CHALLENGES FACING HIGH IMMIGRANT-SERVING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF STANDARDS BASED SCHOOL REFORM

Prepared for the Subcommittee on Education,
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I. SELECTED NATIONAL AND STATE TRENDS

A. National Trends

To set our discussion in context, we begin by noting several powerful demographic trends that bear on immigrant students, the nation's and Illinois' schools.

Children of immigrants represent a large and increasing share of the total child and student populations.

According to the Census, one in five children under 18 is the child of an immigrant – a share that has more than tripled within a generation and that will grow in the coming years (**Figure 1)**.

Figure 1:
Percent of Children Who are Children of Immigrants, Top 10 States: 1996-1999

Source: Urban Institute Tabulations of edited 1996-1999 March Current Population Survey (CPS)

Over half of all children in New York, and sixty percent of all children in Los Angeles are the children of immigrants

Dispersal to Nontraditional Receiving States.

Rapid growth has also led to population dispersal as the communities with large shares of immigrant children are no longer confined to a few gateway cities or states. For example, during the 1990s the immigrant population grew twice as fast (61 versus 31 percent) in nontraditional receiving states as it did in the six states that receive the largest numbers of newcomers (**Figure 2)**. School districts in these states are likely to have few staff who are experienced in educating immigrant children. Moreover the impact aid they receive from the federal government is quite limited. These challenges also confront communities in high immigrant states that have not been destinations of immigrant flows.

Figure 2: Foreign-Born Population for Selected States and Areas
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Source: 1990 Census and March 1999 CPS

Concentration in Secondary Schools; Resource Mismatch.

Our research reveals that foreign born immigrant children represent a larger share of the total high school population (5.7 percent) than of the total elementary school population (3.5 percent). Recently arrived foreign born immigrants (i.e., those in the United States

less than five years) also represent a larger share of the secondary than elementary school populations (2.7 versus 2.0 percent). These recently arrived students, in particular, are likely to require additional language and other services.

Figure 3: Percentage of Children Who Are Children of Immigrants, By Age and Generation: 1996-1999

Source: Urban Institute Tabulations of edited 1996-1999 March CPS

Despite the fact that recently arrived immigrant children represent a larger share of middle and high school than elementary school students, LEP secondary school students are less likely to be enrolled in ESL or bilingual classes than LEP elementary school students (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4: Bilingual/ ESL Enrollment by Grade Level

Source: 1993 Schools and Staffing Survey (Student Surveys)

Emerging Populations of Special Concern: Late Entrants and Long Term LEPs.

According to the most recent data from the U.S. Department of Education 7.8 percent of all students nationwide are limited English proficient (LEP).

Our recent studies of immigrant secondary education programs identified two LEP student subpopulations as being of special concern. One is the set of immigrant children who arrive not as young children but as teens. Many of these late entrants must overcome critical literacy gaps and the effects of interrupted schooling in their home countries. The time available for these late arriving secondary students to master a new language and pass subjects required for high schools graduation is limited. As a result, language and content instruction must be offered simultaneously rather than sequentially.

The second population of emerging concern among educators can be classified as "long term LEPs". This population is composed of LEP/immigrant children who reach high school after having "graduated" from special language service programs (ESL or bilingual). They did so despite the fact that were still not sufficiently literate in English to meet state or local criteria for promotion from LEP status.

Dropout Rates.

According to our analyses, almost a quarter of all LEP children 16 to 24 who enroll in U.S. schools drop out. Almost 40 percent of Mexican-origin children drop out. Moreover Mexican drop out rates are roughly double national averages for each of the first, second and third generations. By contrast, first generation Asian dropout rates are less than one quarter of the national average for all foreign-born children.

As we note later, the introduction of standards based accountability and high stakes testing in some districts may lead to increased drop out rates among English language learners. For example, data just released by the New York City Board of Education reveal that, of all LEP students in the class of 2000, as many dropped out (30 percent) as graduated (30 percent). (The residual 40 percent remained in school.)

High Levels of LEP Segregation in Schools.

One particularly troubling trend among children in immigrant families is their segregation within schools. One half of limited English proficient children (K - 12) attend schools where a third or more of their fellow students also have difficulty speaking English (**Figure 5**). (By way of contrast only two percent of non LEP students attend such schools.) This means that immigrant children are going to schools that are not just ethnically and economically segregated, but also linguistically isolated.

Figure 5: Limited English Proficiency Amongst Children

Source: Schools and Staffing Surveys (School Surveys, 1993-94)

B. Illinois Trends

LEP Enrollments. The percentage of LEP students enrolling in Illinois schools doubled in the period from 1986 to 1999. The state reported serving about 143,800 LEPs in 1999-2000 (about 7 percent of all students).[1] While almost half of all LEPs in Illinois attend Chicago Public Schools, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) reports that most of the growth in LEP enrollment is occurring down-state and in the counties surrounding Chicago: DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties. About 16 percent of students in Chicago Public Schools are LEP.

Refugees. More than 56,000 refugees were resettled in Illinois during the period between 1983 and 1998,[2] making it one of the top ten refugee resettlement states in the nation. The ISBE currently receives a federal Refugee Children's Impact Grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement to fund programs that link schools with refugee social services agencies.

Recent Immigrants Last year 91 Illinois school districts qualified for Emergency Immigrant Education Program (EIEP) money. They reported serving a total of 54,618 recent immigrants (i.e., children who had been in the United States for three years or less) and receiving about $9.3 million in EIEP funds for the 2000-01 school year.[3]

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[1] Administrative Data, Illinois State Board of Education, Research Division, 1999-2000. LEPs served (143,855)/Public School Enrollment (2,027,600).

[2] Source: Office of Refugee Resettlement, FY 1997 Annual Report to Congress.

[3] Source: ISBE, Division of Middle Level Education, (January 2001).

II. What are some of the Issues?

ISSUE 1: Immigrant LEPs in the Standards-Based Accountability Environment: From minimum requirements to a focus on performance outcomes

Federal Policy

No discussion of immigrant education can meaningfully take place outside the context of the standards-based school accountability movement. In 1994, Congress required all states to implement comprehensive accountability systems for schools receiving federal funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title I). This new federal requirement came in response to a widely-held belief that schools serving large numbers of poor, minority, and limited-English immigrant students set lower standards for their education and thus ratified lower expectations for their performance. The changes in the Title I program broke with past practice by requiring states to replace minimum standards for poor and academically disadvantaged children with challenging standards for **all** students. These new accountability systems were to be based on state-established content standards for reading and math and on assessments aligned with those standards. The new law required states to hold all students to the same performance standards and further required states to hold schools and districts accountable for student performance. Most states, including Illinois, have subsequently developed standards-based accountability systems for a wider number of core subjects and for all public schools.

Standards-based Reform in Illinois

Illinois has established uniform content standards in seven core subjects[4] and requires state-wide testing and reporting of outcomes in language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics in grades 3, 5, and 8, as well as Science and Social Studies in grades 4 and 7 (the ISAT).[5] This year, the state will also administer a new hybrid test[6], the PSAE, to all students in the 11th grade. The state, districts, and individual schools use test results to measure school-level and individual student progress toward meeting state standards.

Thus far, the Illinois legislature has not made any of the tests "high-stakes" for students or teachers insofar as the state does not require that ISAT or PSAE results be used for

[4] English Language Arts, Physical Development and Health, Science, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Foreign Languages and Fine Arts.

[5] Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT).

[6] The Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) includes a complete ACT test and a second day of testing on the Illinois standards of learning as well as two "WorkKeys" units that test employment readiness skills in reading comprehension and applied mathematics. In addition to the array of skills tested, the PSAE is unusual in that it combines norm-referenced testing (i.e., the ACT component) with criterion-referenced testing.

determining student promotion or graduation, nor for determining teacher promotion, pay or assignment. Beginning next year (2002) the state plans to use school-level ISAT and PSAE results to identify schools for improvement, intervention, and ultimately for sanctions under a revised state-wide school accountability system. Local officials may also use school-level test results to evaluate the performance of school administrators.

As noted earlier, a key goal of standards-based reform is to direct greater attention to the education of poor, minority, and other students at-risk for academic failure. The Illinois system attempts to accomplish this by making explicit the specific knowledge and skills that every public school student should have at a given grade level. The state then holds schools accountable for results by requiring that that they measure and report the achievement of schools with respect to the standards. Illinois also provides a remediation program that includes additional technical and financial assistance to low-performing schools.

Status of LEP Student Inclusion in the Illinois Accountability System

Data from the Illinois State Board of Education indicate that the majority (77 percent) of all Illinois LEP students are exempted from the state's accountability system. Based on 1999-2000 administrative data, we estimate that more than half (55 percent) of LEPs in the tested 7th and 8th grades may be exempted from the ISAT this year (2001) and that as many as 84 percent of LEP 11th graders may be exempted from the high school PSAE exam.[7]

Illinois LEP students exempted from the standard state assessments are administered an alternate assessment (the IMAGE test).[8] The IMAGE, however, measures progress in English language acquisition only. Although secondary school LEPs may be cognitively ready for challenging work in the content areas, and may in fact spend part of their day in mainstream or sheltered content classes (e.g., social science or mathematics), there are no state assessments for measuring LEP student progress in these subjects until after they have been in language development programs for more than three years. Like most states, Illinois has not established state-wide content standards for the special language development courses (TBE or TPI) that serve as gateways to the core curricula.

LEP students *not* exempted from the ISAT or PSAE are required to take those tests in English without any accommodation for their English language acquisition level (that is, no special provision is made for explaining test instructions, nor is extra time given to

[7] LEP students in state-approved bilingual education programs for three years or less are exempt from participation in the ISAT and PSAE testing programs. About 77 percent of all LEPs in Illinois were in this category during 1999-2000. Our estimates for the 2000-01 school year are based on previous year data as reported in "Transitional Bilingual Education and Transitional Program of Instruction: Evaluation Report, Fiscal Year 2000," Illinois State Board of Education, Research Division, (December 2000).

[8] Illinois Measures of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) Assessment Test

LEP students).[9] Most observers report that the state also does not routinely report outcomes on the ISAT disagregated by LEP status. Thus, it may be difficult for the general public to determine how well individual schools are doing at helping immigrant LEPs meet the content standards in the core subjects.

Our recently released research report[10] suggests a number of technical, demographic and capacity reasons that the inclusion of LEP immigrants in standards-based accountability remains problematic for Illinois and other states:

Challenges to the Inclusion of LEP students in Standards-based Accountability Programs

Challenge: Lack of reliable assessment instruments There is a lack of reliable assessment instruments available for testing LEP students' content knowledge (e.g., mathematics, social studies, science) in Spanish and other native languages. Although some states have produced Spanish-language versions of the state content tests (e.g., Texas), Illinois officials have determined that there is no appropriate way to translate any of the ISAT content tests into other languages and specifically prohibit local officials from doing so. Although the state has issued benchmarks for predicting how IMAGE test results might translate to scores on the grade-appropriate ISAT language arts tests, there remains little guidance on how schools can help LEP immigrants meet the state standards in the other subjects. We note that Illinois is not alone in this regard. The lack of reliable content area assessments or information on appropriate assessment accommodations for LEP students is a challenge in all states developing standards-based accountability systems.

Challenge: Professional uncertainty over curriculum and instruction. While there appear to be a number of effective strategies for helping LEP students develop basic oral English speaking and comprehension skills; a review by the National Academy of Science suggests that professional knowledge on how to help LEP students develop *academic* English literacy remains very rudimentary. This problem is particularly acute in secondary schools where learning in mainstream content classes requires background knowledge and advanced literacy skills (both linguistic and cultural) that second-language learners may not possess. In the typical social science class, for example, students must be able to construct arguments and discuss alternative solutions to social problems in English. In mathematics, students must work with English texts containing vocabulary specific to math (e.g., *integer*, *algebrai*c), as well as everyday words that have different meanings in mathematics (e.g., *table, irrational*). The predicament for many

[9] There are accommodations made for LEP students in special education, as required by their individual education plans (IEPs). Also, the state is working on an accommodated version of the ISAT math test for LEP students and plans to pilot-test this new version in 2001.

[10] Ruiz-de-Velasco, Jorge & Michael Fix (2001), *Overlooked and Underserved: Immigrant Students in U.S. Secondary Schools*, (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press), available online at: http://www.urban.org/pdfs/overlooked.pdf

LEP immigrants is that this level of academic English may take 4 - 7 years to acquire under the best of circumstances,[11] while the window of time students have to master the subjects required for graduation is limited.[12]

Challenge: Demographic Diversity Demographic data from the 2000 census is only now beginning to bring into sharp relief a basic fact about LEP immigrant students that teachers and administrators have known for a while: English language learners vary considerably with respect to the number of languages they speak, the level of prior schooling in their native languages, the level of parent education, and the nature of home literacy practices (e.g., whether they read or are read to at home) as well in the degree to which they are linguistically isolated from English learning outside the classroom setting. All of these factors have been found to bear on classroom learning and may require different kinds of interventions and teaching strategies. Some educators have questioned whether the level of diversity found among LEP immigrants might require that schools move away from offering one basic language development program, to an approach similar to special education, where schools develop an individualized education plan for each student. We note that some states, including Texas, have taken some steps in this direction.

Challenge: Long-term Shortage of Trained Teachers The forgoing issues raise questions about school capacity to help LEP students meet new and higher performance standards. But in Illinois, as elsewhere in the nation, staff shortages place special burdens on schools as they struggle to meet the needs of a growing number of immigrant LEP students. Consider these data from the last national Schools and Staffing Survey: only 30 percent of public school teachers instructing limited-English students nationwide reported receiving any special training for working with these students. Moreover, 27 percent of all schools with bilingual/ESL staff vacancies—and 33 percent in central city school districts—reported finding them “difficult” or “impossible” to fill.[13] The staffing situation in Illinois mirrors the nation. The ISBE has identified both certified Bilingual and ESL teachers as likely high demand areas where teacher shortages are expected in the next 10 years.[14]

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[11] See, Hakuta, Kenji, Yuko Goto Butler and Daria Witt (2000), “How Long Does it Take English Learners to Attain Proficiency?” (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, Linguistic Minority Research Institute), Policy Report 2000-1, available at <http://www.imrinet.ucsb.edu/RESDISS/hakuta.pdf; also see, August, Diane & Kenji Hakuta, (1997) Improving Schooling for Language Minority Children: A Research Agenda, (Washington, DC: National Academy Press); and, Thomas, Wayne & Virginia Collier (1997) School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students (Fairfax, Virginia: George Mason University).

[12] See, Anstrom, Kris, (1997), “Academic Achievement for Secondary Language Minority Students: Standards, Measures and Promising Practices,” (Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education) A report to the U.S. Department of Education, available at: <www.ncbe.gwu/ncbepubs/reports/acadach.htm>

[13] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Schools and Staffing Survey, 1993-94*.

[14] Illinois State Board of Education, *Educator Supply and Demand*, ISBE Research Division, December 2000.

The long-term shortage of new teachers specially trained to work with LEP students underscores the importance of training veteran teachers to work more effectively with new populations of LEP immigrants. This imperative is especially strong in secondary schools where LEP students are often in mainstream subject classes for at least part of their school day. Yet, in Illinois as in other parts of the country, training around LEP issues (e.g., language acquisition, LEP assessment, and multicultural awareness) is focused on language development teachers. Training for mainstream teachers and administrators lags.[15] We note, nevertheless, that Illinois does explicitly include mainstream teachers, administrators and special education teachers in its LEP staff development programs and keeps track of their participation. This places Illinois ahead of systems that continue to focus all LEP training on language development staff.

Challenge: Increased drop-out rates in the wake of standards-based reform. As states implement new performance standards, some are finding troubling signs that their reform efforts are not translating into improved outcomes for all students. This is particularly so where states attach consequences, such as promotion or graduation eligibility to performance on state assessments. In Texas, for example, there is evidence that high school drop-out rates increased for Black and Hispanic students as a result of state implementation of a high-stakes exit test for 10th graders.[16] Likewise, a new study finds that stricter high school graduation requirements have resulted in 3 to 7 percent jump in the dropout rate during the 1990s. The Cornell and University of Michigan economists who conducted the study say this may translate to between 26,000 and 65,000 more high school dropouts a year nationwide.[17]

ISSUE 2: THE ORGANIZATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The organization of work and time in the typical secondary school is often incompatible with the needs of immigrant English language learners and tends to isolate them and language development teachers from the mainstream school program. The issues raised in this section are treated in greater depth in our report: *Overlooked and Underserved.*[18]

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[15] For example, while two-thirds of mainstream teachers in schools with Transitional Bilingual Education programs reported participating in multicultural awareness training, only about one third reported receiving training in language acquisition or ESL/Bilingual methods. ISBE, Evaluation Report: Transitional Bilingual Education and Transitional Program of Instruction, Fiscal Year 2000, (ISBE Research Division, December 2000).

[16] Haney, Walt. (January 13, 2001) "Revisiting the Myth of the Texas Miracle in Education: Lessons about Dropout Research and Dropout Prevention." Paper prepared for the Dropout Research: Accurate Counts and Positive Interventions Conference: Cambridge, MA. Also see, Carnoy, Martin, Susanna Loeb, and Tiffany Smith. (December, 2000) "Do Higher State Test Scores in Texas Make for Better High School Outcomes?" (Draft for Comments) Stanford University: School of Education.

[17] Lillard, Dean R. and Philip P. DeCicca, *Economics of Education Review,* Spring, 2000. News summary available at: http://www.news.cornell.edu//Chronicles/3.16.00/dropout_rates.html.

[18] Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix (2001), *Overlooked and Underserved,* supra, at pp.55-65.

Challenge: Organization of secondary school staff. Our research in immigrant-serving schools indicates that the organization of secondary school staff into subject or functional departments (e.g., English and science departments or special education and ESL departments) often has important and largely negative consequences for LEP students and their language development teachers. This is so principally because the task of preparing LEP/immigrants to participate effectively in mainstream classrooms is organizationally conceived as a special or add-on activity outside the "normal" functions of the secondary school.[19]

- ESL and bilingual program teachers report that rigid departmentalization often excludes them from functions, such as curriculum planning and standards development, that are squarely within their professional competence, but that often occur within the regular academic departments. This was especially true in high schools where large numbers of students compel greater specialization.

- Departmentalization encouraged mainstream subject teachers to believe that addressing the language development needs of their LEP students was the responsibility of other school staff or departments. This belief was often reinforced by the fact that school administrators did not support or encourage their participation in training that might help them incorporate language development strategies into their math, science, or history classes. Core subject teachers also reported that their lack of knowledge about LEP students' needs often led them to have low expectations of their performance.

- Ensuring effective access to the full range of a school's programs (e.g., libraries, computers, counseling and health services) requires that key non-classroom staff be aware of LEP/immigrant student needs and act to eliminate language and cultural barriers to the services they provide. Yet, principals, counselors, librarians and other support staff typically have no special training to work with LEP immigrant youth and often do not posses the language skills necessary to communicate directly with them. As a result, ESL and bilingual teachers often must take on duties normally handled by other expert administrative and support staff.

Challenge: Organization of time in secondary schools Teachers in high immigrant-serving schools often report that the typical school schedule (50 minute time blocks) and calendar (180 school days) are powerful barriers to effective teaching for LEP immigrant students. Teachers cite two critical needs that go unmet when these students and their teachers confront an inflexible schedule. First, the students need to spend more time on all tasks that require English language proficiency. Second, their teachers need to devote more time to planning and collaboration when facing greater skill diversity.

[19] See e.g., Adger, Carolyn Temple and Joy Kreeft Peyton (1999), "Enhancing the Education of Immigrant Students in Secondary School: Structural Challenges and Directions," in *So Much to Say: Adolescents, Bilingualism and ESL in the Secondary School,* Christian J. Faltis and Paula M. Wolfe, eds., (New York: Teachers College Press), and authorities cited therein.

- The typical secondary school day, divided into seven 50 minute time blocks often proves too discontinuous to promote the kind of sustained, interactive and comprehensible instruction LEP secondary student need. Likewise, teachers report that in order for teen LEPs to master the content required for graduation in the short time available, access to extended day programs, specially designed summer school, and after school tutoring may be essential. But such extended programming requires district or state-level support and are frequently not available.

- Teachers also report that the typical teaching schedule -- 5 classes per day, 150 students, and a single 50 minute planning period -- makes it exceedingly difficult for teachers to prepare for students with special needs, give struggling students individualized attention, and collaborate with other teachers. The complex task of teaching students at differing levels of language and literacy development, coupled with the limited body of professional knowledge about effective teaching strategies, made working in isolation an insuperable challenge. Teachers in high immigrant-serving schools reported that collaboration *among* ESL/bilingual teachers was important because it allowed them to learn the approaches that other teachers were taking with immigrant youth. And collaboration *between* language development and mainstream subject teachers was essential for teachers to develop school-wide strategies for helping LEP students make successful transitions to mainstream instruction. This collaboration required flexible scheduling allowing for common planning periods and opportunities for team teaching.

ISSUE 3: LINGUISTIC AND SOCIAL ISOLATION OF LANGUAGE MINORITY IMMIGRANTS

As noted earlier, immigrant residential patterns and ESL bilingual programming may combine to result in schools where LEP immigrant students are concentrated with other language minority students. The resulting linguistic isolation may be more pronounced in secondary schools where studies have found that students tend to self-segregate in non-classroom contexts.[20] Although research in this area remains thin, studies have found that immigrant LEPs may encounter difficulties in language and subject matter learning because of limited exposure to English speakers in their home and peer-group settings. Such non-classroom contact has been found to accelerate language and subject learning by exposing LEP students novel word meanings and standard/academic discourse styles that are rewarded in classroom work.[21] Some educators have found that social isolation can even affect immigrant students who are fully-proficient in English. Teachers in some of the Mellon demonstration schools, for example, found that high-achieving immigrant students often reached their senior year without preparing for post-secondary education (e.g., not having taken entrance examinations or requesting applications for admissions

[20] See, e.g., Olsen, Laurie (1997), *Made in America: Immigrant Students in Our Public Schools,* (New York: The New Press).

[21] August, Diane and Kenji Hakuta, eds. (1997), *Improving Schooling for Language-Minority Children* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press), (NAS Report) Chapter 3.

and financial aid). This owed, in part, to the fact that they were excluded from peer groups and clubs where college-going attitudes are often developed.[22]

ISSUE 4: INCENTIVES TO DROP-OUT: LABOR MARKETS AND IMMIGRATION POLICY

Apart from the unintended effects of higher standards, our own interviews with secondary school teachers confirm that high immigrant dropout rates are driven in part by short-term calculations of the relative pay-offs of schooling and early entry to the labor market. While some work during high school has been found to have positive effects on student outcomes,[23] it is also clear that students who work intensely at paid jobs tend to have lower grades and to drop-out.[24] In some cases, extreme family poverty and the availability of work in a growing economy act as magnets drawing teens away from school and into full or part-time employment. In other cases, researchers find that early disaffection with school programs that fail to meet their needs and subsequent poor school performance cause students and their families to look on early labor market entry as a rational alternative to continued schooling.[25] The push to leave school before graduating is particularly acute among undocumented students whose path to higher education is limited by residency requirements for lower tuition and financial aide and whose eligibility for higher paying jobs in the post-graduation job market is effectively barred by law.

ISSUE 5: WEAK PARENTAL ADVOCACY

Educators rely on parents to support the school's efforts and to act as advocates for their children. Parents are expected to become informed about their children's school progress, monitor the quality of school services, monitor and support homework, and frame student planning and goal-setting. Most research demonstrates that the level and quality of parental involvement can have strong effects on student outcomes.[26] Teachers in high immigrant-serving schools, however, often describe parents who do not appear to supervise their children's homework, fail to attend parent conferences, and do not participate in the PTA or other less formal school events. Immigrant parents and teachers interviewed on this subject identified two critical barriers to involvement.[27]

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[22] Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix (2000), *Overlooked and Underserved,* supra.

[23] Graskey, S. (1996). "Exploring the Effects of Childhood Family Structure on Teenage and Young Adult Labor Force Participation," IRP Discussion Papers, Vol. 1111-96 (Madison, WI: Institute for Research on Poverty).

[24] Chaplin, Duncan & Jane Hannaway (1996), "High School Employment: Meaningful Connections for At-Risk Youth," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY, April 1996.

[25] Steinberg, L.D., S. Fegley & S.M. Dornbusch (1993), "Negative Impact of Part-time Work on Adolescent Adjustment: Evidence from a Longitudinal Study," *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 29. 171-180.

[26] Ibid., at pp. 99-100.

[27] See, Ruiz-de-Velasco, and Fix (2000), *Overlooked and Underserved,* supra, at pp. 62-63.

Challenge: Parental language barriers. Immigrant parents cite language as the most crucial barrier to participation. Many noted that their childrens' English language ability was stronger than their own, and that they did not feel competent speaking with monolingual teachers about their child's schooling. In the absence of bilingual school staff, they depended on their children to interpret for them and help them understand school norms and expectations.

Challenge: Different expectations of school staff and immigrant parents. Some immigrant parents describe U.S. schools as intimidating places. Not having been educated in an American—or sometimes in *any*—school, they report that they do not know when it is appropriate to approach teachers or administrators. Some parents explain that in their home countries, public schools are closed institutions where parental advocacy is neither expected nor desired. Parents thus often did not understand that the school expected them to act as partners, extending school learning to the home.

III. Responding to Demographic Change and Immigrant Student Needs: Potential Strategies and Policy Choices

Promoting the Inclusion of LEP students in Standards-based Accountability Systems

The exclusion of LEP immigrant youth from standards-based accountability systems threatens to widen performance differences between native-born and immigrant populations. At the same time, applying a one-size-fits-all accountability system to a special needs population in schools with low capacity to meet their needs threatens equally undesirable consequences. These include increased grade retention and drop-out rates among students and low morale among teachers and administrators. Clearly, the challenge is to extend accountability systems to LEP students in ways that give educators the resources and incentives they need to focus on low-performing students. Some considerations follow:

- **Establishing content standards for TBE/ESL programs.** As noted, Illinois has established language arts performance standards for students in English language development programs. The state might consider establishing explicit curriculum content standards for the same courses. Indeed, the logic of standards-based reform demands that content standards should precede performance standards. Content standards would define the skills and knowledge that teachers should teach at a given level or grade. Ideally, these content standards would be aligned with the performance standards embedded in the IMAGE test already in use.[28] Alternatively, the state might encourage districts to establish their own content standards for ESL/TBE courses provided that they are aligned with the IMAGE. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has developed model standards that might serve as a guide to districts.

- **Developing assessments in the core subjects appropriate for use with English language learners.** State policymakers might reconsider the merits of exempting teen LEPs from accountability assessments that measure their mastery of math, science and social studies content. The current three year exemption period can account for as much as one half of a LEP immigrant's secondary school experience. Moreover, because 11th graders who take the IMAGE will be precluded from later taking the PSAE, some high school LEPs will be excluded from the accountability system altogether. The ISBE is currently developing a modified version of the ISAT test in math for LEP students. The state might consider extending this effort to other core subjects not covered by the IMAGE test.

- **Expanding the collection and use of LEP student data.** Data-driven reform can be the lynchpin of a sound accountability system. At the school level, data on how recently students have immigrated, and on the level of previous education in the home

[28] California is one of the first states to establish such statewide curriculum content standards for language development courses and its experience might be instructive.

country have been found to be helpful to teachers, although they are not often collected by schools. These data might also help school-level staff identify sub-populations of students (e.g., under-schooled newcomers) who might have literacy needs that are not squarely met by standard ESL/TBE programming.

Currently, Illinois does not collect school-level data on the number of LEP students who are retained in grade (a factor that has been found to correlate with dropping out) nor do districts routinely collect and report school-level data on how many LEP students are served in support programs other than ESL/TBE (e.g., number also served in Title I or Special Education programs). This type of data would help state and district level educators measure local program effectiveness and identify unmet needs.

- **Develop alternative courses of instruction for special populations.** Transitional Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language methods have proven to be effective for many English language learners. But, as noted earlier, the challenge for many LEP teens is not with language *per se* but with basic literacy gaps irrespective of language. Some underschooled teens also arrive in U.S. schools lacking basic school readiness skills (e.g., how to manage homework and independent study). Schools in Illinois and elsewhere are finding that they need to modify their programs and methods for these special-needs populations. In *Through the Golden Door: Educational Approaches for Immigrant Adolescents With Limited Schooling,* Betty Mace-Matluck and her colleagues cite the specially-designed alternative ESL program at Elgin High School (Elgin, Illinois) as a model in this regard. The Elgin program includes a special "Developmental ESL" level for underschooled youth and emphasizes content-based ESL lessons to accelerate LEP student subject matter learning.

- **Taking a cautious approach to "High Stakes" consequences in the LEP immigrant context.** Some states (e.g., Texas and New York) have begun to attach high stakes consequences to test performance. In some states, student promotion or graduation is linked to state tests. In others, teacher and/or administrator pay and promotion is linked to school-level test outcomes. Thus far, Illinois has resisted these approaches. The central question is whether it is appropriate to attach high consequences to performance given the capacity issues outlined earlier in this essay.

MOVING FROM LEP "PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT" TO A FOCUS ON SECONDARY SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING

The challenges presented by the organizational features of the typical secondary school suggest that a narrow focus on improving language development programs will yield only limited success with immigrant LEP students. Our review of model immigrant-serving secondary schools indicates that exemplary schools focused on whole-school reform. Model schools in the Mellon Program in Immigrant Education shared four over-arching elements. They: (1) involved all school teachers, administrators and counselors in reform; (2) focussed on bringing language development and mainstream subject teachers

together; (3) expanded the amount of time LEP immigrants spend in direct instruction in English and the core subject areas, and (4) emphasized sustained, long-term professional development for all school professionals.[29]

Exemplary strategies included:

- **School-wide planning and action teams.** Model schools often established school-wide planning and reform teams that brought together language development teachers, mainstream content teachers, and key administrators, counselors, and university-based partners. These teams focused on identifying the educational needs of LEP immigrant students, analyzing existing practices, and jointly planning responses.

- **Cross-Departmental collaboration**. Activities included analysis of student data, organizing teacher study groups, team-teaching involving both content and language development teachers, and conducting master demonstrations for new colleagues.

- **Block scheduling.** Block scheduling offered LEP/immigrant students four principal benefits in the schools we examined. First, teachers reduced the number of classes they prepared for each day, allowing them to focus on fewer students and, thus, to better understand their students' strengths and weaknesses. Second, longer class periods allowed teachers greater flexibility to move beyond the lecture format and experiment with cooperative/small group strategies or engage in team-teaching with colleagues. Block scheduling also reduced the number of courses students take in a given day, giving them more individualized instruction from fewer teachers. Third, because each individual class period is significantly longer, courses could be offered on alternate days or in shorter trimesters (rather than semesters). In some schools, the flexibility of shorter, more intense courses arranged in trimesters actually increased opportunities for LEP immigrants to take more of the credit-bearing courses needed for graduation. Finally, teachers in some schools reported that longer class periods made for a less frenetic schedule, contributed to better discipline, and improved relationships between students and faculty.[30]

- **Extended day and year initiatives, (summer school).** A common approach in demonstration schools was to engage students in after-school programs staffed by teachers or adult volunteers. Some schools operated special summer school programs for LEP students in both English language development and subject areas. Language development teachers often observe that summer school is especially important for students in the early stages of second-language learning. Most projects also sought to increase the intensity of direct instruction during the typical day, by establishing peer or cross-age tutoring during in-school hours that might otherwise have been spent on unstructured study activities. In this regard we note that the Chicago Public School

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[29] See, Ruiz-de-Velasco, and Fix (2000), *Overlooked and Underserved,* supra, at pp. 70-80.

[30] For a discussion of how block scheduling was implemented at one school, see, Olsen, Laurie, et al., *Igniting Change for Immigrant Students* (Oakland, CA: California Tomorrow) at pp.57-73.

System is considering extending high school to a five-year option for students with special needs.

- **Expanding access to the mainstream core curricula though sheltered instruction.** Often secondary students get caught in a gap between basic language development programs and mainstream classes. To address this transitional stage in secondary schools, model programs often implemented a modified-English or sheltered instruction method for content subjects. These subject classes cover the same material covered in regular classes but in ways that bridge the language barrier, integrating instruction in history with language acquisition techniques and literacy learning strategies.[31] Teachers and researchers reported two important advantages of the sheltered instruction strategy for LEP students. First, it accelerated academic subject learning for students not ready for full-time instruction in English. Second, sheltered instruction promoted language and literacy development throughout their secondary school experience.

- **Newcomer programs.** Newcomer centers usually offer recent immigrant students a special academic environment in preparation for the transition to mainstream instruction. The major goal of a transitional newcomer program is to increase English language instruction time for newcomers who are not ready to benefit from full-time mainstream instruction in English. Newcomer programs also support the adjustment of recent immigrants to American culture and schooling through an orientation program staffed by teachers knowledgeable about newcomers' needs and experiences.[32] Last year, the ISBE launched an initiative to promote this approach in secondary schools that enroll recent immigrants with limited formal schooling and English skills.

- **School-wide professional development.** Long-term shortages of language development and core subject staff specially trained to work with English language learners underscore the need to develop the language and cultural skills of all veteran educators. Social studies, sciences, and language arts teachers often need special training to make their subjects comprehensible to English language learners. Professional development for veteran staff became a central reform thrust at all model schools we visited in assessing the Mellon demonstration projects in immigrant

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[31] See, Echevarria, Jana, & Anne Graves (1998), *Sheltered Content Instruction* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon).

[32] For information on the newcomer programs see Walqui, Aída (2000), *Access and Engagement: Program Design and Instructional Approaches for Immigrant Students in Secondary School,* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics); and, Lucas, Tamara (1997), *Into, Through, and Beyond Secondary School* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics) at p.152. Also see, Short, Deborah J. & Beverly Boyson (1999), "Secondary Newcomer Programs in the United States: 1996-1999 Directory and Supplements," Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics; Short, Deborah J. (1998), "Secondary Newcomer Programs: Helping Recent Immigrants Prepare for School Success" (Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics); and Chang, Hedy Nai-Lin (1990), *Newcomer Programs*, Oakland CA: California Tomorrow.

education.[33] The goal was to help content area teachers understand how language is learned and how to gauge each LEP student's language development level. Demonstration schools also tended to identify counselors as key gatekeepers whose role in student placement and advising was critical to successful student transitions to post-graduate work and study. Counselors were encouraged to pursue training on how to make their services more accessible to LEP immigrants and their families.

PROMOTING SOCIAL INTEGRATION FOR IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Promising reforms that teachers and principals in the Mellon demonstration projects endorsed included:

- **Efforts to integrate LEP students into extracurricular activities.** American schools encourage student-led extracurricular activities—self-governing clubs, sports, music, and other voluntary special interest activities—some of which offer teenagers their first direct experience of participatory democracy. Indeed, many educators believe that formative experiences in these extra-curricular activities help students to develop initiative, leadership, and other non-academic qualities that predict success in college or work settings. Yet, recent immigrants report that lack of English skills often makes them feel insecure around natives and express doubts that they will be welcomed in extracurricular activities. Based on student input, faculty and student leaders at one demonstration school jointly created an "Ambassadors Program." Volunteer student-ambassadors received training from faculty in cross-cultural communication and were paired with newcomer students to help smooth their transition to the school. Ultimately, the program functioned as an orientation program for newcomers, promoting their participation in school clubs, sports, and other student-led activities.[34]

- **Efforts to identify gifted/talented LEP immigrants and include them in college-bound and Gifted & Talented programs.** Teachers and administrators in high immigrant-serving schools report that language and cultural barriers may interfere with the identification of gifted or talented LEP immigrants. We interviewed one school principal who recounted being "surprised" to learn that the salutatorian of the senior class was a former ESL student. These findings underscore the need for concerted efforts by school counselors and staff to identify and promote high achievement among LEP students.

[33] A more elaborate discussion of the school-based staff development model can be found in Gonzalez, Josué M. & Linda Darling-Hammond (1997), *New Concepts for New Challenges: Professional Development for Teachers of Immigrant Youth,* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics).

[34] Olsen, et al., Igniting Change for Immigrant Students, supra, at p.56.

PROMOTING PARENTAL ADVOCACY

Finally, we note that immigrant parents are at a distinct disadvantage in monitoring their children's schooling when they do not speak English or are unfamiliar with the advocacy roles American schools expect parents to play. The demonstration schools we examined experimented with several initiatives to promote greater participation among immigrant parents. In explaining why they became involved with the schools, immigrant parents in our study often cited personal outreach by bilingual school staff members or from another parents who spoke their language. Moreover, active parents agreed that the level of their own involvement depended on the degree to which school teachers and administrators encouraged parents to serve as advocates for their children and as partners with teachers in their child's education. Some schools have worked to accomplish this by establishing parent centers in their schools or by creating a parent-liaison position with full or part-time responsibility for developing stronger parent-school relationships. Other studies have found that school-based parent education programs are helpful in promoting parental involvement and aligning school and parent expectations regarding their children's' education.[35] Examples here include two-generation literacy programs, ESL, GED, or computer literacy programs, or seminars designed to teach parents how to help their children with homework.

[35] See, August & Hakuta, NAS Report, supra, and authorities cited therein, at pp. 99-111.

APPENDIX

LEGAL ISSUES: BASELINE REQUIREMENTS

A. Language Minority Students

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin and protects students who are so limited in their English language skills that they are unable to participate effectively in regular education programs. In defining a school district's Title VI responsibilities to LEP children, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requires that districts "take affirmative steps" to rectify student language deficiencies in order to give them full access to their regular instructional programs (1970 OCR Memorandum, Attached)." The Supreme Court endorsed OCR's legal interpretation of Title VI in Lau v. Nichols (1974).

In general, OCR considers the following factors in determining whether a particular school or district is meeting its Title VI regulatory requirements:

- whether the district/school has in place an effective *system for identifying all LEP students* who need special language instruction;
- whether, in view of the identification of LEP students, the school/district has developed *a program* which, in the view of experts in the field, *has a reasonable chance of success*;
- whether the school/district has ensured that *necessary staff, curricular materials, and facilities are in place* and used properly;
- whether the school/district has developed *appropriate evaluation standards*, including program exit criteria, for measuring LEP student progress; and
- whether the district *takes regular steps to assess the success of its program* for LEP students and modifies it where needed.

These standards are obviously broad and, in the case of a school or district where the number of LEP students is small, the "program" required can be informal. The approach taken in Illinois closely follows the requirements outlined above. The state requires schools where there are 20 or more LEP students with a common native language to offer a Transitional Bilingual Education program. Where there are less that 20 students of a common native language, the state requires a Transitional Program of Instruction which is considerably less formal and does not stipulate a curricular approach.

Because educators nationwide have not reached a judicially recognized consensus about the most effective way to meet the educational needs of LEP students, OCR's practice is to allow school districts broad discretion in decided *how* to meet the legal standards. Thus, OCR does not prescribe a specific intervention strategy or the type of program districts must adopt to serve LEP students, nor does OCR require school districts to teach students in their primary languages. In fact, OCR will accept as "reasonable" educational approaches endorsed by *any* expert in the field. Although schools are legally required to demonstrate that their program promotes LEP students' achievement over time, the legal

bar is effectively low where experts can be found to disagree on benchmarks for measuring program success.

OCR's requirements for Title VI compliance are articulated in three policy documents:

- May 1970 Memorandum: "Identification of Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of National Origin."
- April 1, 1990 Memorandum: "Office for Civil Rights Policy Regarding the Treatment of National Origin Minority Students Who are Limited English Proficient," and
- September 27, 1991 Memorandum: Policy Update on Schools' Obligations Toward National Origin Minority Students With Limited-English Proficiency (LEP students).

B. Undocumented Students

In general, undocumented school-age children and youth have the same right as U.S. citizens and permanent residents to attend public schools and to access free lunch and breakfast programs without regard to their INS documentation status. School leaders should be familiar with the legal requirements contained in the Supreme Court's decision in *Plyler v. Doe* [457 U.S. 202 (1982)], in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

As a result of the *Plyler* ruling, public schools ***may not***:

- deny admission to students on the basis of undocumented status;
- engage in practices that might "chill" or hinder the right of access to school;
- require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status;
- make inquiries of students or parents that may expose their undocumented status;
- or require social security numbers from all students as a condition of school admission or the receipt of school services.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act also prohibits public schools from providing any outside agency -- including the Immigration and Naturalization Service -- with any information from a student's school file that would expose the student's undocumented status without first getting parental permission.