MANY LANGUAGES,

ONE FUTURE

UN FUTURO

ISANG HINAHARAP

UN AVENIR

HAL MUSTAQBAL

MOJA BAADAYE

EEN TOEKOMS

BIR GELECEK

EINE ZUKUNFT

BIR KELAJAK

EEN TOEKOMST

A+ Colorado
SHARPENING PUBLIC EDUCATION

AN A+COLORADO REPORT | OCTOBER 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A+ Colorado would like to express sincere gratitude for the generous support from Aspen Community Foundation, The Denver Foundation, and Rose Community Foundation for this project.

Additionally we would like to thank the following individuals who provided thoughtful advice on this project or feedback on drafts of the report: Dr. Mike Cortés, CLLARO; Janet Lopez, Rose Community Foundation; Jordan Posamentier, Committee for Children; Dr. Luis Poza, San José State University; Dr. Robert Reichardt, APA Consulting; and Gladys Soto, CLLARO.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Emerging multilingual students—students who speak a language other than English and are learning English through targeted services in public schools—make up a growing number of Colorado students. As a state, we invest over $56 million annually in supporting these students, yet relatively little is known about which systems are best serving them.

This report provides a snapshot of how emerging multilingual students are performing in Colorado districts and schools. In assessing the state of emerging multilingual students in Colorado, two key questions emerge. First, how well are Colorado's emerging multilingual students gaining English language skills? Second, how well are Colorado's emerging multilingual students mastering grade-level academic content?

In seeking to answer these questions, this report begins to uncover additional questions, like the following: What instructional and programmatic approaches are most impactful for students? This report also recognizes clear limitations in the current ways that information about emerging multilingual students is being explored and reported. These limitations underscore the need for significantly more rigorous research into what is and isn't working for emerging multilingual students.

Report Findings

The first central question of our report is this: How are emerging multilingual students being supported to learn English? Because the vast majority of Colorado's public school instruction is delivered in English, learning English is an important—and constitutionally mandated—goal to ensure that students have meaningful access to all academic content. In Colorado, English language proficiency gains are biggest at the elementary school level, before slowing down in middle school and lagging again in high school. Simply put, only half of Colorado emerging multilingual students in high schools are on track to attain full English language proficiency within the expected timeline.

At the school level, there are vast differences in the rates at which students are gaining English language skills, with notable exemplars. At Colorado elementary schools serving emerging multilingual students, the top 10 schools have above 90% of students on track with targeted English language proficiency growth. In middle schools and high schools, the top 10 schools have a range of 70% and above on track.

The higher levels of elementary school English acquisition, compared to the lower levels of middle and high school English acquisition, is one of the most striking trends across the state of Colorado. However, it is important to note that several factors—beyond school programming and services—may be playing a role in this trend. The data does not allow us to track certain information about students' educational backgrounds, including information about (1) which students are long-term English learners versus new English learners, (2) how the focus of instruction shifts from literacy to content in early versus later grades, and (3) how the standard for English language proficiency varies at different grade levels.

The second, and more important, central question of this report is this: How are emerging multilingual students in Colorado being supported to master academic content? Most emerging multilingual students are not mastering academic content. (This is true even when

the testing for academic content mastery includes language accommodations.) The range of academic achievement is larger in math than in English or Spanish Language Arts, indicating a wider variation in student performance. However, the mean academic performance in math is lower than the mean academic performance in English or Spanish Language Arts.

When considering academic content mastery, there were some schools that had mean scale scores above 750—the cut point for meeting grade level expectations. A mean scale score above 750 indicates that at least half of all emerging multilingual students in a school mastered academic content standards.

The limitations in understanding academic content mastery for emerging multilingual students are even more complicated than the limitations in understanding and tracking English language acquisition. First, English language proficiency is definitely relevant to academic content mastery. Insofar as academic content mastery tests are administered in English, a student's ability to convey academic content knowledge is limited by that student's English language proficiency. Further, because academic performance data isn't linked to language proficiency data, we are not necessarily looking at the same group of students every year.

Takeaways and Recommendations

Despite limitations in data, this report demonstrates that, based on English language proficiency and academic content proficiency, some districts and schools are serving students significantly better than most other districts and schools in Colorado. The question that remains is why. How can we learn from these more successful schools and embed what we learn into schools across the state?

To that end, this report offers the following recommendations based on our findings and on literature about best practices in the field.

FOR THE STATE:

- Research what works.
- Focus on transparency as a learning tool and create opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.
- Ensure investment follows students.

FOR DISTRICTS:

- Provide all teachers and staff the tools to leverage data to fine-tune instructional practices.
- Enable family empowerment by providing access and engaging families of emerging multilingual students.
- Support strong language development through secondary schools.
- Focus on how different emerging multilingual students are served locally.

We urge the state of Colorado to deeply investigate student performances within schools and districts to understand what is working, so that all students can be supported to master the academic content they are constitutionally guaranteed.

.

MANY LANGUAGES, ONE FUTURE

Emerging multilingual students—students who speak a language other than English and are learning English through targeted services in public schools—make up a growing number of Colorado's students. As a state, we invest over $56 million annually in supporting these students. During the 2017–18 school year, there were over 128,000 emerging multilingual students in Colorado, the result of a 20% increase in the enrollment of emerging multilingual students in Colorado over the past decade. Emerging multilingual students' experiences in the school system—including the support they receive in gaining English language proficiency and mastering academic content—have major implications for their success.

Yet relatively little is known about which systems are best serving these students. Part of this is due to the fact that the process of gaining English language proficiency is indeed just that, a process. Another part of the challenge is connecting the information about English language proficiency to data about academic content mastery over time. Complicating both of these questions are shifts in assessments in Colorado which change the tools by which we can understand, comparably across school systems, whether students are gaining English skills and academic content knowledge.

This report seeks to start to disentangle those challenges by providing a snapshot of how emerging multilingual students are doing in Colorado districts and schools. The intent of this report is twofold. One, it begins to highlight systems where we should be asking more questions, like what are the instructional and programmatic approaches educators and teams are using that are most impactful for students? Two, it emphasizes the need for significantly more rigorous research into what is and isn't working for multilingual students. There are many states, like California and Oregon, where researchers have been able to provide significantly more insight into system-level performance, understanding what schools and districts are best serving multilingual students over time. Yet this requires student-level information, connected across assessments over time—an investment Colorado has not made.

A+ Colorado deeply believes that knowledge is power, and by better understanding where emerging multilingual students are being best served, Colorado can ensure that every student is guaranteed the opportunity to learn and thrive in schools across the state.

A Growing Need

According to the the U.S. Department of Education, in 2015 there were 4.8 million English language learners (ELLs), also referred to as emerging multilingual students, or sometimes just English learners (ELs), in the United States.[1] This growing demographic comprises 10% of the total U.S. student population.

Emerging multilingual students face the dual task of learning English, demonstrated when they no longer need and exit out of the federally-mandated English language instruction services that are guaranteed by the ELL designation, and to continue learning academic content while they gain academic fluency in a second language. Programs and services for emerging multilingual students must therefore meet two criteria: (1) effective instruction will lead to timely growth across levels of English language proficiency, and (2) effective instruction will ensure that students are continuing to master academic content as well.

Emerging multilinguals are a large and growing group across Colorado. More than 1 in 10 Colorado students are emerging multilingual. According to 2015 data, Colorado has the sixth-largest emerging multilingual population (124,529), nationwide; Denver County School District is the district with the eighth-largest population (30,638), nationwide.[2] Within Colorado, total student enrollment growth from 2008-2015 was 9.3%. This growth was far outpaced by the 25.2% enrollment growth in Colorado's emerging multilingual population during the same time. They comprise 14% of Colorado's student population—higher than the nationwide average of approximately 10%—yet to the best of our knowledge there has been comparatively little relevant and timely analysis on how

Colorado's emerging multilinguals are performing in terms of English language mastery and academic content mastery. Colorado is home to many organizations and institutions with special focus on this issue, given its priority statewide, and many of them had an opportunity to review this report. However, ensuring success for all students means taking a moment to pay particular attention to these students and how they are currently being served, even if that means using imperfect data, to hopefully lay the groundwork for future analysis and more robust research.

The Current Instructional Landscape

Before diving into data about emerging multilingual students in Colorado, it's helpful to have some background on what the literature says about the services offered to these students to understand the metrics we look at in assessing the state of Colorado's emerging multilingual population.

Emerging multilingual students are most often identified through a home-language survey administered to parents, which gauges a potential language influence other than English. This will trigger follow-up assessment(s) to gauge English language proficiency. If a student is identified as "Limited English Proficient" they are federally guaranteed access, by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), to receive English language instruction and they are held to the same academic standards as English-fluent peers.[3] This underscores the importance of using English language proficiency and measurement with respect to academic standards to assess the quality and success of ELL programming. When emerging multilingual students have gained English fluency pursuant to a portfolio of assessments, they are "exited" from language support programming, and, after two years of continued demonstration of English language proficiency, are no longer considered English learners.

Figure 1. Designations of English Language Proficiency Levels

DESIGNATIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVELS	
NOT ENGLISH PROFICIENT (NEP)	Students with little mastery of English language proficiency standards. Students receive targeted language instruction.
LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP)	Students with some mastery of English language proficiency standards. Students receive targeted language instruction. Title III federal funds and 75% of Colorado's funding through the English Language Proficiency Act is directed to NEP and LEP students.
FULLY ENGLISH PROFICIENT (FEP)	Students redesignated as FEP no longer receive targeted English language instruction. They are instead monitored for two years to ensure they have mastered English language proficiency standards. Students are designated FEP Monitor Year 1 and FEP Monitor Year 2. If during the two monitor years students demonstrate they have not mastered English language proficiency standards, they can be again designated as LEP to receive targeted language supports. 25% of Colorado's funding through the English Language Proficiency Act is directed to FEP students.
EXITED STUDENTS AND FORMER ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (FELL)	Students who were at one time designated and received serviced as NEP, LEP, or FEP students and have fully transitioned out of any additional targeted supports. Districts do not receive additional funds to support exited students.

Research determining the success of programs is complicated by the need to determine English language and academic content attainment. For example, some studies have found that sheltered instruction most quickly aids English language attainment in the short-term compared to dual language instruction, but dual language instruction is better for academic performance, and long-term dual language students were performing better than students who received English-only instruction.[4] While the success of programming will depend on the capacity and demographics of a given school, there is research that shows that dual language instruction has benefits in both languages and the long-term academic achievement of students. Many studies show, then, this type of instruction is most likely to facilitate the success of emerging multilingual students.[5] While the most "effective" programming is beyond the scope of this report, an important next step would be to connect outcomes explored here to programming opportunities, to know whether the Colorado experience mirrors many of these findings.

Figure 2. Resources for Multilingual Students

WHAT RESOURCES SUPPORT EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS?

Colorado invests national, state, and local funds to support emerging multilingual students. Each district, or consortium of small districts, determines how to spend the additional resources.

FUNDING SOURCE	FUND DESCRIPTION	FY17-18 ALLOCATION[6]
FEDERAL FUNDS[7]	**TITLE III FUNDS** are distributed to districts to target emerging multilingual students with limited English proficiency (Not English Proficient (NEP) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students). Funds are allocated based on the district's share of LEP students. If a district's allocation, based on its population, is less than $10,000, then the district must either seek funding through a BOCES or another consortium of districts with a lead agency to apply for the funds.	**$8,461,749**
	TITLE III SET-ASIDE FOR IMMIGRANT STUDENTS provides funds to districts with a significant increase in the number of immigrant children (who are often, but not always, emerging multilingual students). Funds are allocated per pupil times the increase in immigrant students.	**$470,097**
STATE FUNDS[8]	**THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ACT** provides the bulk of Colorado's investment in emerging multilingual students. 75% of the funds are allocated to NEP and LEP students. 25% of funds are allocated to FEP students. Those monies are then distributed to districts based on their share of NEP and LEP students, and their FEP students respectively. Districts may receive ELPA funds for a total of up to 5 years per student.	**$46,903,952** **ELPA Program: $19,903,952** **Professional Development & Support: $27,000,000**
	ELPA EXCELLENCE AWARD recognizes districts and charter schools with the highest content growth, highest language growth, and highest content achievement for emerging multilingual students. While historically these have been identified using an average of performance on three indicators, beginning in 2018-19, CDE will identify district and charter awardees who are in the top quartile in each indicator.[9]	**$500,000**
DISTRICT FUNDS	Mill Levy Overrides approved locally can be used to target additional resources to emerging multilingual students. The amount and use of the funds are left to local districts and voters to determine. There is no centralized tracking of MLO funds being used to support emerging multilingual students.	**Unknown**
	TOTAL FUNDING (EXCLUDING DISTRICT FUNDING)	**$56,335,789**

Research Questions

1. How well are Colorado's emerging multilingual students gaining English language skills?

2. How well are Colorado's emerging multilingual students mastering grade-level academic content?

There are multiple threads that must be considered. The first key question, in assessing the state of emerging multilingual students in Colorado, is how well are these students gaining English language skills? The second, how well are emerging multilingual students in Colorado mastering grade-level academic content? This report addresses these questions. However, due to data limitations it is outside the scope of this report to see which types of programs are best ensuring the long-term academic success for emerging multilingual students. Moreover, in addition to the lack of sufficient data around basic questions regarding academic performance and English language proficiency, there are likely other data that should be collected and publicly reported, and aren't, such as home language proficiency and redesignation rates, that would be helpful to fully understand the state of this population, and what features are integral for a students' success.

Three Approaches to Programming for Emerging Multilingual Students

1. English as a Second Language (ESL)

ESL is targeted English language instruction. In elementary school this often means pulling emerging multilingual students out of class for this specialized instruction, referred to as pull-out ESL. Notably, this type of instruction is designed to accommodate speakers of various different language backgrounds, and the teacher need not necessarily have fluency in a student's primary home language. In middle school it is more common for ESL instruction to occur during class, referred to as in-class ESL.

2. Bilingual learning

Bilingual learning is often either transitional or dual language. In both cases, instruction is occurring in two languages, and the teacher must be fluent in the emerging multilingual student's primary home language. Therefore, this type of programming is most effective when the emerging multilingual population is linguistically homogeneous. The primary goal of transitional learning is English language fluency. These classes are comprised of solely emerging multilingual students. They receive academic and language instruction in a combination of home-language and English, with the home-language being slowly phased out overtime. Dual language instruction, by contrast, has the goal of bilingualism. Here classrooms are comprised of both emerging multilingual and English-fluent students. Academic instruction occurs in both languages.

3. Sheltered/Structured English immersion[10]

Sheltered or structured English immersion instruction is when English-only academic content instruction is paired with additional supports, such as visual aids, to promote English language and academic proficiency.

Data

This report uses data that was all publicly available. In order to assess academic performance we used CMAS data from 2015-2017, which was the latest available data at the time of analysis. It is important to note, also, that there are several different designations under the umbrella term of 'emerging multilingual student' (see below). For most analyses in the report all emerging multilingual students are included. There is variation in performance depending on the level of english proficiency. However, our reasons for using this umbrella category are twofold: first, if we break down the analyses of academic performance and language proficiency across the five different levels we lose a lot of data due to CDE's reporting rules. Second, the federal guidelines dictate that all emerging multilingual students are to be held to the same standard of proficiency and academic content mastery as native English speakers. All emerging multilingual students must therefore be considered, and we wanted to include as many students as possible in the analysis. The averages of the whole population we hope will represent the average performance of this broad group, understanding that there is variation (as in any average that is used to convey the performance of a whole group of people), specifically considering language proficiency level. That being said, there are some points where we look at subsects of the emerging multilingual population—those cases clearly identify which group of students is being looked at.

A small portion of emerging multilingual students take the Colorado Spanish language arts assessment rather than the Colorado English language arts assessment to demonstrate mastery of reading and writing. This is considered to be a language accommodation made for students who are either not English proficient or limited English proficient, and whose primary instructional language is Spanish, which most often occurs in transitional native language and dual language programs. This version of the test that aligns to CMAS, and only began to be administered in 2016. It is only given to third and fourth graders. As such, it comprises a very small portion of Colorado's emerging multilingual students, but that data is also included to consider academic content mastery of emerging multilingual students who qualify for this accommodation.

In order to assess English language proficiency we used ACCESS data from 2014, 2015, and 2018. ACCESS is a standardized assessment that is administered to emerging multilingual students to gauge English language acquisition. It is one metric that is used to consider whether a student has attained sufficient English language skills for redesignation, but it is not the only tool used (best practice literature affirms the need for multiple different types of assessment and evidence to make this important decision). However, because this test is completed with high participation rates, and is required by the state to have a comparable measure for all students, it is a useful tool for identifying which schools and districts are facilitating greater English language proficiency. ACCESS standards changed in 2015, raising the standard for academic English language proficiency. Because this test measures growth at least two years of data are needed. For this reason the data included to measure emerging multilingual students' proficiency gains is limited to 2014, 2015, and 2018, and 2018 data is not directly comparable to that of prior years.

Demographic data came from a report published by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) on emerging multilingual students in Colorado, which is the most recent cross-tabulated demographic data on this population that was publicly available. Data in CDE's report looked at the population from 2008-2015. While none of these data completely overlap, we feel that it is still important to (1) bring attention to these data gaps and work better at having quality assessments of this key population and (2) examine what we can regarding the performance of these students.

Consent Decrees

When a district is not adequately serving students according to federally mandated requirements, some parents and advocacy groups have, historically, pursued litigation against the district. This litigation is often resolved by agreements called "consent decrees," which stipulate minimum requirements for districts to serve their emerging multilingual student population.[11]

The most notable example is Denver's consent decree. For several decades, Denver has been the site of ample litigation for the failure to comply with federal acts that set standards for emerging multilingual students' education, namely the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA).[12]

Denver's agreement states, for example, that if there are more than 60 emerging multilingual students in the school, then transitional learning programs must be offered. The consent decree also enumerates requirements for teacher qualifications and establishes monitoring protocols to ensure that students are being properly served. Although these legal measures are in place, emerging multilingual students are still not being served well by all schools.[13] Other districts that have settlement agreements with the Department of Justice include Westminster 50[14] and Adams 12 Five Star Schools. Additionally, many other districts have agreements with the Office of Civil Rights, though they were not determined by courts or by litigation.

Student Demographics

Based on CDE's data, emerging multilingual students comprised 14% of Colorado's student population in 2018. The majority (66%) are concentrated in Metro Denver.

81% of Colorado's emerging multilingual students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, compared to 42% of the overall population. This indicates that, compared to the general population, emerging multilingual students are located in urban areas and experience higher levels of poverty. The high percentage of emerging multilingual students experiencing poverty has particularly acute implications on the income-driven achievement gap (see academic content performance section of this report).

Spanish is the primary home language for emerging multilingual students in Colorado (83%), followed by Vietnamese (1.6%) and Arabic (1.6%) (additional home languages listed in appendix).

44% of Colorado's emerging multilingual students are in elementary schools, 40% are in middle schools, and 15% are in high schools. It is more common for emerging

multilingual students in high schools to be either long-term emerging multilinguals (meaning they have been receiving services for a long period of time), special education students, or recently arrivals to the United States (i.e. receiving English language instruction for the first time). Any of these factors may lead to lower scores for academic content and English language proficiency as compared to elementary students, underscoring the need for student-level data across several years.

Denver county has the largest population, with 30,638 of 91,794 students identifying as emerging multilingual, but only the eighth-largest concentration of emerging multilingual students at 33%. Adams 14 has the largest concentration of emerging multilingual students, with nearly half of students (48%) designated as emerging multilinguals.

Figure 3. Total Emerging Multilingual Students in Colorado, K-12

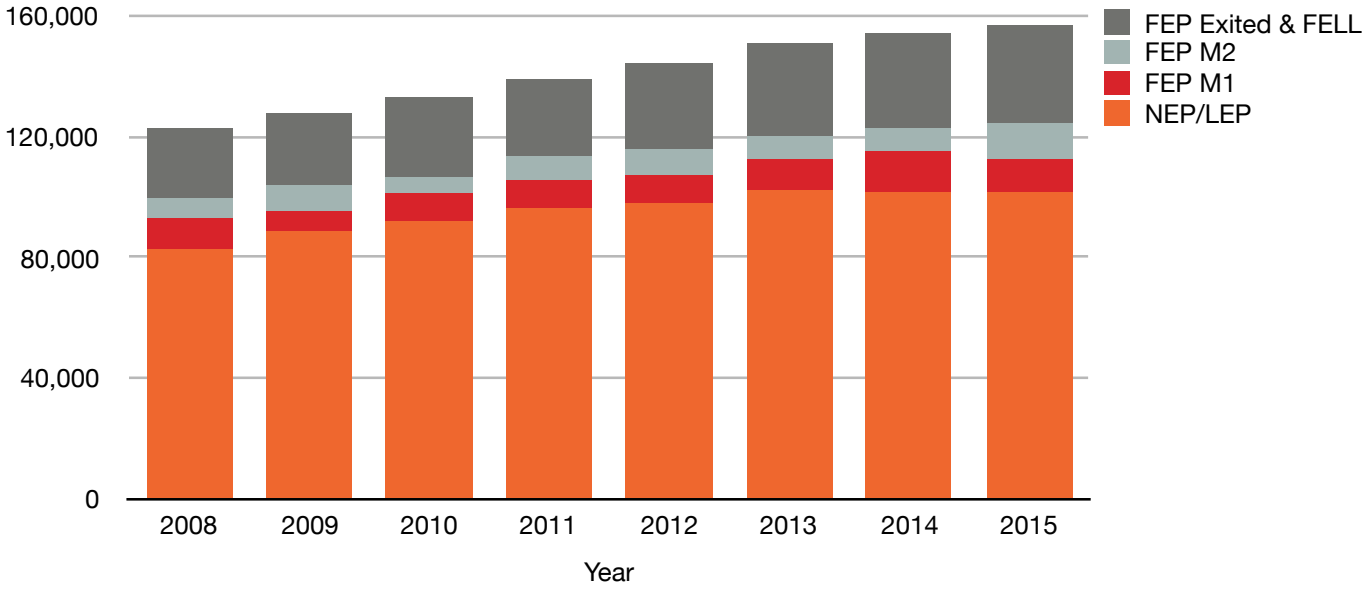


Figure 4. Percentage of Emerging Multilingual Students Qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch

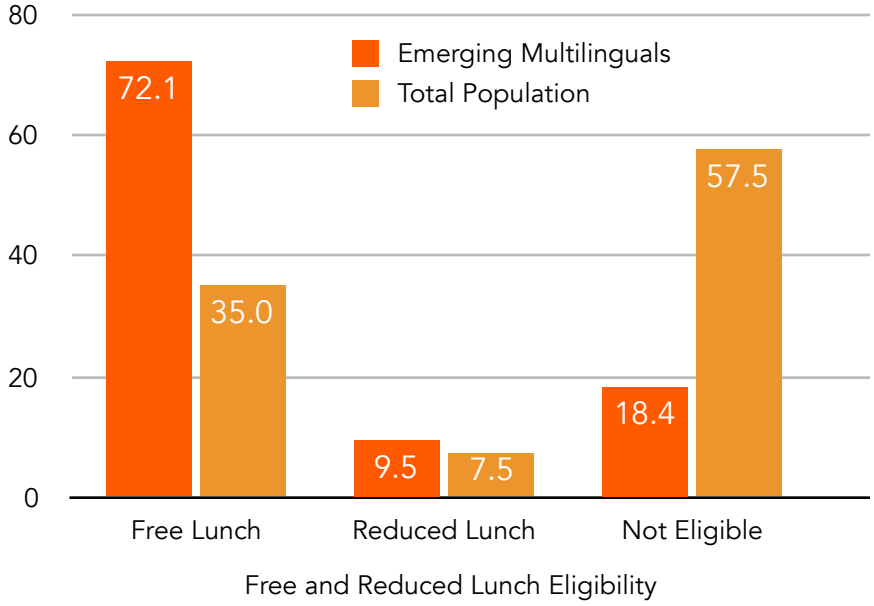
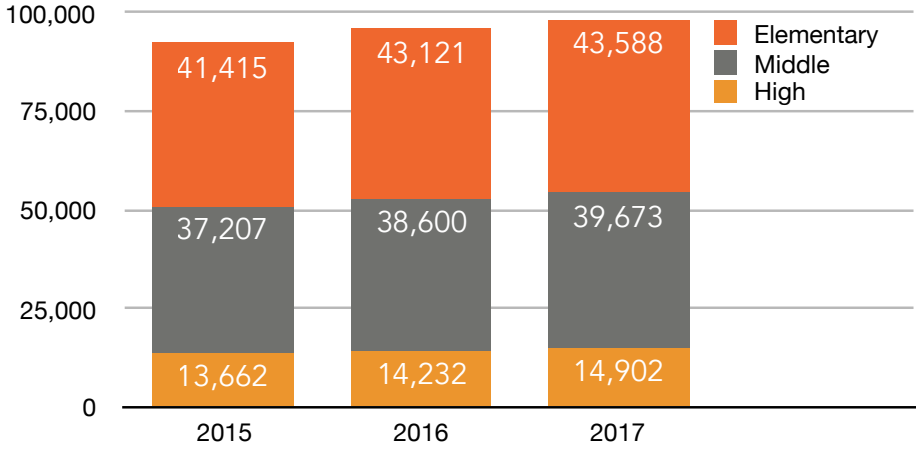


Figure 5. Emerging Multilingual Student Population by School Level*



*This data was extrapolated from 2015-2017 CMAS participation data.

Figure 6. Districts Serving the Largest Numbers of Emerging Multilingual Students (EMS)

DISTRICT NAME	TOTAL PUPIL MEMBERSHIP	EMS COUNT	EMS AS PERCENT
DENVER COUNTY 1	91,794	30,638	33%
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28-J	40,920	15,964	39%
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	38,870	7,085	18%
JEFFERSON COUNTY R-1	86,112	6,719	8%
CHERRY CREEK 5	55,657	6,053	11%
GREELEY 6	22,325	5,282	24%
ST VRAIN VALLEY RE 1J	32,421	4,429	14%
WESTMINSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9,441	3,615	38%
DOUGLAS COUNTY RE 1	67,597	3,562	5%
ADAMS COUNTY 14	7,400	3,536	48%

Figure 7. Districts Serving the Largest Proportions of Emerging Multilingual Students (EMS)

DISTRICT NAME	TOTAL PUPIL MEMBERSHIP	EMS COUNT	EMS AS PERCENT
ADAMS COUNTY 14	7,400	3,536	48%
CENTER 26 JT	626	246	39%
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28-J	40,920	15,964	39%
WESTMINSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9,441	3,615	38%
LAKE COUNTY R-1	1,036	367	35%
SHERIDAN 2	1,402	475	34%
YUMA 1	831	278	33%
DENVER COUNTY 1	91,794	30,638	33%
ROARING FORK RE-1	5,637	1,823	32%
EAGLE COUNTY RE 50	6,931	2,177	31%

As shown in Figure 6, most districts with the highest numbers of emerging multilingual students are located in the Denver Metro area. However, when analyzing emerging multilingual students as a proportion of the student body, some smaller and rural districts appear. These districts are a key part of the conversation around emerging multilingual students, especially considering student academic performance and language proficiency.

The districts with the highest concentrations of emerging multilingual students can be seen in Figure 7. While Denver Public Schools serves the highest number of multilingual students in the state with over 30,000, they're only 8th on the list when it comes to concentration. In Adams 14, nearly 1 in 2 students is an emerging multilingual student. Thus, the way each district elects to serve these students will, and should, vary. For example, dual language programs may make more sense in some settings; pull-out ESL may make more sense in others.

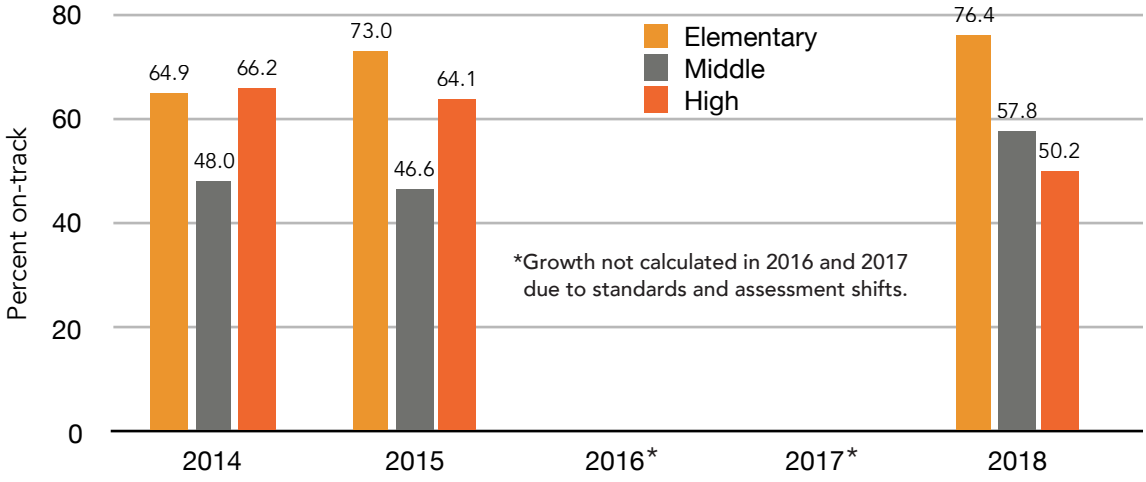
All these factors are important as districts decide how to best serve emerging multilingual students. Each local context is unique: The experience of a student learning English in Denver may be wholly different than the experience of a similar student in Center. The programming available to these students is likely different as well. Without information about programmatic differences, it is difficult to determine which approaches are most effective. We can see, however, which districts are best ensuring that most of their students are on-track with English language proficiency attainment, or which districts are best ensuring that students are mastering academic content.

English Language Proficiency: Achievement and Growth

We look at ACCESS scores to assess English language proficiency. The ACCESS assessment indicates a student's English proficiency, grouping students from a level one to a level six, on the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition to their overall and domain scores on ACCESS, every student earns a student growth percentile (SGP) which shows how those students performed compared to their academic peers. Within a school or district we see the distribution of all SGPs and take the number in the middle, referred to as the median growth percentile (MGP). This number is likely to be more representative of the general performance of a group, because an average would be skewed if a handful of students performed significantly better or worse than most students. The MGP, therefore helps understand how students in a district are growing relative to their peers—or students who showed similar mastery of linguistic skills in the past.

The other metric we have calculated is referred to as the "percent on-track," which tells us the proportion of students that are meeting English proficiency standards. ACCESS has six levels which coincide with six stages of language acquisition.[15] After ACCESS set new standards for English language proficiency in each of these levels, Colorado educators and administrators recalibrated the time most students' needed to progress their mastery of English. Expected growth across those proficiency levels is not linear as language acquisition is not a linear process. The time it should take to grow to a level one is one year, whereas the time to grow from a level three to a level four is three years. CDE publicly reports the percent of students that grow each level within the timeline associated for that standard. This gives us an idea of what proportion of students are meeting standards. However, it bears noting that because the standards for level one and level two are met more quickly than level three and four, we see significantly more growth for elementary schools, where many students are level one and two. At middle schools and high schools the percent of students on-track is lower because almost no students are level one or two. For this reason, comparing within school level is important, because the cohorts are so different. Moreover, given the different standards in 2018 it is difficult to compare across years, but growth measures do consider past performance data.

Figure 8. English Language Proficiency Over Time, by Percent On-Track



State Level

The statewide percent on-track is 68%. This is skewed upwards due to the high proportion and number of elementary school students who are on-track with language proficiency standards. The average percent on-track for middle and high schools in 2018 was 57% and 50% respectively. Data limitations, again, complicate our understanding of these disparities. For instance, many long-term emerging multilingual students are also students with special education needs. However, due to small numbers, and lack of student-level data, it's impossible to say what is driving this tremendous difference, and what proportion of middle and high school populations are in fact long-term emerging multilingual students. While the data across years are not necessarily comparable, because of shifting standards, the percent on-track trends generally stay the same, to wit, elementary schools always have the highest average percentage of students on-track. In 2018 we see that high schools have the lowest percentage on track, but it is not possible to differentiate the impact of new standards on this shift. Simply put, only half of Colorado emerging multilingual students in high schools are on track to attain full English language proficiency within the expected timeline.

District Level

There is tremendous variability across the state, which is evident when we focus on the district and school levels. Looking at rankings of school districts by MGP and percent on-track illuminates a couple phenomena. First, we notice that rankings by MGP and percent on-track do correlate some, but are not totally identical. Second, we notice that most districts with high MGPs are smaller or serving fewer than 100 emerging multilingual students for multiple years with some notable exceptions like Weld County Re-1, Academy 20, Delta, and Falcon for elementary schools; Roaring Fork, Boulder Valley, and Summit for middle schools; and Harrison, Roaring Fork, and Montrose in the top ten for high schools. When we look at the percent on-track it's a different story. Larger districts like Douglas County, Adams 14, and Westminster rank highly when we look at percentage of emerging multilingual students that are on-track with English language proficiency standards.

It is notable that in the top 10 districts for which data is available, the percent on-track ranges include districts with 60% on-track at the middle and high school level, which isn't significantly higher than the state average. In 2018, percent on-track is as low as 34% for middle schools (Littleton 6) and 12% for high schools (Brush RE-2J). The low growth in language proficiency for Littleton middle school students is interesting given the high growth in language proficiency experienced in their elementary schools. Again, lack of student-level data makes it difficult to see whether these are long-term emerging multilinguals or newly arrived students. However, compared to other districts with emerging multilingual students in middle schools, Littleton has markedly low growth here, in contrast to its elementary school population. This variation underscores the importance of looking at individual schools, since even a single district can have top-ranking elementary schools and bottom-ranking middle or high schools.

School Level

At elementary schools in Colorado serving emerging multilingual students, the top 10 schools have over 90% of students on-track with targeted English language proficiency growth. In middle schools and high schools the top 10 schools range from 70% on-track and above. Bear Creek K-8 in Jefferson County R-1, Longs Peak Middle School in St. Vrain, and Rampart High School in Academy 20 are the top-ranking schools per school level across the state. Notably, across the top-ranking schools, the number of emerging multilingual students in a school is below 100, and hovering around 20 with a few exceptions. Vanguard Classical School–West (elementary) in Adams-Arapahoe 28-J, Casey Middle School in Boulder Valley, and Adams City High School in Adams 14 all have more than 100 emerging multilingual students, yet also have relatively high percentages of students on-track. This means that in these schools most of their students are on-track with targeted growth. This exemplifies what we already know: Successful programming for emerging multilingual students is tremendously variable. There isn't one formula for success, but it would be useful to understand what techniques are helping schools with smaller populations of emerging multilingual students and what programs are helping schools with larger populations of emerging multilingual students.

Measuring English Language Proficiency Growth

Median Growth Percentile (MGP): A measure of how emerging multilingual students progresseed in learning English as measured by ACCESS relative to their peers with similar levels of English Lanugage proficiency.

On-Track: A measure of whether students are gaining English language proficiency in the state-designated timeframe.

Note: Schools and districts may have more students included in MGP calculations than on-track calculations due to data supression rules.

Figure 9. 2018 Elementary Schools with Highest Growth (MGP) in English Language Proficiency for Emerging Multilingual Students (ACCESS)

2018 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH HIGHEST GROWTH (MGP) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS (ACCESS)				
DISTRICT NAME	N INCLUDED IN MGP CALCULATION	MGP	N INCLUDED IN ON-TRACK GROWTH	% ON TRACK
STEAMBOAT SPRINGS RE-2	92	70	60	80%
EAST GRAND 2	31	70	n<20	n<20
PLATTE VALLEY RE-7	28	69	n<20	n<20
WIDEFIELD 3	59	68	35	86%
WELD COUNTY RE-1	140	67	122	83%
ACADEMY 20	183	65	182	89%
BENNETT 29J	44	63.5	n<20	n<20
CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN 12	67	63	51	92%
DELTA COUNTY 50(J)	105	59	55	78%
FALCON 49	193	58	191	79%

Figure 10. 2018 Middle Schools with Highest Growth (MGP) in English Language Proficiency for Emerging Multilingual Students (ACCESS)

2018 MIDDLE SCHOOLS WITH HIGHEST GROWTH (MGP) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS (ACCESS)				
DISTRICT NAME	N INCLUDED IN MGP CALCULATION	MGP	N INCLUDED IN ON-TRACK GROWTH	% ON TRACK
YUMA 1	22	85.5	n<20	n<20
MOFFAT COUNTY RE-1	36	75	n<20	n<20
ACADEMY 20	66	72	51	75%
FALCON 49	59	71	46	74%
WIDEFIELD 3	22	66	n<20	n<20
ROARING FORK RE-1	160	63	160	69%
BOULDER VALLEY RE-2	385	62	350	66%
FORT MORGAN RE-3	83	61	59	73%
MESA COUNTY VALLEY 51	57	58	36	58%
SUMMIT RE-1	127	58	106	59%

Figure 11. 2018 High Schools with Highest Growth (MGP) in English Language Proficiency for Emerging Multilingual Students (ACCESS)

2018 HIGH SCHOOLS WITH HIGHEST GROWTH (MGP) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS (ACCESS)				
DISTRICT NAME	N INCLUDED IN MGP CALCULATION	MGP	N INCLUDED IN ON-TRACK GROWTH	% ON TRACK
ELLICOTT 22	22	85	20	75%
ACADEMY 20	90	80.5	74	85%
DURANGO 9-R	20	75.5	n<20	n<20
SHERIDAN 2	44	71.5	31	55%
PUEBLO COUNTY 70	77	70	63	62%
FOUNTAIN 8	25	70	n<20	n<20
HARRISON 2	264	67	264	63%
ALAMOSA RE-11J	39	67	n<20	n<20
ROARING FORK RE-1	209	65	209	66%
MONTROSE COUNTY RE-1J	139	65	116	66%

Fig.12. 2018 Elementary Schools with Highest On-Track Growth in English Language Proficiency for Emerging Multilingual Students (ACCESS)

2018 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH HIGHEST ON-TRACK GROWTH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS (ACCESS)				
DISTRICT NAME	N INCLUDED IN MGP CALCULATION	MGP	N INCLUDED IN ON-TRACK GROWTH	% ON TRACK
CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN 12	67	63	51	92%
ACADEMY 20	183	65	182	89%
WIDEFIELD 3	59	68	35	86%
POUDRE R-1	782	57	777	83%
WELD COUNTY RE-1	140	67	122	83%
HOLYOKE RE-1J	38	55.5	23	83%
PUEBLO CITY 60	369	54	362	83%
ROARING FORK RE-1	765	55	759	81%
BOULDER VALLEY RE 2	1,168	54	1,168	81%
LITTLETON 6	224	53.5	223	81%

Fig. 13. 2018 Middle Schools with Highest On-Track Growth in English Language Proficiency for Emerging Multilingual Students (ACCESS)

2018 MIDDLE SCHOOLS WITH HIGHEST ON-TRACK GROWTH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS (ACCESS)				
DISTRICT NAME	N INCLUDED IN MGP CALCULATION	MGP	N INCLUDED IN ON-TRACK GROWTH	% ON TRACK
ACADEMY 20	66	72	51	75%
FALCON 49	59	71	46	74%
FORT MORGAN RE-3	83	61	59	73%
ROARING FORK RE-1	160	63	160	69%
BOULDER VALLEY RE 2	385	62	350	66%
JOHNSTOWN-MILLIKEN RE-5J	37	56	23	65%
HARRISON 2	262	53	241	64%
ALAMOSA RE-11J	53	57	24	63%
DOUGLAS COUNTY RE 1	411	55	392	62%
WESTMINSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	461	56	459	62%

Fig. 14. 2018 High Schools with Highest On-Track Growth in English Language Proficiency for Emerging Multilingual Students (ACCESS)

2018 HIGH SCHOOLS WITH HIGHEST ON-TRACK GROWTH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS (ACCESS)				
DISTRICT NAME	N INCLUDED IN MGP CALCULATION	MGP	N INCLUDED IN ON-TRACK GROWTH	% ON TRACK
ACADEMY 20	90	80.5	74	85%
ELLICOTT 22	22	85	20	75%
ADAMS COUNTY 14	389	64	371	67%
MONTROSE COUNTY RE-1J	139	65	116	66%
ROARING FORK RE-1	209	65	209	66%
DOUGLAS COUNTY RE 1	289	64	271	63%
HARRISON 2	264	67	264	63%
PUEBLO COUNTY 70	77	70	63	62%
BOULDER VALLEY RE 2	262	59	244	60%
CHERRY CREEK 5	578	59	574	60%

Overall, English language proficiency gains are biggest at the elementary school level, slow down in middle school, and lag again at high school. Once again, detailed analysis is complicated by a lack of longitudinal, student-level, data, a lack of distinction between program types, differential standards, and the length of time it takes to move across levels. We see that smaller districts have some of the higher MGPs for emerging multilingual students. Comparing the percent of students on-track across time is difficult due to changing standards. However, we see that across levels, of emerging multilingual students in elementary schools, 76% are on-track, 56% in middle schools are on-track, and 50% in high schools are on-track. Larger districts may have a high percentage of students on-track and meeting standards even with a lower MGP.

The higher performance of students in elementary schools, and the decreasing performance of older students, is one of the most striking trends across the state of Colorado for emerging multilingual students. There are a few things that may be playing a role here, beyond, perhaps, school programming and services.

First, there are differences in how children gain language skills over time. There is some research that older children have a harder time gaining language skills than younger children. This ties into a secondary problem: our inability to differentiate which students are newcomers, which students may have robust academic content and literacy skills in their home language, and which students have been receiving programming for emerging multilingual students for a longer period of time. Third, elementary schoolers are all receiving explicit language instruction, regardless of their home language, as all students at this stage are learning a language. Finally, there is no data that allows us to compare home languages at the school-level (it could be the elementary schools are more homogenous than middle schools in the same district, leading to different programming). All of these different factors could explain an actual or perceived difference in language acquisition and academic content performance in older students.

76% of the emerging multilingual students in elementary schools are on-track, 56% in middle schools, and 50% in high schools.

Limitations

Due to limitations in the publicly available data, we don't know:

1. If there are differences in English language acquisition based on:
   - students' home languages
   - when they started receiving English language instruction
   - if they have been identified as needing special education services
   - mobility between districts and schools
2. If there are trends in the outcomes of different instructional approaches.

Academic Content: Achievement and Growth

For academic achievement and growth we look at results from the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) in English language arts (ELA), Colorado Spanish Language Arts, and Math from 2015-2017. The assessment, administered starting in grade 3 (in 2015, administered in grades 3-11; in 2016 and 2017, administered in grades 3-9), indicates whether students are mastering grade level standards in academic content. The score range for these assessments is 650-850, where a 750 demonstrates a student met expectations.

A clear picture of emerging multilingual student performance is complicated by the several different designations for emerging multilingual students, and the fact that we don't know whether they are meeting grade-level standards. However, overall emerging multilingual students don't perform as well as their English proficient peers in academic content areas. Elementary school students designated as LEP had an average mean scale score of 718, compared to 754 for FELLs (Former ELLs) and PHLOTEs (Primary Home Language Other Than English), and 753 for FEPs (Fluent English Proficient). The means scale scores for each group decreases as the school level increases. Statewide the performance of emerging multilingual students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch is significantly lower than for emerging multilingual students who don't qualify for free or reduced price lunch (referred to later as non-FRL ELL) with mean scale scores of 727 compared to 754, respectively. Many small districts have the highest academic performance for ELLs, such as Cheyenne Mountain and Manitou Springs, for ELA and Math.

Statewide:

Tracking performance over time shows progress, with mean scale scores slowly creeping up for ELA, yet still below grade-level expectations. Part of the performance here is driven by the fact that by definition these students are not fluent in English. We can attempt to nuance the language arts performance by looking at CSLA scores for third and fourth graders and differentiating between exited and non-exited emerging multilingual students.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

A portion of third and fourth grade emerging multilingual students who are NEP and LEP take the Colorado Spanish language arts test in lieu of the English language arts assessment. This data was only available at the state level and provides mean scale scores, which aim to indicate students' level of academic content mastery. CSLA data mirrors the trends seen in CMAS data, with mean scale scores that are marginally higher than CMAS mean scale scores (although comparability across these tests is complicated by the tremendous variability in testing cohorts). Most emerging multilingual students are not mastering academic content, and this translates to students for whom language accommodations in testing have been made.

As noted, part of the low performance of middle and high school students is driven by the variability of language proficiency levels in the category of emerging multilingual students. In Fig. 16 we consider the performance of emerging multilingual students who are considered fluent in English (FEPs and FELLs) compared to LEP and NEP students. These are the extremes within the category of emerging multilingual students, and we would expect that these extremes would be the most disparate at the high school level, where content standards are higher and more difficult to attain, and where it is more likely that students are long-term emerging multilinguals or have special education needs. There is a significant 30+ point gap between mean scale scores between these two groups, yet it is notable that FEPs and FELLs remain below the threshold (a score of 750) for meeting standards in English language arts despite having exited targeted programming.

Figure 15. Colorado Statewide Language Arts Performance for Emerging Multilingual Students (CMAS & CSLA)

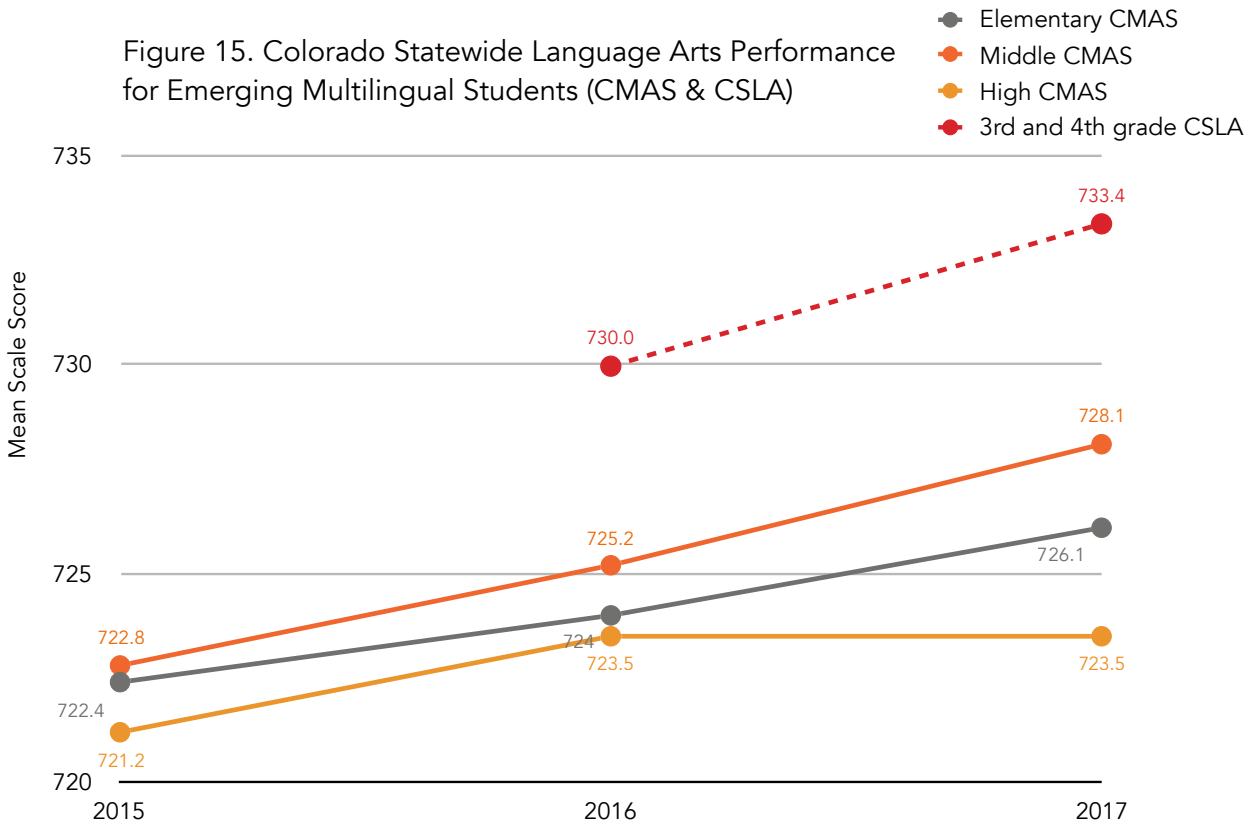


Figure 16. High School Emerging Multilingual Student Academic Achievement in English Language Arts by Language Proficiency (CMAS)

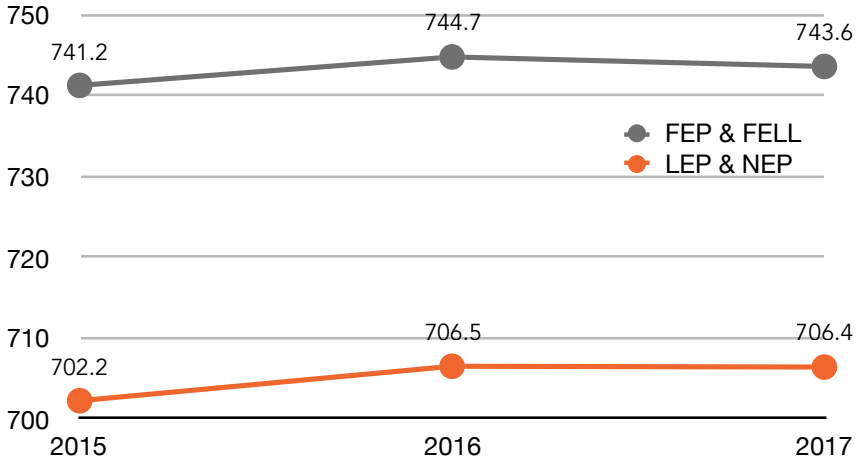
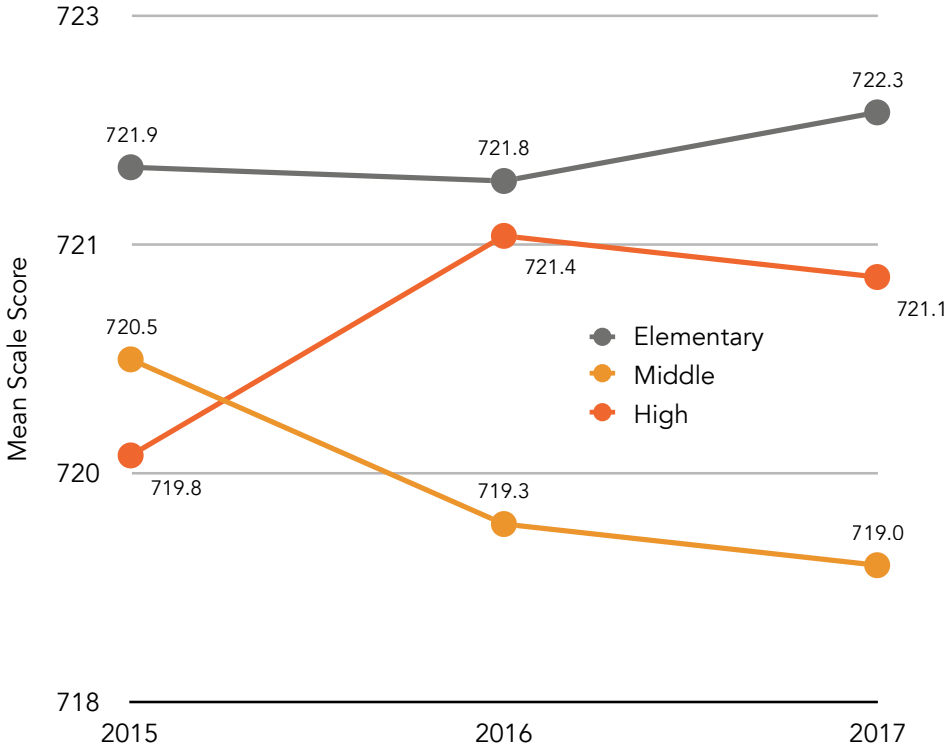


Figure 17. Colorado Statewide Math Performance for Emerging Multilingual Students (CMAS)



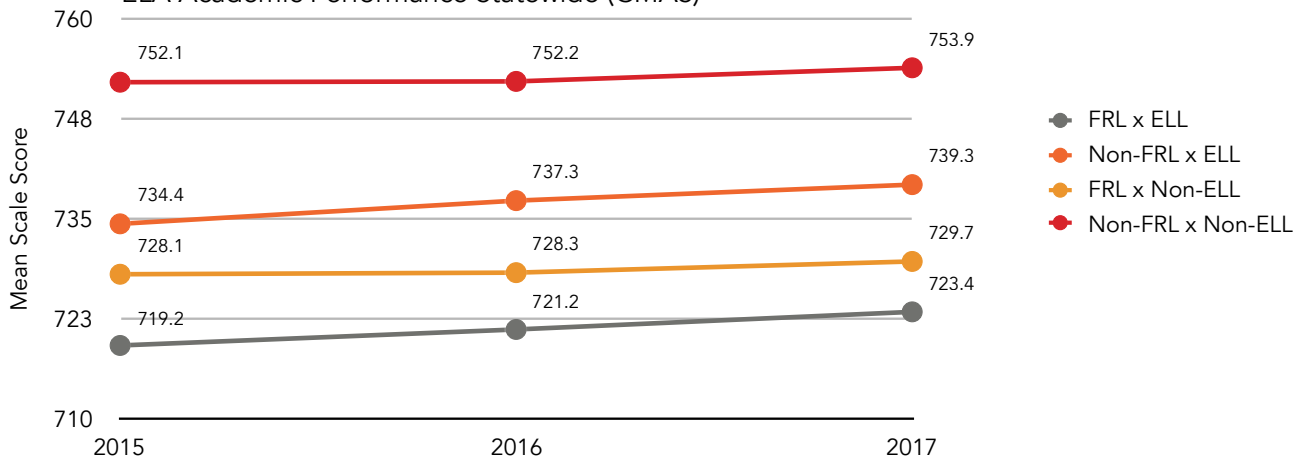
MATH

In math, academic performance trends vary by grade level. The range is larger, indicating a wider variation in student performance, but the mean is lower. The relationship between English language proficiency and academic content mastery is nebulous, and difficult to fully explain with standardized test results as the only measures to analyze. However, English language proficiency is definitely relevant to academic content mastery, at the very least, insofar as these tests are administered in English, so a student's ability to convey academic content will be limited by their language proficiency. Further, because academic performance data isn't linked to language proficiency data, we aren't necessarily looking at the same group of students each year.

CASE STUDY: FREE OR REDUCED PRICE LUNCH ELIGIBILITY

It is interesting to compare performance between emerging multilingual students and their peers who are native English speakers from comparable economic backgrounds. When we do this analysis at the state-level, we see that emerging multilingual students never perform as highly as their native English peers, when disaggregated by their eligibility for free or reduced price lunch (FRL). However, it notable that non-FRL emerging multilingual students perform significantly higher than emerging multilingual students who qualify for FRL. A vast majority (80%) of emerging multilingual students are on FRL. Also of note, there is a larger gap in performance between non-FRL emerging multilingual students and their non-FRL native English speaking peers than the gap between FRL qualified emerging multilingual students and FRL qualified native English speakers. School-level analysis to see which schools are doing the best job at closing these gaps would be a helpful place to search for best practices that could be shared across the state.

Figure 18. FRL Eligibility and Emerging Multilingual Students: ELA Academic Performance Statewide (CMAS)



At the District Level:

We look at mean scale scores to compare academic performance of students across districts. This allows us to see how the average student in the district is performing. As a reminder, a mean scale score that is above 750 corresponds to meeting standards. The first significant thing that one notes is that of the top ten districts for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math only one district has a mean scale score where at least half of the students met the state standard for math. This considers all students, without disaggregating by school level. Manitou Springs has a mean scale score of 752. Manitou Springs also has a small emerging multilingual population, with only 16 emerging multilingual students that are being reported on. This means that a vast majority of emerging multilingual students statewide are not meeting academic standards. The average mean scale score for emerging multilingual students statewide is 725 for ELA and 720 math. The range is 43 and 52, respectively. However we know that top district mean scale scores are still not meeting standards, with a few exceptions. This shows that Colorado emerging multilingual students' academic performance is abysmally low.

Academic growth for emerging multilingual students varies significantly across the state, yet there is a similar trend of higher growth within a few small districts, such as Lake County and Meeker, for ELA and Math. Statewide growth percentiles are also extremely variable, with ranges in the forties, and highest growth was 66 for ELA (Lake County) and 81 for Math (Meeker). Statewide growth percentiles are close to 50, which is unsurprising as state MGPs tend to be around 50.

When we disaggregate performance by school level, there is slightly more variation with some districts having higher mean scale scores. However, overall at the district level it seems that most emerging multilingual students statewide are failing to meet standards.

Figure 19. Top-Ranking Districts for Emerging Multilingual Students in English Language Arts Achievement (2017)

TOP-RANKING DISTRICTS FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN ELA ACHIEVEMENT (2017)		
SCHOOL LEVEL	DISTRICT	MEAN SCALE SCORE
ELEMENTARY	**ACADEMY 20**	749
MIDDLE	**EAST GRAND**	760
HIGH	**POUDRE R-1**	743

Figure 20. Top-Ranking Districts for Emerging Multilingual Students in English Language Arts Growth (2017)

TOP-RANKING DISTRICTS FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN ELA GROWTH (2017)		
SCHOOL LEVEL	DISTRICT	MGP
ELEMENTARY	**DELTA COUNTY**	68
MIDDLE	**LAKE COUNTY R-1**	78
HIGH	**ENGLEWOOD 1**	70

Figure 21. Top-Ranking Districts for Emerging Multilingual Students in Math Achievement (2017)

TOP-RANKING DISTRICTS FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN MATH ACHIEVEMENT (2017)		
SCHOOL LEVEL	DISTRICT	MEAN SCALE SCORE
ELEMENTARY	**ACADEMY 20**	745
MIDDLE	**ASPEN 1**	740
HIGH	**ACADEMY 20**	740

Figure 22. Top-Ranking Districts for Emerging Multilingual Students in Math Growth (2017)

TOP-RANKING DISTRICTS FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN MATH GROWTH (2017)		
SCHOOL LEVEL	DISTRICT	MGP
ELEMENTARY	**EAST GRAND 2**	64
MIDDLE	**VALLEY RE-1**	73
HIGH	**LITTLETON 6**	60

Figure 23. Top-Ranking School Districts in Academic Content Achievement, All Emerging Multilingual Students in District

DISTRICT NAME	STUDENT COUNT	MEAN SCALE SCORE (ELA) 2017
CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN 12	152	747.2
ACADEMY 20	430	746.0
EAST GRAND 2	79	745.3
GRANADA RE-1	25	745.2
MANZANOLA 3J	17	743.4
LEWIS-PALMER 38	131	742.9
MANITOU SPRINGS 14	16	740.9
CHERRY CREEK 5	4,081	735.6
STEAMBOAT SPRINGS RE-2	133	735.2
HARRISON 2	1,652	734.5
LITTLETON 6	535	733.8

DISTRICT NAME	STUDENT COUNT	MEAN SCALE SCORE (MATH) 2017
MANITOU SPRINGS 13	16	752.6
CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN 12	156	742.4
ACADEMY 20	466	741.6
LEWIS-PALMER 38	143	738.5
MANZANOLA 3J	17	734.2
CHERRY CREEK 5	4,619	732.5
MC CLAVE RE-2	22	731.4
STEAMBOAT SPRINGS RE-2	133	730.9
GRANADA RE-1	25	730.5
LITTLETON 6	569	730.3
ASPEN 1	108	730.1

Note: Cut score for "met expectations" is 750.

At the School Level:

While the large-scale district and state pictures are grim, there are in fact schools that are serving their emerging multilingual students populations extremely well.

Figure 24. Top-Ranking Schools for Emerging Multilingual Students in English Language Arts Growth (2017)

TOP-RANKING SCHOOLS FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN ELA GROWTH (2017)		
SCHOOL LEVEL	SCHOOL	MGP
ELEMENTARY	GREEN ACRES ELEMENTARY (FORT MORGAN RE-3)	88.5
MIDDLE	DENVER GREEN SCHOOL (DENVER COUNTY)	86.5
HIGH	KIPP NORTHEAST DENVER LEADERSHIP ACAD. (DENVER COUNTY)	93.5

Figure 25. Top-Ranking Schools for Emerging Multilingual Students in English Language Arts Achievement (2017)

TOP-RANKING SCHOOLS FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN ELA ACHIEVEMENT (2017)		
SCHOOL LEVEL	SCHOOL	MEAN SCALE SCORE
ELEMENTARY	HULSTROM OPTIONS K-8 SCHOOL (ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS)	790
MIDDLE	AURORA QUEST K-8 (ADAMS ARAPAHOE 28J)	784
HIGH	VICTORY PREPARATORY ACADEMY HIGH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL	764

When considering academic content mastery, there were some schools that had mean scale scores above 750, which is the cut-point for meeting grade level expectations, meaning at least half of all emerging multilingual students in the school mastered academic content standards. It's important to note that these schools with higher academic achievement are all schools that are either choice or magnet programs, meaning families sought out the schools or applied to attend (see online appendix for additional tables).

Math growth and achievement is noisier after elementary school since there is greater academic differentiation in middle school and high school. Interestingly, the top schools for math achievement are located in Adams 12, yet Adams 12 doesn't appear as a top ranking district for math achievement—illustrating yet again the significant variability that exists across Colorado for emerging multilingual students.

Figure 26. Top-Ranking Schools for Emerging Multilingual Students in Math Growth (2017)

TOP-RANKING SCHOOLS FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN MATH GROWTH (2017)		
SCHOOL LEVEL	SCHOOL	MGP
ELEMENTARY	**UNIVERSITY PREP - STEELE ST. (DENVER COUNTY)**	91
MIDDLE	**ATLAS PREPARATORY MIDDLE SCHOOL (HARRISON 2)**	83
HIGH	**DSST: GREEN VALLEY RANCH HIGH SCHOOL (DENVER COUNTY)**	85

Figure 27. Top-Ranking Schools for Emerging Multilingual Students in Math Achievement (2017)

TOP-RANKING SCHOOLS FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN MATH ACHIEVEMENT (2017)		
SCHOOL LEVEL	SCHOOL	MEAN SCALE SCORE
ELEMENTARY	**HULSTROM OPTIONS K-8 SCHOOL (ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS)**	791
MIDDLE	**HULSTROM OPTIONS K-8 SCHOOL (ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS)**	775
HIGH	**STARGATE CHARTER SCHOOLS (ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS)**	782

Some schools that saw very high growth in at least one academic subject for emerging multilingual students in both 2016 and 2017 include Turnberry Elementary, Hulstrom Options K-8, and Skyview Elementary in Adams 12; and Rocky Mountain Prep-Creekside, University Prep- Steele Street, and Garden Place Elementary in Denver. This shows that some schools are showing consistently high results for emerging multilingual students, and would be strong places to look at long-term results for students.

Limitations

Due to limitations in the publicly available data, we don't know:

1. How emerging multilingual students' academic performance progresses over time. The cohort of students who are designated as emerging multilingual is dynamic; students identified as emerging multilingual students in elementary are not necessarily classified as such in secondary schools if they have been exited from programming. For this reason it would be imperative to look at student-level data and the progress of cohorts over time.

2. How progress in English language proficiency is related to gains in academic content

MANY LANGUAGES, ONE FUTURE

By now, a few things are evident. Some districts, based on English language proficiency and academic content proficiency, are serving students significantly better than most other districts in Colorado. The question that remains is why? Significantly more data is needed on program types, considering the demographics of the population, and context of the district to be able to fully determine which districts and which programs are most successfully serving students. It is unlikely that one program is categorically superior, but perhaps some districts are choosing programming based on their unique population. Beyond program type, what sort of human capital and resources are being put into ELL programs across districts? While beyond the scope of this report, these questions, and more, are imperative to understand what is the source driving these differences in academic and English language performance.

It is also immediately apparent that most emerging multilingual students in Colorado are not meeting grade-level academic standards, as best can be surmised from mean scale scores. While some districts have a high percentage of students gaining English language proficiency, meeting grade-level academic standards is a critical expectation for Colorado and the federal mandates under ESSA. Realizing this, we know that far too many students are not receiving the education required and promised by Colorado. This report only scratches the surface for what is required. Significantly more information and analysis is needed to assess what is driving the academic and language performance of these students. Beyond performance in one moment in time, it is critical to know how these students perform in the long-term, after exiting ELL programming.

ACCESS, the English language proficiency assessment, is a small part of the portfolio that informs the decision to exit a student from ELL programming. We don't know redesignation rates by language proficiency level or category for students across districts. We know that around 68% of students are meeting standards. We don't know how many of those students are being redesignated, meaning that they gained English language proficiency and no longer receive targeted language supports. Nor do we know how these students continue to perform after they've exited the ELL program. Of students who are not meeting standards within the given timeline, we don't know how long it takes those students to meet standards. Substantially more data and analysis is needed to see how this growing population is doing.

To that end, we offer the following recommendations.

Recommendations

FOR THE STATE

1. Research what works.

Support longitudinal research that looks at progress over time and long-term success of students. This requires looking at the student-level data and linking assessment results over time. Additionally, this information should be linked to targeted language programming, broader school design, and investment to understand what is being deployed in classrooms and schools that is most impacting students. To do this effectively, Colorado must invest in data infrastructure and capacity, and prioritize and partner to conduct research. This means understanding how different cohorts of students do over time, how the student compositions and language backgrounds relate to outcomes, how long-term emerging multilingual students are served relative to their newcomer peers, and which programs and strategies schools and districts are using to target these students, among other considerations.

2. Focus on transparency as a learning tool and create opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

The research is all for naught if educators, families, and communities cannot access learnings about what works and what doesn't for different groups of students. Colorado must prioritize getting this information out, to make it accessible, understandable, and actionable for all stakeholders. For educators in particular, the state should hone network learning opportunities focused on serving emerging multilingual students.

3. Ensure investments follow students.

As districts receive additional dollars to support emerging multilingual students, school-based budgets should reflect the population of students in the building. When Colorado released it's school-based financial transparency website, it became clear that within the same district, there are instances where schools with significantly more students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch, and with more emerging multilingual students are receiving fewer school-based dollars than schools serving their wealthier, and native-English speaking peers. This implementation does not reflect the intent of the federal or state funds that are specifically targeted to support these students. The state should better track how districts are using funds to support emerging multilingual students to understand what those funds purchase and the impact on schools and students, a task made easier by its current investment to report spending at the school level.

FOR DISTRICTS

1. Provide teachers and staff the tools to leverage data to promote instructional practice.

The State Board adopted new educator licensing rules that all educators with elementary, science, social students and English language arts endorsements complete training around Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education. To make this successful teachers must also be equipped with the tools and resources they need to leverage their student data to ensure emerging multilingual students are making progress toward English language proficiency and academic content mastery. This means ensuring teachers can see and use ACCESS results, and connect them to other measures of academic progress to tailor instructional practice and support for students.

2. Empower and engage families of emerging multilingual students by providing access.

Families should be partners in their students' learning process, yet too often language has been a barrier for families to engage with their children's schools. Reports of student progress including results of any assessment must be made available to families in their home language.

3. Support strong language development through secondary.

Progress on ELA and academic content mastery slows markedly for emerging multilingual students once they reach secondary grades. Districts must better understand if this is particularly challenging for long-term emerging multilingual students and/or newcomers—and how to target supports for each of those student communities.

4. Focus on how different emerging multilingual students are served locally.

Districts should ask hard questions about how they serve their student populations. Some schools within districts have homogenous populations of emerging multilingual students in terms of home language or socioeconomic status; some schools have significantly more diverse emerging multilingual students. What works in schools where the primary home language of most emerging multilingual students is Spanish? What about when there are 40 different home languages? How are emerging multilingual students who are identified for exceptional services, like gifted programming or special education services, doing? Are emerging multilingual students over- or under-represented in different education programs? Districts should advocate for state-level research to help answer these questions.

We urge Colorado to investigate student performance within schools and districts to understand what is working, so that all students are supported to master the academic content they are constitutionally guaranteed.

ENDNOTES

1 U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Our Nation's English Learners. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-characteristics/index.html

2 Ibid.

3 Zacarian, D., Dr. (2012). Serving English Learners: Laws, Policies, and Regulations. Washington, DC: WETA.

4 "Effectiveness of Four Instructional Programs Designed to Serve English Learners: Variation by Ethnicity and Initial English Proficiency," Valentino & Reardon, Stanford University Graduate School of Education, 2015.

5 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/24677.

6 Colorado Department of Education Office of Grants Fiscal Management. (2018, April 20). ESSA Revised Final Allocations Fiscal Year 2017-2018

7 Colorado Department of Education. (2018, September 27). ELPA Excellence Award. Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/elpaexcellenceaward

8 Colorado Department of Education. (2018, September 27). English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA). Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/elpa

9 Colorado Department of Education. (n.d.). English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) Overview. http://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/elpa-overview

10 U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition.(2017). English Learner Tool Kit for State and Local Education Agencies (SEAs and LEAs) (2nd Rev. Ed). Washington DC. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html>

11 Denver Public Schools. (2018, February 27). ELA DEPARTMENT & CONSENT DECREE OVERVIEW.

12 USDC Colorado. (2012, September 28). Consent Decree (2012) of the U.S. District Court DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROGRAM. Case 1:95-cv-02313-RPM Document 56-1

13 Robles, Y. (2014, October 25). Three decades after order, Denver schools still struggle to teach English. Denver Post. Retrieved from https://www.denverpost.com/2014/10/25/three-decades-after-order-denver-schools-still-struggle-to-teach-english/

14 Robles, Y. (2018, March 26). Westminster district signs agreement to better serve students learning English. Chalkbeat. Retrieved from https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/co/2018/03/26/westminster-district-signs-agreement-to-better-serve-students-learning-english/

15 WIDA Consortium. (2007). English Language Proficiency Standards: PreKindergarten through Grade 5 (pp. I-Iii). Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.

REFERENCES

Colorado Department of Education. (2018, September 27). ELPA Excellence Award. Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/elpaexcellenceaward

Colorado Department of Education. (n.d.). English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/elpa-faqs

Goldenberg, C. (2013). Unlocking the Research on English Learners: What We Know - and Don't Yet Know - About Effective Instruction. American Educator, (Summer).

Horwitz, A. R., Uro, G., Price-Baugh, R., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., Lewis, S., & Casserly, M. (2009). Succeeding with English Language Learners: Lessons Learned from the Great City Schools (Rep.). The Council of the Great City Schools.

Kieffer, M. J., & Thompson, K. D. (2018). Hidden Progress of Multilingual Students on NAEP. Educational Researcher, 47(6), 391-398. doi:10.3102/0013189x18777740

Slama, R., Haynes, E., Sacks, L., Lee, D., & August, D. (2015). Massachusetts English Language Learners' Profiles and Progress: A Report for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Rep.). Washington, DC: Center for English Language Learners at American Institutes for Research.

Thompson, K. D. (2015). English Learners' Time to Reclassification. Educational Policy, 31(3), 330-363. doi:10.1177/0895904815598394

APPENDIX

TOP HOME LANGUAGES FOR EMERGING MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS		
HOME LANGUAGE	COUNT	PERCENT
SPANISH	**103,646**	83.4
VIETNAMESE	**2,037**	1.6
ARABIC	**1,979**	1.6
RUSSIAN	**1,244**	1
CHINESE, MANDARIN	**1,195**	1
SOMALI	**1,057**	0.9
AMHARIC	**953**	0.8
NEPALI	**862**	0.7
KOREAN	**656**	0.5
FRENCH	**642**	0.5

ABOUT A+ COLORADO

The mission of A+ Colorado is to sharpen public education by building public will and advocating for the changes necessary to dramatically increase student achievement in schools and districts in Colorado. We are an independent, nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization working to bring the power of data and research to challenge ourselves, educators and policymakers to rethink public education.

A+ Colorado
1390 Lawrence St., Suite 200
Denver, CO 80204

admin@apluscolorado.org
303.736.2549
www.apluscolorado.org

A+ Colorado
SHARPENING PUBLIC EDUCATION

AN A+COLORADO REPORT | OCTOBER 2018