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# Nevada English Language Learner's Summary

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## Nevada's English Language Learner Population: A Review of Enrollment, Outcomes, and Opportunities<sup>1</sup>

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Nevada is outpacing the rest of the nation in population growth, immigration, and the increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity of its children and families. As a result, Nevada has increasing and high numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs) - students who speak a language other than English at home – and show low educational attainment compared to their native English-speaking peers. The complete report paints a picture of Nevada's English Language Learner population and provides suggestions for improving their educational opportunities and outcomes. We provide here a list of selected findings from the report followed by state level policy recommendations.

The complete report is available at <http://www.unlv.edu/lincyinstitute/education>

### Selected State and District Findings

- From 1998 to 2008, the number of ELLs in Nevada increased over 200 percent (Mokhtar, 2012).
- Nevada is home to the highest density of children (31 percent) who do not speak English as their first language (Migration Policy Institute, 2010).
- In 2010, one-third of Nevada's children ages five to seventeen years spoke a language other than English at home – a 43 percent increase from the year 2000 (Mokhtar, 2012).
- In February 2013, CCSD identified 94,771 ELL students, with 53,073 actively enrolled in services (CCSD ELL Fast Facts, 2013).
- Eighty percent of CCSD's ELL students are from the U.S. (CCSD ELL Fast Facts, 2013).
- Nevada does not have English Language Development (ELD) standards in place, requiring ELL students meet English Language Arts (ELA) standards despite limited proficiency in English (CCSD, ELL Programs, n.d.).
- In 2011, less than half (42 percent) of third-grade ELLs in CCSD met the standard in reading; only 10 percent of eighth-grade ELLs met the standard in reading (Mokhtar, 2012)
- Despite having the highest density of ELLs in the country (Migration Policy Institute, 2010), Nevada remains one of only eight states that do not fund ELL education (AIR, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> For a copy of the full report, including references, please visit <http://www.unlv.edu/lincyinstitute/education>

- The only monies Nevada schools receive to support ELL students are Title III federal funds, which are significantly less than what most states provide districts for ELL students (AIR, 2012).
- In CCSD, ELLs receive only \$119 in additional district level support per pupil compared to \$4,837 in Broward County Public Schools, FL, \$4,677 in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, FL, and \$2,588 in Houston Independent School District, TX.
- Although analyses of public school funding in Nevada have examined adequacy (2006) and equity (2012), the state has not conducted a costing out study focused specifically on how to meet the educational resource needs of its ELL population.

## State-Level Policy Recommendations

- Develop a vision for ELL education in Nevada that is grounded in theory about second language acquisition and evidence-based practices in districts, schools, and classrooms.
- Use Gándara and Rumberger’s framework for defining an adequate ELL education.
- Develop English Language Development (ELD) standards that can be used by districts to support their ELD curriculum development, instruction, and professional development.
- Provide high quality early learning opportunities for Nevada’s ELL students.
- Require small class sizes in schools serving large ELL student populations.
- Require highly qualified teachers<sup>2</sup> in classrooms and schools serving large ELL student populations.
- Partner with higher education institutions to develop pre-service programs that produce bilingual, bicultural teachers
- Provide in-service professional development for all current teaches to teach ELL students at higher ELD level
- Provide a menu of evidence-based ELL program options for districts to implement
- Encourage districts to develop:
  - Professional collaborative time school-wide to tackle problems of practice as they relate to ELL students
  - Well defined programs for ELLs
  - Detailed and understandable information to parents and families about ELL program options, including dual language schools
  - Research that includes cohort analysis to understand the educational trajectories of ELL students at different grade spans
- Require districts to report 4-year cohort graduation rates and annual dropout rates for ELL students.
- Ensure ELL students are not further harmed educationally as a result of the elimination of social promotion policies.
- Commission a costing out study that focuses specifically on the resource needs of Nevada’s ELLs.
- Develop a weighted student funding formula that allocates additional funding to ELL students based on their English language development level and clearly defined educational goals and needs.
- Identify and allocate adequate state funds to the education of Nevada’s ELL students and other linguistic minorities

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<sup>2</sup> NCLB coined the term “Highly qualified teacher.” Each state has the freedom to develop a definition of “highly qualified,” as long as it has these minimal requirements: bachelor’s degree; full state certification (no emergency certification) and licensure as defined by the state; and demonstrated competency, as defined by the state, in each core academic subject he or she teaches.