prepare students for participation in the regular services for EL students. Exact definitions of ‘newcomer’ vary by school and district.

The use of time, space, and personnel are defining characteristics of these programs according to research. Boyson and Short (2003) found that the most common newcomer configuration is a full-day program that lasts for one year, uses separate space to operate as a program within a school, and offers sheltered content instruction and American cultural orientation in addition to English language courses. Common characteristics of newcomer programs include:

1. **Use of Space**—In addition to the most common configuration of operating as a program within a school, newcomer programs may also run at independent non-school sites or as independent self-contained schools.

2. **Use of Time**
   - **Length of daily program:** Apart from the full-day design, programs may operate for half of the academic day or less, or they may take place after school. A combination of these other options was the most common configuration for the 1999–2000 school year, after the full day model (Boyson and Short, 2003).
   - **Exit criteria and maximum length of stay:** Although one school year was the most common program length (Boyson and Short, 2003), newcomer programs may be longer (e.g., a school year plus a summer) or shorter (e.g., one semester only). Both Genese
(1999) and Boyson and Short (2003) note that students often transition out of the program based on individual factors and preparation. Generally, there is likely a high incentive to integrate students into regular services as quickly as possible to minimize the amount of time that they are isolated from peers.

3. Educational Experiences—Most newcomer programs aim to prepare students for “the literacy and content demands of bilingual, ESL, or mainstream courses” (Boyson and Short, 2003, p. 7); some programs, however—particularly those that operate as independent sites or schools—may have more or larger goals, such as helping newcomers graduate from high school.

Although the research does not speak to the use of personnel, the description of the intended services within a limited timeframe implies the need for highly qualified staff who are strong in content, English language development, interpersonal skills, and skills to provide American culture orientation instruction and support EL students as they adapt to living and schooling in the United States. If the newcomer program is co-located within a school and plans to share staff with the base school, there will be additional implications for the use of time within the master schedule as discussed previously.

School Districts effectively serving EL students have empowered and capable EL leadership. The research on the use of personnel in support of EL students also has implications for the relationship between central office and schools. Research by the Council of Great City Schools indicates that a characteristic of effective school districts for EL students is that these districts empowered their EL Office authority to establish districtwide EL practices and to work with other central office departments and schools to oversee progress. The EL Office had the leadership, capacity, and authority to establish “hybrid school governance models that combined instructional management by the central office with site-based empowerment. These hybrid model districts were more likely to have a district-determined curriculum, clear models for EL programs, districtwide adoptions of instructional materials, district-supported, coordinated, and prioritized professional development, and strong accountability systems reaching down to the school level.” This differed significantly from the role of the EL Offices in districts with low EL performance levels. In these ineffective districts, the EL offices “lacked the authority and resources to take strong leadership roles on EL issues. With limited influence, the EL director was not empowered to monitor or enforce implementation of EL initiatives or to provide direct assistance to school leaders in examining instructional practices for EL students. The role of the EL office was often relegated to that of ensuring compliance with legal mandates, with little connection to teaching and learning and the broader initiatives of the district.”
Reference List


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**Fairfax County Public Schools, Office of Program Evaluation**

January 2016
Appendix E

Additional EL Performance Information
WIDA Consortium's Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs). FCPS LEP 1-5 students take this English Language Proficiency assessment each year to determine where along the trajectory towards academic English proficiency they fall. Figure E-1 shows the percent of students who attained English proficiency each year between 2012-13 and 2014-15. The State AMAO proficiency targets are shown by the grey hash mark within each bar. FCPS students have surpassed the state targets for reaching English proficiency for the past three years.

**Figure E-1: English Proficiency Rates Relative to AMAO Target**

![Figure E-1: English Proficiency Rates Relative to AMAO Target](image)

Figures E-2 and E-3 display the results from two separate analyses of FCPS’ historical data on EL students within the division. Figures E-2 and E-3 show data from a sample of 2006-07 LEP students who were enrolled in FCPS for at least five years between 2006-07 and 2015-16. The bars reflect the percentage of 2006-07 LEP students who reached English proficiency by the number of years it took. Figure E-2 shows the percentage of LEP students, overall, who reached English proficiency within subsequent school years through 2014-15. Figure E-3 shows the same data for the LEP students broken out by their 2006-07 LEP Level.

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43 2006-07 LEP students were tracked from the LEP level they were coded at that school year. This was not always a student’s starting LEP level. There was a range of LEP levels observed in the students who remained in the sample.
Figure E-2: Percent of 2006-07 LEP students who reached English Proficiency by Number of Years

- 1 year (n=1739)
- 2 years (n=2457)
- 3 years (n=1984)
- 4 years (n=4199)
- 5 years (n=1719)
- 6 years (n=1176)
- 7 years (n=1087)
- 8 years (n=845)
- 9 years (n=515)
- Has Not Yet Reached English Proficiency

Figure E-3: Percent of 2006-07 LEP students who reached English Proficiency within 10 years

- Level 1: 22, 9, 6, 6, 6, 45
- Level 2: 6, 29, 12, 8, 7, 5, 5, 23
- Level 3: 18, 31, 12, 10, 10, 5, 11
- Level 4: 40, 28, 11, 7, 3, 8
- Level 5: 40, 56, 2

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44 LEP students who were enrolled in FCPS for at least five of the 10-year time period (2006-07 to 2015-16).
45 LEP students who were enrolled in FCPS for at least five of the 10-year time period (2006-07 to 2015-16).
Prior to 2007, FCPS used a different categorization framework to identify which level of services each EL student needed. Unfortunately, there is no way to align prior LEP levels (as they were called prior to 2007) from before 2007 to current ELP levels. As such, this analysis had to use a subset of students included in the previous figure (Figure 10). These data come from students who were coded as former EL students who were English Proficient as of SY 2014-15 and who enrolled in FCPS in SY 2007-08 or later.

ELP 5 students’ time to proficiency is impacted by the transition to the WIDA Access for ELLs to determine level of English proficiency. Most of these students were identified at Level 5 under the previous system and although they were not assessed as Level 5 using WIDA ACCESS for ELLs in SY 2009-10, their ELP level was not lowered. This increased the length of time to proficiency for this group of students.
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2). In Grades 1 and 2, all students are assessed on their reading skills using the DRA2, which measures reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.\textsuperscript{48} Figure 3 shows that over the past 10 years EL student performance has consistently been 20 percentage points lower than overall division performance. And over the past two years, division performance has been stable while EL student performance on the DRA2 has decreased.

\textbf{Figure E-5}

\textit{DRA2 Performance – Percent At or Above Grade Level}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure_e_5.png}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{48} Additional description of the assessments discussed in this report are provided in Appendix B.
Standards of Learning test. At Grades 3 and above, students are assessed on their content mastery through the Standards of Learning assessments. EL pass rates on the SOL tests decreased significantly when SOL tests were revised to include items of greater complexity and rigor. Typically, when a test revision occurs, performance decreases and then begins to increase as familiarity with the revised test increases. However, Figure E-6 shows the performance of ELP Level 3 and 4 students across each of five SOL tests. For 9 of the 10 tests displayed, June 2015 data shows that performance has not increased and has in fact continued to decrease on the revised SOL tests. This is similar to the patterns seen for EL students at the remaining ELP levels.

The performance of the division overall decreased when standardized tests were revised. The drops shown by EL students are larger than those seen by the division overall (in Figure E-7), and EL performance continues to drop in some areas where the performance of the division overall has stabilized.
EL students at ELP Levels 1 and 2 have options for alternative assessments in reading, which resulted in similarly variable patterns but higher levels of performance. For other content areas, ELP Levels 1 and 2 student performance patterns follow the patterns of ELP Levels 3 and 4 students, but were 5 to 20 percentage points lower.

EL students at Level 5 and former EL students also show similarly variable performance over time, although the performance of former EL students is equal to the division overall for reading, mathematics and history. The pass rates for former EL students are the only ones that consistently reached school accreditation benchmarks for performance, 75% in English and 70% in all other content areas.

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51 SOL tests were revised with increased rigor during the time period reflected in these tables and drops in performance typically aligned to the year in which the revised tests were first administered; Reading (2012-13), Writing (2012-13), Mathematics (2011-12), History (2010-11), and Science (2012-13).

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E-6
SOL tests were revised with increased rigor during the time period reflected in these tables and drops in performance typically aligned to the year in which the revised tests were first administered; Reading (2012-13), Writing (2012-13), Mathematics (2011-12), History (2010-11), and Science (2012-13).
Graduation Rates. The summative measure for all students is high school graduation. Figure E-10 shows the graduation rates for students who were English learners at the time of graduation (Figure E-10, blue line), students who had at some point been English learners (Figure E-10, red line), and all students (Figure E-10, green line). The data shows that the graduation rates for EL students have always been lower than the rates for the division overall. However, the gap between the overall graduation rate and the EL graduation rate has been increasing since the class of 2010. Interestingly, this was the point at which FCPS had the largest EL population over the past 10 years.
Appendix F

Program Management Response to OPE's Recommendations
The Program Management Response will be added once it is received.