# DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF SERVICES TO LEP STUDENTS AND LEP STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

# VOLUME III

# REPORT ON CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

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# NOTE

The Descriptive Study of Services to LEP Students and LEP Students with Disabilities was conducted by Development Associates, Inc., Arlington, VA, for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for LEP Students (OELA) from September 2001 to September 2003.

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This report is one of several developed as part of the Descriptive Study. The reports produced are:

- Research Report (Volume I)
- Policy Report (synthesis of findings))
- Methodology (Volume II)
- Case Study Findings (Volume III)
- Special Topics Reports:
  - Special Topic Report #1: Native Languages of LEP Students
  - Special Topic Report #2: Issues in Studying Learning Outcomes for LEP Students
  - Special Topic Report #3: Analysis of Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Data Related to LEP Students
  - Special Topic Report #4: Findings on Special Education LEP Students

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## A. Purpose and Contents of This Report

This report is one of a series of products produced as part of the Descriptive Study of Services to LEP Students and LEP Students with Disabilities (hereafter referred to as the "Descriptive Study'). The Descriptive Study was funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide descriptions of limited English proficient (LEP) students in U.S. public schools, the instruction LEP students receive, the alignment of instruction of LEP students with State content and performance standards, and the numbers and characteristics of instructional staff providing services to LEP students. The Study also included a major substudy concerning LEP students with disabilities. Development Associates, Inc. subcontracted with The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (GWU/CEEE) to carry out the training of researchers and to manage the implementation and reporting on case study interviews in twelve school districts providing services to LEP and SpEd-LEP students.

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the case study interview component of the Descriptive Study. The study included two other major components: (1) mail surveys of coordinators of LEP services and special education services at the school district and school levels; and (2) on-site data collection involving background questionnaires for teachers, instructional aides, and district staff working with LEP students and record review forms for individual LEP and special education LEP (SpEd-LEP) students. The case study interview visits were conducted to obtain descriptions of local district and school experience in addressing recent reform efforts for LEP and SpEd-LEP students, and to obtain the perspectives of district and school staff on key issues related to services for LEP and SpEd-LEP students.

The case study data collection involved interviews with a range of district-level and school-level staff and focused on key issues including:

- Instructional services provided to LEP and SpEd-LEP students,
- Alignment of instruction with State standards;
- Assessment and inclusion of LEP and SpEd-LEP students in Statewide testing; and,
- Coordination of services between the LEP and special education programs.

## B. Case Study Methodology

Case study interviews were conducted in 12 school districts and 34 schools within those districts. Two researchers visited each district: One was an expert in LEP student services and the other had expertise in special education issues. The researchers were trained during a two-day session to assure consistency during the data collection and in the writing of the reports.

Data collection instruments. Seven interview guides were used, four for interviews at the school district level and three for interviews at the school level:

- District LEP Services Coordinator Interview Guide;
- District Special Education Coordinator Interview Guide;
- District Curriculum/Assessment Coordinator Interview Guide;
- District Testing Coordinator Interview Guide;
- School Principal Interview Guide;
- School LEP Services Coordinator/Lead Teacher Interview Guide;
- School Special Education Coordinator/Lead Teacher Interview Guide.

The interviews lasted from 30 to 90 minutes, depending on the nature of the questions and the amount of detail provided by the interviewee. The data collection instruments and data collection procedures were field tested in two districts and six schools within those districts. The field tests included debriefing interviews in which respondents provided feedback on specific items and on the overall validity of the interview in reflecting the characteristics of their districts/schools. Interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality, read a confidentiality statement on the front of the interview protocols, and signed the protocol to acknowledge their agreement to participate. In two cases, interviews were conducted by telephone when the interviewees were not available during the site visit.

Case study sites. The 12 case study sites were purposely selected from among those in the mail survey and on-site data collection samples in order to represent a range in terms of number of LEP students, region of the country, and geographic type (urban, suburban, rural). Three schools per district were visited (one elementary, one middle, and one high school), unless the district did not serve LEP students at one of those levels (e.g., was an elementary school district). The case study districts and schools have been given pseudonyms in this report in order to maintain their anonymity.

## C. Organization of This Report

In addition to this introduction, the report contains five chapters. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the case study results. Chapter 3 presents findings from the interviews with district staff of the 12 school districts. Chapters 4 to 6 present findings based on the interviews conducted in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, respectively. A total of 14 school case studies are included. These were selected because they represented a range of approaches within the school level. Not all schools are included, in order to decrease the amount of repetition across sites.

For readers wishing to relate school case studies to the relevant district cases, the names of the schools have the district pseudonym embedded (e.g., Date Palm Elementary School is in the Palm School District).

# 2. CASE STUDY INTERVIEW FINDINGS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD

## A. Instructional Services

### 1. Instructional services for LEP students

The districts visited represented a range of instructional services for LEP students. The services offered in the districts included examples of all of the eight instructional service categories identified in the Descriptive Study (See Appendix A). For example, services within districts ranged from Type 8 services (extensive LEP services, significant native language use), as in two-way programs using both English and LEP students' native language for instruction of classes comprised of both LEP and monolingual English students, to Type 1 services (no LEP services, mainstream instruction only) or Type 2 services (no LEP services, instructional support). At least two of the districts provided newcomer centers or newcomer homerooms for newly entering LEP students; at least one district offered high-school English credit for advanced ESL classes; and, another district offered a Spanish class for Spanish speakers in its secondary school program. Instructional staffs that work with LEP students include mainstream teachers, specialist teachers with self-contained classes, team teachers, pull-out specialist teachers, and instructional assistants/aides. Thus, the districts visited suggest the broad range of instructional services which are being structured to meet LEP students' needs.

### 2. Instructional services for SpEd-LEP students

The descriptions of instructional services for SpEd-LEP students similarly reflected a range of approaches. In several districts, there is a continuum of options for these students, ranging from use of an in-class special education instructional assistant within a general, mainstream class, to separate services where needed. In at least one district, students with the most severe disabilities are served through a neighboring district. In several districts, the staff mentioned an emphasis on including the SpEd-LEP students within the least restrictive environment, by including the students within the mainstream classes with same-age peers to the extent possible. To do so, the districts provide services such as consultative teachers, in-class instructional assistants, tutoring and/or small-group instruction. Several districts provide LEP services for SpEd-LEP students by including these students in the LEP services offered in the schools, and providing special education assistance in addition to the LEP services. In at least one district, efforts were made to incorporate LEP expertise within the special education services. This was done by including a bilingual aide within every special

education classroom, and by emphasizing ESL certification for many of the special education teachers. With the exception of this one district, however, SpEd-LEP students appear to receive a combination of separate LEP and special education services, as opposed to receiving services that are specifically structured to meet their combined needs. As noted by many of the district and school coordinators, there is a lack of instructional staff with training in both LEP and special education areas.

## B. Monitoring/Transitional Services for LEP Students

Coordinators in several districts described the monitoring or transition services provided for students exited from LEP services. The case study interview findings suggested that:

- Districts vary in the length of time students are monitored after exit to mainstream services. Generally, monitoring of student performance occurs for one or two years after exit from services.
- Monitoring most often consists of periodic examination of test scores, or review of report cards, for the group of exited students. In some cases, the ESL teacher may confer with the mainstream teacher about a student's progress.
- Specific transition services for former LEP students, apart from monitoring, do not appear to be very common.

Only one district specifically mentioned extended-day tutoring and summer school as support options for former LEP students after exit from LEP services. Another district mentioned that Title I services were available for those who were eligible. An informal support service was described by a coordinator in a district in which former LEP students frequently visit with their ESL teachers, utilizing them in essence as guidance counselors. In other cases, mainstream teachers are informed that ESL services can be provided again if needed. However, in at least one district, the coordinator commented that the threshold in skills for exiting from LEP status and services was high, and thus LEP students did not experience difficulties after exit from services.

Overall, the interview findings suggest that transition services may be an area for further review and research, in order to determine effective models for transitioning LEP students to all mainstream instruction. Several coordinators commented on the need for all teachers in a school to have training in working with LEP students; such comments are relevant to the issue of transitioning LEP students effectively as well.

## C. Alignment of Instruction With State Standards.

The school districts visited varied in the extent to which instruction for LEP students was aligned with State standards. Administrators in the Palm School District, for example, explained that the district's competency-based curriculum, which had been in use for 10 years, served as the basis for the development of standards for the entire State. A staff member in the Maple School District explained that five years earlier all of the district's curriculum guides had been updated and aligned with the State core curriculum content

standards. By contrast, staff from the Birch School District indicated that they had been using science and social studies curricula that were aligned with State standards for only one year and they had not yet implemented an English language arts curriculum that was aligned with standards. Staff from Pine district noted that although the district had used State standards to guide the development of certain instructional activities for LEP students, the district did not yet have an ESL textbook selected that was aligned with the standards.

### 1. Professional development pertaining to alignment

The mechanisms used to familiarize teachers with State standards and to promote the alignment of instruction with standards included professional development sessions, teacher team meetings, materials distribution, and trained lead teachers who worked with other teachers. An assistant principal at Queen Palm Middle School, for example, discussed a reading workshop attended by teachers in which they learned about strategies to promote reading skills (e.g., reading and retelling, comparing and contrasting, identifying synonyms and antonyms) that are aligned with State standards. The principal at Loblolly Pine Elementary School explained that the district offers training that focuses on techniques to integrate the standards into instruction. In the Fir School District, teachers are able to obtain re-certification credit if they attend workshops on aligning instruction with standards. In other approaches, teachers may meet in teams to work on aligning curricula with standards. Administrators at Loblolly Pine Elementary School, for example, designate "alignment days," in which adjacent grade level teachers meet to plan curricula across grades. At Grand Fir Middle School, teachers and administrators have been collaborating to align language arts and social studies instruction with standards and to develop a project-based approach to teaching. Textbook adoption committees in the Pine School District have worked together to select textbooks that are aligned to standards. The principal from Douglas Fir High School commented that teachers were provided with a booklet from the State education agency that described the standards very clearly and concisely.

Some districts have ESL or language arts standards for LEP students. One district established standards for K-12 ESL based on the TESOL standards, provided all teachers of LEP students with a policy manual on serving LEP students, provided materials for tracking and recording progress, and provided assistance from district lead teachers in implementing the standards in the classroom.

Respondents indicated that standards for SpEd-LEP students were implemented through the development of the students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which must be written to be aligned with State standards.

Across several districts, coordinators' comments indicated the following issues with regard to alignment:

- Teachers of LEP students must abstract from general training and materials to apply the standards to their LEP students; and,
- There is a need for additional professional development activities on alignment and standards, and in particular, for training on implementation of standards in the classroom. As one coordinator stated: "Teachers need to be able to *see* the standards".

## 2. Challenges to aligning instruction for LEP students

Across the 12 districts, the most frequently cited challenge in aligning instruction for LEP students with State standards was teachers' lack of familiarity or lack of comfort with the State standards and with techniques for aligning instruction. As noted above, some interviewees specifically identified the need for more professional development activities on the topic of alignment. Teachers' lack of time also was noted as one barrier to aligning LEP student instruction with standards.

Another commonly reported challenge noted by the interviewees was the difficulty of holding students with very limited English skills (and very diverse cultural and educational backgrounds) to rigorous English language arts standards. This was described particularly as an issue when students enter who have very limited education backgrounds in their home country. The LEP services coordinator at Date Palm Elementary explained that most students do not live in homes in which English language and literacy skills are reinforced, which further contributes to the likelihood that students will not meet high English language arts standards. The principal of Cedrus Cedar High School made the observation that rigorous standards present a particularly difficult challenge for high school students who need to meet the standards in a relatively short amount of time in order to graduate.

Across the districts key challenges to alignment noted by several district/school coordinators were:

- The need for greater familiarity with standards and ability to embed these in instruction on the part of instructional staff, i.e., need for additional professional development related to standards for LEP students
- The difficulty of achieving standards when students enter with very limited English language skills and very limited formal education

## 3. Challenges to aligning instruction for SpEd-LEP students

The challenges involved with aligning instruction for special education students with State standards appear to be very similar to the challenges associated with aligning ESL instruction. Interview respondents again mentioned:

- Teachers' lack of familiarity with the content of standards, and
- The high level of the skills required; as well as
- The amount of paperwork involved with aligning IEPs with standards.

As one staff member explained, teachers need to be fully informed of the content of State standards and how to embed standards in students' IEPs. Several special education administrators made the observation that the standards assume that these students have the same background knowledge and English language ability as the general student population. The special education coordinator at White Oak High School stated that "standards-based instruction has a pre-determined pace in presenting information to students and it is difficult to keep special education students on pace." Similarly, staff from Ponderosa Pine High

School commented that for lower-level LEP students, "pacing instruction appropriately so that reading and writing standards are achieved in the time allotted" is extremely difficult. The special education coordinator at English Oak Elementary School agreed that the "set amounts of time do not allow for the repetition and practice that LEP students with disabilities require to master benchmark skills." To address this problem, Noble Fir Elementary School implemented a reading lab and extended day tutorials for SpEd-LEP students.

The principal at Saucer Magnolia Elementary School expressed his belief that the extensive amount of paperwork involved in aligning IEPs with standards is a deterrent to the process of aligning instruction. The special education coordinator at Weeping Birch Elementary School also commented on the amount of paperwork involved with IEPs and on the particular difficulty of aligning instruction for special education students who are migrant. Staff at Saucer Magnolia Elementary School also noted that the State makes changes to standards each year, making it difficult for the aligned instruction to keep pace. Concerns regarding the amount of paperwork and changes in policies also were voiced by staffs in the Chestnut and Oak School Districts.

### 4. Methods used to monitor alignment

According to interview respondents, a commonly used method to assess alignment with State standards is the review of student test scores, on the assumption that State assessments are aligned with standards. Another particularly common practice is to incorporate review for alignment of instruction as part of the teacher observations conducted by principals and/or district staff.

A few school districts have developed systems for recording the standards attained by each student. In two districts (Birch and Spruce), for example, databases are kept in which teachers record students' progress toward meeting standards. Starting in the next school year, the Birch School District will implement a standards-based report card.

## D. Assessment Policies

### 1. Assessment policies for LEP students

The interviews with district and school staff on assessment were conducted prior to the implementation of NCLB. As of the 2001-2002 school year, across the 12 districts most LEP students were exempted from State assessments for a period of one to five years after they moved to the United States. In many cases, an alternate assessment in the native language was administered to those students exempted from the State test. In several school districts (e.g., Pine, Cedar, and Chestnut), an English language proficiency test was used to determine LEP students' eligibility for participating in Statewide testing. In a few of the districts that were visited, including Birch and Magnolia, LEP students were exempt only if their parents signed a waiver requesting that the students not be tested.

### 2. Assessment policies for SpEd-LEP students

In most cases, respondents reported that SpEd-LEP students participated in Statewide testing unless their IEP dictated that they take an alternate assessment. Not surprisingly, students whose IEPs excuse them from testing tend to be those with the most severe disabilities. The special education coordinator in the Magnolia School District, for example, explained that there were only two students in the district with disabilities that were severe enough to exempt them from testing. In a few districts (e.g., Walnut and Birch), parents may sign a waiver excusing their children from testing.

### 3. Assessment accommodations

In the interviews, one of the more frequently mentioned accommodations for LEP students was testing students in a small group in a separate setting. Staff from at least half of the districts, including Chestnut, Spruce, Walnut, Cedar, Pine, and Palm, mentioned this accommodation. Other relatively common accommodations were the provision of extra time, reading test instructions aloud, and providing instructions in the student's native language, either orally or in print. Similarly, a few districts (e.g., Cedar, Chestnut) explained that instructions might be simplified or amplified. Assessment accommodations for SpEd-LEP students were described as incorporated by staff into students' IEPs. School districts generally appeared to provide LEP and SpEd-LEP students with the same sets of accommodations.

## E. Identification of SpEd-LEP Students

A key issue for those involved in providing services to LEP students is the effective identification of students who require special education services due to a disability. However, a common concern expressed by coordinators at the district and school levels was the difficulty of determining whether a student's difficulties are due to second language learning issues or due to a disability. Overall, the comments of the coordinators also indicated:

- There is a need for staff to be knowledgeable about the needs of, and strategies for instruction of, both special education and LEP students;
- It is important to identify students in need of special education services as early as possible, although this is extremely difficult in the case of LEP students;
- It is difficult to distinguish the source of academic difficulty when a student enters who has very limited formal education experience; and,
- Particularly for assessment and evaluation purposes, there is a need for persons with expertise in the native languages of students as well as expertise in special education.

Some of the steps that districts have taken to provide services and develop resources for identifying and serving SpEd-LEP students include:

- Use of cultural liaisons who are district staff persons with expertise in the language and culture of key language groups in the district;

- Use of cultural/language consultants who are on-call to the district to assist in evaluation of LEP students for special education; and,
- Development of tuition-support programs for special education teachers/staff who are interested in taking courses toward ESL certification.

At least four school districts, including Birch, Palm, Fir, and Pine, explained that they use a team approach to identifying LEP students in need of special education services. The evaluation teams often include teachers, parents, administrators, bilingual assessment specialists, and other staff members. These teams, or committees, are responsible for reviewing all relevant students records and information. Prior to placing a student in special education services, the teams must determine if all other teaching strategies and service options have been exhausted. In one middle school, the special education coordinator explained that there is a State-developed book designed for teachers who are seeking alternative instructional strategies for working with students. It lists over 100 strategies, allowing teachers to select those strategies that are most appropriate for the content area and the student. This is particularly useful when the team is trying to determine which types of interventions and strategies might help a student.

Teams attempt to determine whether the student's difficulties are due primarily to second language acquisition issues. Often, this is done through the administration of a battery of tests, some of which are administered in the student's native language. At Englemann Spruce High School, an interpreter also speaks with the student's parents about the use of English and the native language in the home. In addition, staff at Englemann Spruce administers a parent questionnaire, which asks for parents' appraisals of students' abilities. The LEP services coordinator at English Oak Elementary School explained that they ensure parent involvement by inviting parents to attend meetings with interpreters.

Interview respondents from districts that do not use a team approach and that rely on smaller numbers of staff commented on the scarcity of staff members who are trained in both bilingual education and special education and/or on the lack of staff trained to administer assessments in students' native languages. According to the staff members interviewed, the greatest challenge in identifying LEP students in need of special education services lies in making the distinction between academic difficulties that are due to second language acquisition issues and difficulties due to learning disabilities.

## F. Coordination Between LEP and Special Education Services

In general, coordinators reported that there was effective coordination between LEP services and special education staff, although the descriptions of the actual coordination mechanisms did not always reflect extensive coordination. The processes for coordination were reported as:

- More often informal than formal; and,
- Where formal, the coordination examples were most frequently IEP meetings, common planning times, and joint teacher team meetings for general curriculum coordination purposes.

For example, administrators in the Oak school district explained that teacher training sessions, IEP meetings, and scheduled appointments provide opportunities for service coordination. Similarly, each Friday, the staff in the Magnolia School District has a half-day allotted to training and planning. According to the district special education coordinator, these three-hour weekly sessions play a "huge" role in facilitating staff collaboration. Similarly, the LEP services coordinator at Noble Fir Elementary School observed that common planning periods provide "ample opportunities to share information."

The level of coordination varied considerably across districts. In one case, the district was organized such that LEP services and special education were departments under a single special services coordinator. In another district, the LEP services coordinator indicated that there were no formal or informal mechanisms for coordination; rather, this coordinator referred to the trust placed in the special education services staff on the part of other staff. In several of the districts, the coordination between LEP services and special education services was described as involving informal discussions between teachers of the same students; however, at least one coordinator mentioned the difficulty in finding the time for such discussions.

At the school level, principals in some schools, such as Sugar Maple Middle and Date Palm Elementary, provided common planning time that allowed for coordination between teachers of LEP and special education students. An assistant principal at Queen Palm Middle School explained that teams of teachers meet weekly to discuss curriculum planning, so each teacher knows what the others are doing. When common planning time is not provided, teachers typically have to meet before or after school. Staff at some schools, such as English Oak Elementary and Douglas Fir High School, reported that this sort of informal coordination is effective. Similarly, the LEP services coordinator at Weeping Birch Elementary School stated that the close proximity of the LEP services and special education staff's offices allow them to "resolve issues when they arise," and that this helps create an environment in which "teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of the student and how to address the individual needs of the students." Staff from Ponderosa Pine High School agreed that "sharing common school space" facilitated communication between LEP services and special education staff, although finding adequate time to meet was sometimes a challenge.

Overall, coordination between the LEP services and special education staff in both evaluating students and providing services appears to be an area in which further review may be useful in promoting effective services for SpEd-LEP students.

## G. Strengths and Challenges in Providing Services for LEP and SpEd-LEP Students

Coordinators were asked to describe the strengths of the services they offered to LEP and SpEd-LEP students as well as to identify areas needing improvement. Instructional staff was the key element mentioned with regard to both strengths and areas of improvement related to LEP and SpEd-LEP instructional services. Areas of strength mentioned by coordinators included:

- Quality of teachers;
- Staff development opportunities offered to staff;
- Commitment of staff to acceptance of diversity and to the school/district programs; and,
- Family/parent involvement activities.

Areas needing improvement reported by several of the coordinators included:

- Need for additional staffing resources and expertise related to LEP students, including LEP and special education expertise for those serving SpEd-LEP students;
- Need for additional professional development activities to assist teachers in incorporating standards and expectations for high achievement for all students; and,
- Need for increased outreach to parents.

Interview respondents from a range of districts, including Birch, Palm, and Maple, mentioned the issue of the scarcity of teachers who have been trained or certified in ESL and special education instruction. District-level administrators in the Elm, Oak, Walnut, and Chestnut school districts mentioned as a related challenge the identification, placement, and monitoring of LEP students. Difficulties and concerns arise in part due to the overall limitations in number of staff with expertise in working with both LEP and special education issues, and also due to the limited number of staff who are proficient in assessment techniques and/or experienced in working with students from less common student languages.

For example, the principal at Blue Spruce Elementary School explained that sometimes it is hard to obtain information about students' backgrounds. He said, "office staff try to have conversations with parents to determine the kind of schooling students have had, but some LEP students are brought to school by other family members." The special education coordinator at White Oak High School agreed that adequate information about students' educational histories can be difficult to obtain. She explained she has seen students arrive with a sheet of onionskin paper covered with notes from a psychologist because that was the only piece of paper available in the home country.

Another area that could be improved, for both LEP and SpEd-LEP students, is parent involvement. The principal at Saucer Magnolia Elementary School explained that some parents have two jobs, which makes it particularly difficult for them to attend meetings at the school. Similarly, the special education coordinator at Queen Palm Middle School noted that parents' long work hours, along with limited literacy skills, reduce the extent to which they are able to partner in their children's education. Some interview respondents, including those from the Oak and Birch School Districts, remarked that schools need to make more efforts to reach language minority parents. The principal at White Oak High explained that they are trying to do more to encourage parent involvement. Recently, for example, they sponsored a "Family Fest" in which they invited parents to the school and provided descriptions of the State testing process and student progress reports in Spanish.

# 3. FINDINGS FROM THE DISTRICT INTERVIEWS

In this chapter, findings from the interviews in the twelve case study districts are summarized. The districts are organized in order of the size of the LEP student population in the district. The twelve districts are outlined in the table below.

**Table 3.1**
**Case Study Districts**

| District | Geographic Setting | Total Number of Students | Number of LEP Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Palm | Large city | 363,127 | 66,011 |
| 2. Oak | Large metropolitan | 435,470 | 65,984 |
| 3. Pine | Small city | 57,000 | 6,411 |
| 4. Birch | Small city | 16,184 | 8,028 |
| 5. Elm | Small city | 11,500 | 4,035 |
| 6. Cedar | Suburban | 11,702 | 1,522 |
| 7. Fir | Rural | 2,052 | 1,063 |
| 8. Spruce | Suburban | 12,460 | 589 |
| 9. Maple | Suburban | 2,761 | 228 |
| 10. Magnolia | Rural | 373 | 169 |
| 11. Walnut | Rural | 917 | 68 |
| 12. Chestnut | Rural | 7,231 | 27 |

# PALM SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Large city |
| Total students: | 363,127 |
| LEP students: | 66,011 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 4,420 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (87%) |
| Other languages include: | *Haitian Creole* |
| | *Portuguese* |
| | *French* |
| | *Cantonese* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

In this large urban school district, beginning **LEP students** receive English as a second language (ESL) instruction, along with native language arts instruction and content area instruction involving the use of significant amounts of Spanish (Service Type 8). The district LEP services coordinator explained that when newly arriving LEP students enter the school district, their introduction to the English language is not delayed; they receive at least two hours per day of English language instruction. In content classes (e.g., science, social studies, mathematics), the extent to which students' native language is used in instruction depends on the ethnic composition of the students in the school. Typically, newly arriving Spanish-speaking students receive considerable amounts of instruction in Spanish because a relatively large proportion of the teachers are bilingual. Depending on the age of the student, Spanish instruction may occur formally, as in a native language content class, or it

may be provided informally with bilingual staff using the native language as needed in a class taught primarily in English.

The average length of time a student receives ESL services is approximately 2.7 years. The performance of former LEP students is monitored for two years after they exit ESL services. When a former LEP student is performing poorly in coursework or on standardized tests a committee consisting of teachers, counselors, and parents meets to discuss the course of action (e.g., provide tutoring, recommend repeating a grade, etc).

To identify LEP students in need of special education services, a bilingual assessment specialist administers a battery of tests in both English and the child's native language. The school district has approximately 15 bilingual specialists who administer these assessments and interpret the results. If as student's performance is extremely poor when tested in both languages, a committee (including administrators, teachers, and parents) is convened to develop a plan for the child's education.

The greatest challenge regarding the identification of LEP students who need special education services, according to the district LEP coordinator, is the initial difficulty in distinguishing between second language difficulties and learning disabilities. Because staff members are often very cautious about recommending LEP students for special education, students who need special education services may end up going without such services for a relatively long time. The district LEP coordinator commented that more research needs to be done in this area in general (second language versus learning difficulties) and corresponding professional development activities and materials need to be developed for ESL teachers.

The services provided to Special Education LEP (SpEd-LEP) students depend more on individual education plans (IEPs) than on the particular disabilities of the students. SpEd-LEP students are taught either by general content teachers or by special education teachers using ESL methods. Special education teachers are "ESL endorsed" once they have taken five university-level ESL classes. These classes include topics such as methods for teaching ESL, cross-cultural issues in education, and testing and evaluation of LEP students. Support personnel, such as occupational therapists, take ESL courses as well.

The district has established guidelines for exiting LEP students from special education status. Newly exited SpEd-LEP students are monitored for up to two years by special education staff. There is a section in the student's IEP designated specifically for this follow-up. Also SpEd-LEP students who have been exited from LEP status in some cases are reclassified as LEP at a later point in time. Typically,

when this occurs, it is due to the more demanding nature of content courses at higher grade levels.

At the beginning of each school year, the district staff identifies 80 to 90 schools with large numbers of language minority students. They then sponsor parent orientation sessions at these schools to inform parents of what their children's education entails. In addition, there are four parent liaisons at the district level who work with parents to help answer questions, as well as a parent services specialist who provides training to teachers on issues pertaining to working with parents.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The LEP services and special education services staff meet fairly regularly and share information on an ongoing basis. According to the district LEP services coordinator, however, she and the district special education coordinator have extremely busy schedules which prevent them from meeting as frequently as they would like. Furthermore, the large size of the district makes it a challenge to work closely with all schools.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

Following a mandate that students receiving LEP services must be provided with the same instructional program as mainstream students, school administrators took the mainstream language arts standards and developed performance indicators for LEP students. The district LEP services coordinator commented that adapting the mainstream language arts for LEP students was a major challenge at that time because language arts teachers had not received any ESL training and ESL teachers had not received English language arts training. This led to the current State law that all of the teachers, regardless of the subjects they teach, must be endorsed in teaching using ESL strategies.

The district curriculum coordinator commented that all teachers have access to numerous professional development activities and materials pertaining to standards. The district produces curriculum support materials and assists teachers directly in the classroom with coaching. In the opinion of the curriculum coordinator, the best way to monitor the alignment of instruction with standards is to examine student performance on State assessments. The Data Management Division provides the

curriculum coordinator with a report of test scores, which serves as the basis for teacher workshops.

Monitoring instruction to assess alignment is the responsibility of school staff. In addition, district administrators frequently conduct "spot checks" in which they drop in at schools to observe teachers. The district staff assists principals with the process of assessing the alignment of instruction with the State standards. For example, district administrators trained school administrators in a teacher evaluation methodology, which provides ongoing assessment of teaching and learning for the purpose of professional development. The high school principal who was interviewed commented that when he conducts his teacher observations, it helps him gauge the alignment of instruction with the State standards.

In the opinion of the district special education coordinator, the alignment of IEP goals for LEP special education students and State standards is high because the objectives delineated in IEPs are linked to State standards.

One of the greatest challenges in aligning standards with instruction in this school district, according to the district LEP services coordinator, is the fact that immigrant children arrive with such diverse educational backgrounds. Some students arrive having had little schooling, for example, while others are on grade level in their native languages. For students with limited literacy in their native languages, particularly those at the high school level, the expectation that they will achieve standards that parallel those of native English-speakers is not always realistic. Furthermore, the continuous stream of immigrating families also makes assessment and placement a challenge.

One of the greatest challenges in aligning instruction for LEP students with disabilities to State standards is ensuring that teachers develop measurable ESL goals for the individual education plan (IEP). Another challenge is the amount of paperwork that is required of teachers.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

LEP students may be exempt from testing if they have been in the United States for less than two years. However, if a student is exempt from the State assessment, an alternate test in the native language must be administered. According to the district LEP coordinator, the school district generally does not recommend exempting LEP students, regardless of English proficiency.

**The district assesses SpEd-LEP students** according to IEPs. The district recommends the Spanish Brigance as the alternate assessment if LEP/special education students are not able to take the State test. The district developed a similar test in Haitian. Special education students who are not LEP may take the Brigance in English as the alternate.

According to district staff, several types of **accommodations** may be made for LEP students on the State assessment. LEP students are permitted to use dictionaries, for example, and they are given extra time to complete the test. In addition, a bilingual test proctor is used so that test directions can be read to students in their native languages. Test items, however, cannot be translated. Groups of LEP students also may be tested in separate rooms from those in which mainstream students are tested.

The accommodations that apply to LEP students also apply to special education students. According to the district special education coordinator, it is a challenge to identify appropriate accommodations and to train teachers to implement them. She noted that accommodations should be selected from both a special education and ESL perspective, but teachers don't necessarily do this.

The district assessment coordinator explained that through the **district assessment database**, the staff is able to run reports on "just about anything you can name." They can report on a student's LEP status, time in ESL classes, and which ESL classes have been taken. In addition, the State keeps track of which students used accommodations during the test.

The State currently requires the district to account for every student and indicate testing information for each student including, for example, whether the student was exempt, was tested and had a useable score, was tested and did not have a useable score, or was absent. Before the State releases test results, districts are required to double-check this coding for each student and confirm that if a student is exempt there is supporting documentation for that decision.

Through a plan developed by the governor's office, schools are given "grades" based on the performance of students on the State assessment. The scores of students who have been in the country less than two years are not included in this process. The district disaggregates scores and tracks LEP students for two years after they have exited from LEP services.

Currently, SpEd-LEP students may take the State assessment, but their scores do not count toward a school's "grade." The district LEP coordinator commented that accountability for SpEd-LEP students is beneficial because attention is paid to

students' needs, but at the same time, the stress involved with requiring that SpEd-LEP students take a test in English is a drawback.

The district assessment coordinator stated that she uses the scores of both LEP and special education students for creating trend reports, but she does not create interpretive reports that attempt to explain why certain trends occur. She also provides customized reports to schools in which she adds bar graphs and lists of questions for schools to ask about student performance. In addition, she sponsors workshops for teachers on how to use assessment data.

## V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

Staff listed the curricula, instructional materials, and staff development opportunities as **strengths** in this district. Another strength identified by district staff is the school system's international baccalaureate program. The district also has a strong math and sciences magnet program. The district has eight schools in which instruction is in both English and the students' native language; however, the district LEP services coordinator would like to see more.

According to the district special education coordinator, one of the **strengths of the services for LEP/special education students** is the use of the language proficiency dominancy assessment developed by district staff. Other strengths of the district include the availability of school psychologists who speak second languages that are not limited to Spanish. Also, there is a multilingual ESL team at the district level that goes from school to school to serve children from several language groups by providing a range of services from instruction to assessment.

Regarding **areas for improvement,** staff identified the provision of equal access for LEP students as a concern. The district LEP coordinator observed, for example, that although elementary schools have gifted and talented programs, ESL students rarely participate. She shared her opinion that education for ESL students could be improved through increased teacher awareness that students with limited English skills are not any less capable of high achievement than their English-speaking peers.

The district LEP coordinator also identified a need for more special education teachers who are bilingual. She noted that in some cases, the instruction for special education students could be improved with more frequent use of the students' native languages.

The district special education coordinator agreed that special education students need more instruction in their native languages. She commented that if teachers are not able to speak a student's native language, the student should have access to native language instruction through some other means.

# OAK SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Large metropolitan |
| Total students: | 435,470 |
| LEP students: | 65,984 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 6,183 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (90%) |
| Other languages include: | *Polish* |
| | *Cantonese* |
| | *Urdu* |
| | *Arabic* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The type of services provided for **LEP students** in this large urban district is determined by the number of students in the same grade from the same language group within an individual school. The following are the types of services received by LEP students:

- Native language instruction in which native language use decreases from 75% to 25% over three years (Service Type 8); followed by use of the native language only as support (Type 7 ).
- ESL instruction through pull-out or in-class instruction, and use of "sheltered English" for some or all of instruction (Type 6).

Typically, LEP students receive services for 3 to 5 years. In addition to LEP services support, students receive Title I and vocational education services. Once LEP students are exited from LEP status, they are treated as "transition students" for one

year. Schools are required to provide these students with additional support programs such as extended-day and summer programs. The district monitors the test scores of former LEP students for two years. The district staff reported that approximately 80 percent of LEP students, including new LEP students who enter at the secondary level, are able to earn sufficient credits to graduate.

To identify LEP students in need of special education services, special educators in the district are trained to administer a variety of standardized tests to determine English language proficiency of special education students. However, the key issue faced in identification of SpEd-LEP students is the critical shortage of credentialed personnel, and in particular, of bilingual special educators and bilingual school psychologists, who can participate in the assessment process. Staff describe early identification as especially problematic since young students are placed in classrooms in which the teachers may not have the expertise to distinguish a learning problem from a delay in acquiring English language skills. They indicate that this is particularly the case when much of instruction is conducted in the student's native language, a language the general education teacher may not speak or understand. The district is addressing this issue by developing programs to support the training of bilingual special educators and school psychologists (e.g., through a college tuition loan program for graduated students and for district staff).

SpEd-LEP students generally are included in the same types of LEP services as other LEP students. The specific service is determined in part by the outcomes of standardized language assessments of English and Spanish skills. SpEd-LEP students who are at the two lowest levels of English proficiency receive instruction using their native language. SpEd-LEP students in the high incidence disability categories in grades K through 3 receive services with other LEP students in which the native language is used for content instruction (Type 8, Type 7). Those SpEd-LEP students who are assessed as more proficient in English do not receive any instruction in the native language and are included in all-English LEP services. Special education services are provided to these students through interventions such as team teaching, tutoring, or through pull-out to a special resource classroom. LEP students with disabilities continue to be included in general education classes as they transition to English instruction in middle and high school grades. Since monolingual teachers provide most of the instruction in these grades, bilingual teacher assistants are placed in the general education settings to assist students as necessary (Type 4 services). SpEd-LEP students who are exited from LEP services are monitored for their English language needs only through the IEP annual review process. Students can be returned to ESL services if additional support is needed.

Parents of SpEd-LEP students are supported through monthly training workshops, facilitated in English, Spanish, Polish, and Arabic that focus on topics related to

parenting. The district also organizes an annual local community agency fair that highlights various community resources, such as job training programs, and housing options. Generally, parents participate on various advisory boards. To support the participation of parents in the IEP process in particular, the schools provide translators for meetings with school staff, including translators for low-incidence languages. For the most common languages, Spanish and Polish, headsets are available for use during IEP team meetings for simultaneous translation of the proceedings.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The district LEP coordinator reported that the district LEP and special education staff work well together, and noted as on example of collaboration their use of the same language assessment instruments. In general, there are both formal and informal methods of communication among the staff. Teacher-training sessions, IEP team meetings, and scheduled appointments are frequent more formal settings for discussion and coordination. District policy also provides three professional development days in the school calendar allocated for discussion of school-related issues. Informal communication occurs throughout the school day, before and after school, at lunchtime, and during classroom breaks.

The bilingual education and special education teachers use a consultative model to deliver services to LEP special education students who have higher levels of English language proficiency. However, the coordinator noted that this model is not as effective as the district staff would like, and so the district is providing targeted funding for coordination and consultative skill training throughout the next school year.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

In addition to overall State standards, the district has developed goals and standards for ESL instruction for grades pre-K through 12, adapted from the TESL standards. The ESL standards are grouped into three grade clusters, and include performance indicators for each goal at three levels of English proficiency.

District staff reported that all teachers who provide services to LEP students receive both the district's policy manual on serving LEP students and the ESL standards document. In addition, these teachers receive special data folders for recording individual students' English proficiency and achievement test information, standards-

based ESL acquisition, and student participation in special support programs (e.g., extended day, Saturday). The district LEP services coordinator reported that more than 3,000 teachers have received professional development on the ESL standards, and that more than half of the teachers who provide LEP services that involve use of the students' native language have received training on State standards. There are six regional offices within the district that provide technical assistance on ESL standards. These offices work primarily with lead teachers within those programs that use the native language, and these lead teachers in turn provide assistance to other teachers. Monitoring of instruction for alignment is the responsibility of the principals.

For instruction of **SpEd-LEP students**, it is the opinion of the district special education coordinator that there should be strong emphasis placed on aligning IEP goals and special education instruction with State standards, so that the IEPS are standards-driven documents. The coordinator noted that the district's curriculum assists in this process since the curriculum is based on State and district standards and benchmarks. The special education coordinator also mentioned the fact that there are separate ESL standards, and indicated that these can be considered in developing IEP goals and objectives. All special education teachers have manuals that outline State and local standards and benchmarks at each grade level.

When asked about **challenges to alignment**, the LEP services coordinator noted that one challenge is that instruction within any given school could be aligned with the State standards, State assessments, or with district assessments. While in theory all of these are aligned and similar, in practice each reflects different emphases in instruction and assessment.

The special education coordinator identified the lack of adequately trained personnel as a key challenge to the alignment of instruction for SpEd-LEP students, since most special education teachers are monolingual English speakers. Currently, the district offers tuition support for special education teachers interested in taking ESL coursework, and other training options, and the district coordinator hopes for improvement in this area in the future. In addition to providing training for monolingual teachers, a nearby university is providing bilingual Peace Corps volunteers to help students in need of special education in a language other than English.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

The **program of assessment** includes tests for performance on State standards, tests on district standards, and tests of achievement in specific subject areas. In grades 3,

5, and 8, students are assessed on State tests in reading and mathematics; in grades 4 and 7, they are assessed in science, social studies, art, and health. There is also a separate achievement test in grade 11. The district administers the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in grades 3-8 to measure performance on district standards, and also administers achievement tests in specific subject areas in grades 9-12. There is also required English language proficiency testing for students in their first two years of enrollment and special testing for students in elementary grade dual language programs.

LEP students are exempted from State tests and the ITBS for the first three to five years of enrollment. LEP students are exempted from the district subject area tests for two years if they are in a class that uses the native language or sheltered English for instruction. LEP students who are exempted from the regular State tests take separate State tests for LEP students in English reading and language arts in grades 3-11, and in mathematics in grade 11. The district staff did not indicate any use of accommodations for LEP students on State assessments.

SpEd-LEP students may participate in the State assessments and English language proficiency tests. The IEP team makes this determination. The progress of SpEd-LEP students with severe disabilities is documented by alternate assessments, such as portfolio assessments, and training in scoring students' portfolios is provided to teachers in the summer. However, English language proficiency is not documented through portfolio assessments.

SpEd-LEP students may take the State assessments and English language proficiency tests with or without accommodations. Written policy states that allowable accommodations are to be included in the students' IEPs. Reading aloud of test directions, use of large-print test booklets, and small group administration are examples of allowable accommodations. Accommodations may not compromise test security or the purpose of the test (e.g., reading aloud for a reading test).

The district staff were asked to identify any challenges in implementing the assessment program. The staff reported that the challenges in assessing SpEd-LEP students are integrally related to the overall problem of needing experienced, trained staff. Most of the special education/LEP services teachers are relatively young with few years of teaching experience. Staff development is needed not only in State assessment, but also in selection of accommodations and development of standards-based IEPs.

Results of State assessments are provided to the district, and the district maintains a separate database of results on local assessments, such as the Iowa tests. The district database includes data on LEP and former LEP status, native language, disability

category, IEP service model, and accommodations on tests. Since LEP students are tested on a separate test for the first 3-5 years of enrollment, their results are not combined with those of non-LEP students. When LEP students do take the State tests, the results are not presented separately for LEP students, although the schools have data that allow them to carry out such separate analyses.

# V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The district LEP services coordinator indicated that the following were strengths of the services provided to LEP students: (1) the separate ESL standards developed by the district; (2) the student progress monitoring system, including developmental profile forms; (3) the support system for LEP and former LEP students, including extended day and summer programs; (4) the strong professional development component; (5) the strong parent involvement component; and (6) the developing newcomer center program. The coordinator emphasized the system's provision of appropriate instruction to all LEP students, and its use of accommodations in promotion standards for LEP students.

The areas in need of improvement identified by the district staff focused on the need for additional staffing resources and expertise related to LEP student issues. The district LEP services coordinator would like to see individual monitoring of former LEP students. Currently, this monitoring is only done at the group level. However, the lack of staff time is the major barrier to monitoring. Also, the coordinator noted that teachers continue to indicate that they do not have the time available to complete all necessary teaching responsibilities during the school day. When asked about areas in need of improvement, the special education coordinator observed that there is insufficient staff with the language backgrounds and training needed to meet the needs of LEP students with disabilities.

# BIRCH SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Characteristics

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|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Small city |
| Total students: | 16,184 |
| LEP students: | 8,028 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 679 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (99%) |
| Other languages include: | *Tagalog* |
| | *Vietnamese* |
| | *Cantonese* |
| | *Arabic* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

There are three types of services for **LEP students** in this K-8 district: (1) the mainstream curriculum (which may include 30 minutes of "pull out" instruction per day)(Service Types 1-3); (2) structured English immersion, which involves teaching the general curriculum using ESL strategies (Service Type 6); and (3) a Spanish bilingual education curriculum (Service Types 7-8). The district hosts "Parent Nights" during which the three programs of instruction are explained to families. Parents of LEP students almost always opt to place their children in the district's bilingual (Service Types 7-8) programs, which are offered in 90% of the district's elementary schools.

In the district bilingual program, academic instruction is provided in a mix of Spanish and English until students can access grade level curriculum taught entirely in English or through the structured English program. In grades K-4, students in the bilingual program receive instruction that is provided in Spanish over 25% of the time (Service Type 8); typically, the use of Spanish decreases in grade four to

approximately 20% of instruction. Once a student achieves a level of English proficiency that allows him/her to participate equally in classes with native English speakers (typically in grade five or six), that student is "redesignated", i.e., exited from LEP status, and transitioned to mainstream classes. The district LEP services coordinator explained that because a very high academic performance level is required prior to redesignation, former LEP students tend to perform well in mainstream classes. If a former LEP student has difficulty in mainstream classes, tutoring services are available.

The identification of a LEP student in need of special education services often begins when a parent or teacher requests a special education evaluation. A school study team responds to a request for an evaluation within 15 days. The school team convenes (along with the student's parents) and reviews all available records and relevant information pertaining to the student's academic progress. Prior to placing a student in special education services, the study team will inquire as to whether regular education modifications have been made and whether the effectiveness of modifications has been documented. In addition, the team will examine whether general education resources have been fully considered and utilized, and will attempt to determine if outside factors, such as problems at home, are the sources of the child's academic struggles.

The district special education coordinator emphasized the importance of testing a student in his or her native language when considering a LEP student for special education services. She also obtains input from school psychologists prior to making any placement decisions. A child will be placed in a special education program only if a disability is present in the first language. According to the district LEP services coordinator, things get "tricky" when a student has had limited education in the home country. In these situations, it can be difficult to determine whether the problem is due to a disability or the lack of formal education.

For special education students in this district, there is a continuum of options including pull-out and push-in. If a Spanish-speaking student has been in the United States for less than one year, he or she will receive instruction predominantly in the native language. Every special education class contains a bilingual aide, and at least half of the teachers have State certification in teaching students with limited English proficiency. Educators allow LEP special education students to take an additional year of LEP services (relative to other LEP students) prior to transitioning to all English instruction.

There are a small number of SpEd-LEP students who are redesignated to mainstream education based on their work products and test scores. After a SpEd-LEP student exits to the mainstream, the special education coordinator meets with

the LEP services coordinator as well as the student's classroom teachers on a monthly basis to discuss the student's progress.

Every month, a special education community advisory group meets and invites parents to attend. Parents also may serve on school councils and participate in the Parent-Teacher Association.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

There is frequent informal contact between ESL staff and special education staff. This is facilitated by the fact that the cubicles in which they work are located in the same part of the district building. In addition, a bilingual staff member, the "ESL mentor," is a special education teacher who offers support regarding language issues for special education teachers throughout the district.

In the past, there was an ESL/Special Education Committee, but the committee has not met formally in years. However, special education staff and LEP services staff continue to attend each other's meetings occasionally. The LEP services coordinator explained that the disbanding of the formal committee has not reduced the effectiveness with which the two divisions collaborate or the frequency with which they communicate.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

The district LEP coordinator explained that although teachers have handbooks describing the standards, the district has not truly begun to implement professional development activities regarding the alignment of instruction for LEP students with State standards. Until this year (2001-2002), standards for LEP students have not been a focus in the district. In the opinion of the LEP coordinator, the district "is about 70% there" with the alignment of instruction to State standards. Standards-based social studies was implemented a year ago (2001) and standards-based science was implemented in March 2002. The district plans to implement standards-based math and English language arts in the coming year (2002-2003). The district is currently piloting a standards-based report card, which will be used in the next school for each student. In addition, staff has created a database in which the specific math and language arts standards each student has met are recorded.

One of the major challenges involved with the alignment of instruction to State standards is to ensure that alignment is consistent across all classrooms. To facilitate

the implementation of the curriculum, there are plans to equip teachers with the appropriate materials and to provide professional development activities. The State has produced and disseminated a guide to the standards. The district also has invested time and effort in creating a data-driven system (including a new database and report cards) that will monitor the performance of all students toward the State standards.

The district special education coordinator expressed her belief that aligning IEPs with State standards is very important. She believes that special education students should be held to standards that are comparable to those that general education students must meet. The key challenge, according to her, is educating and training teachers to understand and implement the standards. Another challenge is educating language minority parents about the standards.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

The policy in the State is to test all students in grades two through 12 on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-9), including LEP students. English language learners are tested using the SABE (Spanish Assessment of Basic Education). Students are exempt from testing only if their parents sign a waiver indicating that they would not like their children to be tested. Students who are tested, receive a score of zero for the assessment. Scores on standardized assessments are used by the district to help teachers focus on the areas in which students need to improve.

Since last summer, the district has been testing each LEP student with a State-developed assessment for English language learners. The purpose of this assessment is to identify new students who are English learners in kindergarten through grade 12, to determine their level of English proficiency, and to annually assess their progress toward acquiring English proficiency in four areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. State law requires that this assessment be aligned with the State English language development standards adopted by the State board of education. Districts are required to administer the assessment within 30 days after a LEP student enrolls in school and it must be administered annually until the student is proficient in English. Prior to using this State-developed instrument, staff used a district-developed instrument that assessed math, language arts, and English as a second language.

The district special education coordinator reported that all students in special education who are participating in academic programs must participate in the State assessment. Parents ultimately make the decision about testing, however, as they may waive a child's participation in State assessments. The district special education

coordinator explained that she believes it is important for special education students to become accustomed to taking assessments. However, she is in favor of testing in the primary language to obtain a more accurate measure of a student's skills.

According to State law, LEP students are not provided with accommodations unless they have an IEP that allows for accommodations. Accommodations that are permitted include the provision of more time and testing in small groups. In addition, test directions may be read in the native language.

Currently, the district is working with a university to develop a system through which they will be able to import and work with State assessment data more efficiently. The district's assessment database includes all scores on the State assessments as well as some of those on local assessments. The database includes a variable to indicate those students whose parents signed the waiver exempting them from testing. Test scores of LEP and special education students can be included along with scores of mainstream students or they can be disaggregated. The district uses software that allows staff to disaggregate test scores according to a variety of criteria. Both principals and teachers are provided with in-services regarding the interpretation of test scores.

## V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

In the opinion of the district LEP coordinator, the greatest **strength** of their program for English language learners is that the students aren't "left out to sea." That is, they are supported in their first language prior to being instructed in English. She believes that parent outreach is another strength of the district.

The district special education coordinator stated that the district's greatest strength is their commitment to bilingual education regardless of what the State endorses. According to her, the district also is committed to promoting individuality and acceptance of diversity. Like the LEP coordinator, she observed that there are strong school-parent relations across the district. IEP meetings, for example, always offer translators so that parents can fully participate. Every year, there also is a one-day parent conference in which workshops are conducted in both English and Spanish.

The district LEP coordinator identified several **areas in need of improvement** regarding services for LEP students. She would like to see building accountability for classroom implementation of standards for LEP students that is the equivalent to the mainstream program (pertaining to standards in mathematics and English language arts). In addition, she would like to see all teachers obtain certification in

teaching LEP students. She observed that there are many teachers with large numbers of LEP students in their classes who have not received a sufficient amount of professional development in the use of ESL instructional strategies. Also, she observed that there are not enough staff members in the district with backgrounds in both special education and ESL.

According to the district special education coordinator, staff members at the middle school level are not as aware of diversity issues as are staff within elementary schools. She believes that a potential improvement would be the implementation of ESL computer labs at all schools. In addition, she would like to see more teachers with both special education and bilingual education credentials.

# PINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

| District Characteristics | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Small City |
| Total students: | 57,000 |
| LEP students: | 6,411 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 648 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (92%) |
| Other languages include: | *Tagalog*<br>*Chinese*<br>*Tonga*<br>*Vietnamese* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

When LEP students register to attend a school in this district, their English language skills are assessed at one of the district's newcomer centers. Spanish literacy skills also are assessed using the SABE, *Spanish Assessment of Basic English*. Three newcomer centers provide preliminary intensive LEP instruction. Newly enrolled LEP students attend a newcomer center for varying lengths of time, depending on their grade placement. Elementary students attend for approximately nine weeks, middle school students attend for one semester, and high school students may attend a newcomer center for up to one year. High school LEP students with low-literacy in their home language will complete one year of intensive instruction at the intake center. (Presently, the district is considering the elimination of the elementary newcomer center.)

The high school newcomer program offers intensive English, reading, social studies, science, keyboarding and physical education, as well as a non-academic curriculum that includes an introduction to American school culture and routines (e.g., learning how to open a padlock on a student locker). Since communicating in English is difficult, each new student is assigned a student "buddy" who supports the new

student through the school day. Newcomer centers utilize school district buildings, but the student populations are not mixed.

After attending a newcomer center, LEP students are enrolled in their home school, and receive LEP services. These services are provided in English although some native language instruction is provided if the teacher is a speaker of the student's home language. No school district curriculum is provided in a language other than English. An ESL curriculum is used to guide instruction in the ESL pullout program in elementary schools. Instruction is provided by a certified ESL teacher or an ESL instructional assistant. ESL aides are placed in kindergarten classes with large numbers of LEP students

Middle and high schools offer scheduled ESL classes and some ESL content classes. High school students earn credits toward graduation at the intake center, but the majority of required credits are gained through classes offered at their high school. LEP students may spend up to five years in high school accumulating the required credits and gaining sufficient academic competency to pass the high school proficiency examination. Some high schools offer up to two Spanish for Spanish Speakers courses, which count toward foreign language credit. These classes help students gain home language literacy and accumulate credits toward graduation.

LEP or former LEP students who are not able to complete high school in 5 years may move to an adult education program to gain a diploma or they may take the General Education Development (GED) high school equivalency test.

With the exception of one middle school special education teacher who was in her first year of teaching in this school district, the special education teachers interviewed indicated that the process of identifying LEP students for special education and the assignment to instructional programs are employed consistently across all levels of the school system. The process for identifying a LEP student as having a disability involves a multidisciplinary team that includes general, special, and ESL teachers, parents and a bilingual school psychologist who tests the student in Spanish. A variety of assessment instruments are administered in the student's native language, which the special education staff are trained to administer. The bilingual school psychologist also assesses the student. Classroom teachers evaluate the effectiveness of the pre-referral interventions. If concerns persist over time, the multi disciplinary team meets again to determine if a referral for a special education assessment is needed.

The key challenge in identifying a LEP student with a disability is the difficulty of separating the effects of learning English from a disability, both of which are affected by limited formal school experience. Along with gathering as much background

information as possible, testing in a student's dominant language, and using multiple testing instruments, bilingual psychologists and teachers receive ongoing training in evaluating LEP students.

Services for SpEd-LEP students vary somewhat according to the school level. However, all levels use a pull-out model to provide content-based instruction. Service provision occurs within a self-contained resource room where students spend a portion of their school day as indicated by their IEPs. In this way, Sp-Ed-LEP students are instructed in both special education and general education settings. Some SpEd-LEP students are included in general education classrooms with their same-age peers to receive grade-level instruction when their IEP does not identify a learning deficit. Few classes are team-taught by general and special educators in this school district. The one exception is at the middle school in which a general education teacher teaches two science classes for some students with both disabilities and limited English proficiency. The grade-level science curriculum is delivered while two special education teachers assist specific students or provide special education teaching strategies for the entire group of students when needed.

A recent change in student characteristics has led to modification of instructional service for special education students at the high school level. Within the past few years, many SpEd-LEP students have entered the high schools with literacy skills in English at the 1st or 2nd grade level. This particular group of students has needed more direct reading instruction. As a result, the full inclusion model for delivering special education services has become a pull-out model whereby special education services are provided in a resource classroom.

When IEPs are reviewed annually, the IEP team examines a student's progress in acquiring English language skills and meeting IEP instructional objectives. Bilingual school psychologists attend each of the team meetings. It is at this point that service provision is either continued or discontinued. In order to exit from special education services, students must no longer meet the criteria for receiving special education services as determined by the State Educational Agency. For those students who are able to return to mainstream education full-time, academic performance is monitored for at least one year before services are officially discontinued.

District and school personnel use a variety of means for communicating with parents of LEP students. Translators are provided by the school district for all situations in which the parents are not able to communicate in English. Parents are also used as a primary source of background information throughout the process of identifying a LEP student with a disability for special education.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

This school district does not have a history of program coordination between the district-level personnel for the LEP and special education programs. Overall, there tends to be more service coordination among elementary and high school ESL and special education staff than in the middle school. There also is a tendency for more experienced teachers to coordinate their instructional delivery. Coordination between programs is hindered by the high student-teacher ratios for both departments. There is a ratio of 50 students to each ESL teacher while there are 24 students to each special education teacher.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

In this State, school districts may add to State standards to better represent the local community, but nothing may be deleted from the standards. The community, K-16 council, the local university, and local businesses review the standards and their implementation. State standards were used to write skill activities for NEP/LEP/FEP students. These skill activities are used by teachers to guide ESL instruction. Student performance is monitored using a checklist placed in each student's ESL folder. Each grading period, the teacher marks the skill activities that have been introduced, need improvement, or have been mastered. This checklist aides the teacher in the completion of progress reports.

ESL teachers have content area textbooks that are aligned with standards. ESL teachers are included in training and receive a few copies of each relevant content textbook. No ESL textbook adoption has been completed yet; the curriculum guide is just being prepared. The school district is considering whether to complete the textbook adoption process for ESL textbooks aligned to State standards.

The LEP services coordinator is responsible for monitoring instruction and assessment of LEP students and assuring that the curriculum is aligned with State standards. Since the instructional program for LEP students is large, the LEP services coordinator uses assessment data to monitor student progress in the aligned curriculum.

# IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

There are three components to this State's Statewide testing program. A norm-referenced test has been used as a large group administration at 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th grades in previous school years. However, the district is in the process of securing a new test vendor due to scoring difficulties. A State-developed criterion-referenced test that is aligned with State standards is also used at the 3rd and 5th to measure basic skills in reading and math. Testing at the 8th grade level will be available in the next school. The 8th grade basic skills test was pilot tested during the 2001-2002 school year. The third component of this Statewide testing program is a high school proficiency exam that must be passed to receive a regular high school diploma. Students begin taking this high stakes exam in the 10th grade, with the writing subtest offered in the 11th grade. Students have the option of taking the exam four times in order to achieve a passing score. No alternative assessments are available. The State has defined the exit criteria for LEP status based on assessment results.

LEP students take the State and district standardized tests when they have attained a specific score on the Language Assessment Scale (LAS). However, these scores do not indicate that the students no longer receives services in the ESL program; they merely indicate an intermediate English language proficiency. There is no specific limit on the number of years that a LEP student may be exempted from Statewide assessments.

According to district policy, both LEP students and students with disabilities can be exempted from Statewide testing. An IEP team can decide to exempt a student with a disability; however, a regular diploma will not be awarded upon graduation without passing the high school proficiency exam. An adjusted diploma is offered to those students with disabilities who receive an exemption from the high school proficiency exam. LEP students may also be exempted from Statewide testing according to their level of English proficiency as measured by the LAS-O, which serves as alternative testing for these students. Students whose LAS-O score is assigned either a proficiency level I or II may be exempted from State testing. However, these students will not receive a high school diploma unless they have an identified disability.

There are written policies addressing the use of accommodations when testing LEP students and students with disabilities in the State's large-scale assessment program. Students with disabilities, including SpEd-LEP students, can take the regular State test either with or without accommodations or they may take the alternate assessment, which is intended for a very small percentage of students with severe

disabilities. If a student has both limited English proficiency and a disability, the policies for students with disabilities typically take precedence.

According to the district test coordinator, the accommodations most frequently used by LEP students are: extended test time, small group administration, specialized word definitions, and having directions read aloud. If a LEP student has a disability, an IEP team can elect the use of a calculator in math tests.
ESL teachers tend to practice test-taking with students prior to the administration of Statewide assessments.

Student test performance is reported in the aggregate, and then disaggregated by specific variables as mandated by federal law. Test data are disaggregated by disability and LEP status separately, but not for SpEd-LEP students.

At the district level, both NRT and CRT test scores are used for curriculum planning. The Center for Teaching and Learning interprets test data for teachers to inform curriculum decisions and long-term instructional plans. Since the CRT component of this State's Statewide assessment program has only been administered for one year, the district has yet to develop a district-level database.

There is a district level database for the NRT test data that includes variables for students receiving ESL services, students who formerly received ESL services, and status after a LEP student is transitioned into general education classes. Data are entered over time for individual students allowing for visual tracking of each LEP students' educational experience. Information on disability category for SpEd-LEP students is also stored in this database. Information pertaining to accommodations or test exemptions is kept separately in special education or cumulative paper files at school sites.

## V. PERSEPCTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The LEP services coordinator feels that the strength of the LEP programs lies in the quality of the teachers. Most have master degrees earned at one of the regional university's through the completion of 12 hours of specialized course work.

The director of special education services in this school district expressed concerns about special education programming for LEP students throughout the interview. When asked to identify program strengths, he said, "I guess you have to hope that the right personnel are invited to the IEP process." In that way, both disability and second language needs will be well identified with appropriate service provision. He

did acknowledge that the bilingual school psychologists are an especially valuable asset to the special education department. Not only are they well-skilled professionals, but they advocate strongly in the community to support families in working with the immigration office, public health departments, and employment agencies.

The curriculum coordinator expressed concern that funding has not kept pace with student growth. For example, general student enrollment has increased by three to four percent each year, whereas the LEP student enrollment has risen from 17 to 20 percent. The LEP coordinator has seen the student/teacher ratios rise from 20/1 to 58/1 over the past 10 years due to budget cuts.

The director of special education indicated that he was not certain that special education staff were receiving enough training to be able to meet the needs of students with limited English proficiency. He hopes for an increase in district-wide training for all teachers, including general education teachers, so that they are able to instruct the district's growing population of diverse learners.

# ELM SCHOOL DISTRICT

| District Characteristics | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Small City |
| Total students: | 11,500 |
| LEP students: | 4,035 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 272 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (56%) |
| Other languages include: | *Hmong* |
| | *Mien* |
| | *Lao* |
| | *Punjabi* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

There are three options for instructional services for LEP students in this district:

- Mainstream program plus pull-out: Students at Level 4 or 5 on an English language proficiency test or above the 21$^{ST}$ percentile on the SAT 9 receive a daily class of English language development (ESL) and attend mainstream English instruction in all content areas (Service Type 3)

- Structured English immersion program: Students who are Level 3 on the English language proficiency test, or score between the fourteenth and twentieth percentile on the SAT 9 treceive English language development (ESL) instruction daily and are in or sheltered English courses for language arts, history/social studies, math and science. All other content areas are provided in mainstream classes (Service Type 6).

- Bilingual program: Students receive services that differ according to the student's English language proficiency level. Those who score on Levels 0 – 1 on the English language proficiency test, or up to the eighth percentile on the SAT 9 Total Reading, receive English language development (ESL) instruction, language arts, history/social studies, math and science in the native language; and, mainstream instruction in all other content areas. Once students reach Level 2 on the English language proficiency test, or between the 9th and 13th percentile on the SAT 9, students receive a daily ESL class; native language instruction in language arts, history/social studies; sheltered math and science classes; and mainstream instruction for all other content areas (Service Type 8).

According to the district's LEP services coordinator, LEP students' level of English language proficiency determines their transition to mainstream classes. The English language proficiency level is determined through a number of indicators: scores on the annual State test for English language proficiency (ELD), the SAT 9, and ongoing assessments based on State ESL standards that are administered throughout the district.

The LEP services coordinator explained that they expect students to be re-designated after approximately six years in the system. In addition, all LEP students receive ELD. The coordinator Stated that LEP students are so well prepared through their ESL classes, they do not need support once they have been re-designated.

The coordinator also observed that the parents of LEP students are as involved as are the parents of general education students. Translators are available if needed. Interpreters are used at school board meetings and are available at the school when needed, especially for IEP meetings.

The LEP services coordinator indicated that a critical concern is staffing. There aren't enough bilingual special education teachers or psychologists. Consequently, there may be too many students identified as needing special education services or there may students who need services who are not identified. The district currently has one Spanish bilingual special education psychologist, but she is spread among many schools and students. The coordinator fears that students who don't have overt problems may not be identified as being in need of services. For the Asian community, the district uses community outreach persons during the identification process, but there is some concern over the fact that these persons don't have backgrounds in education and teaching.

The district special education coordinator reported that there is a thorough process for identifying students in need of special education services. Some students are

identified when they exit from a sheltered bilingual class to the mainstream program. Bilingual psychologists and interpreters, in addition to staff trained in early identification techniques, help to serve the SpEd-LEP population. There are many options for special education students including pull-out programs, stratified age-groupings, small group instruction, restrictive special day classes, mainstream classes for most of the day, primary language instruction, primary language support, assistance from paraprofessionals, and a transition program.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The educational services department directors meet twice monthly to coordinate the programs for the district; funding issues are always addressed in the meetings.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

This State has English language proficiency standards ("English language development (ELD) standards"), in addition to the State's English language arts standards. The ELD standards are aligned to the English language arts standards. All of the staff members who were interviewed focused on the ELD standards when discussing alignment because they are new standards and a focus of work within the district.

The district LEP services coordinator indicated that the curriculum council oversees the alignment of curriculum and instruction. This council includes the superintendent and the assistant superintendent. The focus is on standards, materials, and assessment practices in the district.

According to the district's curriculum coordinator, the district is doing a good job in "heading in the direction" of instructional alignment. At the present time, the district is providing a lot of staff development because instruction is not as tightly limited to standards as they would like it to be. The respondent characterized the staff development as "trying to get teachers to see standards instruction – what it looks like". She said that, overall, she felt the district had done a wonderful job aligning standards and that they were now focused on the essentials.

The monitoring of teachers in teaching to standards is done at the site through the principal, resource teacher, and the school site council, which is critical in conducting needs assessments and making decisions based on the data. Currently, eleven out of sixteen schools in the district are underperforming and they are

monitored for standards-aligned instruction through lesson plans and classroom checks.

According to this district curriculum coordinator, although alignment for LEP students' instruction is headed in the right direction, it is in need of refinement because teachers are overwhelmed with information, (e.g., ELD, ELA, social studies). She said that some schools staff are aware of how far they have progressed in aligning instruction to standards, and teachers are conscious of benchmarks and are teaching them in classrooms. The district curriculum coordinator also said that ELD instruction needs to have a separate time in order to address the needs of English language learners and to deliver appropriate instruction. The district's LEP services coordinator commented that the district has ELD standards for different grade levels.

The special education coordinator reported that IEP goals are written to match the standards as appropriate to the needs and deficit areas of the student. Special attention is given to the deficit areas of the student because the ability/functional level of the student and the time allotted for achieving the goals determines the maximum requirements that can be incorporated into an IEP.

The LEP services coordinator commented that there is a heavy emphasis on English language arts and ELD and not enough emphasis on cross-cultural pursuits, (e.g., adding a new culture to one's own culture). He said that there needs to be more support from the native language perspective because English language arts and Spanish language arts don't always align. As he explained, "Translation doesn't always cut it because the same word doesn't always conjure up similar examples."

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

The State education code requires testing of all students in grades two through eleven, including all students with disabilities and English language learners. It includes assessing student performance on the State standards.

The district policy for LEP students is one of maximum inclusion. The district LEP coordinator reported that 94 percent of LEP students were included in the most recent State tests. The only LEP students test exemptions are bared on IEP and parental choice.

Testing is required of all special education students, including those who require testing accommodations. Many students with disabilities can take an alternative test

with accommodations. SpEd-LEP students participate in the academic curriculum but take an alternate functional test.

State policy does not allow the use of accommodations for LEP students on State tests unless the LEP student has been enrolled in the district fewer than 12 months at the time of testing. Although there is some local discretion on the use of accommodations, the LEP services coordinator reported that less than one percent of LEP students used accommodations on the State test. Those LEP students who used accommodations did so because of their IEP requirements. The accommodations provided were dictionaries and a written translation of directions into the native language.

Accommodations are considered if they are based on the child's need, are provided in the regular instructional program, don't provide an unfair advantage, don't change the nature of what is being tested, and/or are Stated in an IEP or 504 plan. The decision to exempt a special education student is made by the IEP Team. General accommodations include: using an alternate test, using a lower grade level test, oral reading of a test, using a word processor, and/or reading directions.

The district has access to a variety of data. LEP student data are disaggregated. At the State level, the Academic Performance Index (API) provides longitudinal/historic student achievement data. These data include SAT 9 scores and English language development (ELD) test data. The ELD data identifies five levels of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The district coordinator noted that one of their middle schools had met all the API targets for ELLs, but not for the general population.

Test score data are disaggregated and information is sent to parents. Interpreters are available if needed by the school or parents. The ways in which data are used vary from site to site (i.e., district, grade, school). The district has an ELL database that records student's name, grade level, ELD test scores, SAT 9 test scores, core classes, and ELD class level.

## V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The LEP services coordinator Stated the district has highly qualified teachers, staff development that is exceptional, and a strong community support system with parent workshops that have enabled parents to maintain bilingual education for their children. Most classrooms have high quality materials and most administrators

understand ELD. Currently, the district office leadership is focusing on the new ELD standards.

The LEP services coordinator felt that the district needs to improve its ability to place kids in appropriate settings with appropriate resources. He also felt the district needs to improve their evaluation of program effectiveness by asking the office of evaluation and assessment to evaluate programs at individual schools. The barrier to doing this is a lack of time and personnel.

The diversity of the student population makes recruitment difficult at times; hence, there aren't enough staff members to deliver services for all of the language groups. There are "philosophical differences," according to the staff, about whether to teach in the students' native languages. There also is a need for a bilingual/Spanish special education teacher. Trying to make primary languages available for meeting instructional and other needs has also been a challenge.

# CEDAR SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Suburban |
| Total students: | 11,702 |
| LEP students: | 1,522 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 68 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (77%) |
| Other languages include: | *Vietnamese* |
| | *Marshallese* |
| | *Chinese* |
| | *Japanese* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

There has been a relatively recent increase in the LEP student population in this district. The district offers a continuum of **LEP services**, including special provisions for newcomers. The district LEP services coordinator explained that all students are assigned to regular education classrooms initially. Access to the regular academic content (e.g., science, social studies, mathematics) for LEP students is facilitated by instructional assistants or by use of regular classroom and ESL teachers as team teachers. In order to meet the needs of the large Spanish speaking population, a Spanish literacy program was implemented two years ago for students in kindergarten and first grade. Planning is underway to implement the program in the higher grades.

In the secondary schools, students are assessed and placed in ESL classes at three different proficiency levels. Newcomers are placed for half a day in an intensive English home room structured specifically for newcomers. In this homeroom, instruction is focused on "survival skills", such as how to ask for directions or order a

meal. Also at the secondary level, advanced ESL classes count for regular English credit.

The LEP services coordinator commented that it could be difficult for LEP students to access content knowledge in English. To support access to content information, Title VII funds were obtained to provide sheltered English classes. In addition, pre-algebra and algebra is taught in Spanish at the high schools. A Central Latino center has been established to teach Spanish-speaking students with low literacy skills to read and write in Spanish. One high school has successfully implemented Spanish classes for Spanish speakers and the other high school will implement them in the next school year.

To exit LEP status, students must score at level three on the LAS test and meet grade level benchmarks. When students exit ESL services, the ESL teacher monitors them for a year. There is no money to support this process but it is the responsibility of the ESL teacher to monitor former LEP students and to discuss their progress with the students' current teachers. There also is a quarterly and yearly check on exited LEP students' grades. Often, students are exited from ESL when they are orally proficient, but not yet academically proficient. There is a concern about the fact that fifty percent of Latino students in the district who are not designated as LEP are not academically successful.

According to the district LEP services coordinator, the biggest challenge in the identification of SpEd-LEP students is the need for education for regular class teachers. Teachers need to understand the stages of English language learning and the impact of moving into a new culture. The district also suffers from a critical lack of personnel who can assess students in their first language. Bilingual speech and language teachers and bilingual psychologists also are needed.

The staff noted that parents need to be brought into the education process and it is important to learn the family's plan for their child. Staff development is improving this process slowly and ESL personnel are involved in almost every decision from the evaluation process to the development of IEPs.

The special education coordinator stated that at the elementary level, special education services range from completely separate services to total inclusion in general education. If a student requires services in his/her first language, this is part of the IEP educational plan but the availability of bilingual staff can be problematic. It is considered preferable to mainstream students in a regular education class so that they follow the general education curriculum as closely as possible. However, SpEd-LEP students with minimal English skills receive first language support from bilingual personnel such as a bilingual speech therapists and ESL teachers.

The services provided for the SpEd-LEP students at the middle school are similar to those at the elementary school with a continuum of services. The special education coordinator considers it important that students do not have to choose between special education and English language services. Functional academic communication support is provided in regular classrooms. Unit and course organizers are provided in the first language to help SpEd-LEP students.

The issue of high school diplomas challenges the district's approach to serve SpEd-LEP students at the high school level. A variety of services are in place to provide SpEd-LEP students with access to learning, including small special education classes with bilingual teachers, classroom support from instructional assistants, and mainstreaming students in ESL classes. The special education coordinator stated that a large concern is that SpEd-LEP students are at even higher risk than most students for dropping out of high school. Students with mild disabilities need links between school and life. Therefore, life skill classes and vocational education classes are provided at high schools. A Title VII grant provides opportunities for Latino students to become part of the community through participating in beautification projects or other outreach activities.

The district is conscientious about reaching out to **parents**, according to the special education coordinator. There is a parent training program for parents of children with disabilities. To encourage parents to attend, schools provide interpreters, translated materials and child care. Translating the IEP documents proved extremely expensive, so each IEP meeting is taped. Since an interpreter is provided at IEP meetings, second language parents are able to ask questions at the meeting. They then take their tape home and, if they have further questions, are able to contact the interpreter for clarification.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The district special education coordinator said the coordination of LEP and special education services is promoted at the district level by including staff from both departments in planning groups. For example, both departments participate in the district's Comprehensive Improvement Plan. In addition, as a next step, the district plans to ensure that the needs of LEP and SpEd-LEP students are made a focus for the assessment, curricular, and technology committees.

According to the district LEP services coordinator, coordination between departments at the district level is improving slowly. There is staff development

grant money for the literacy program and this improves training opportunities at the elementary school level. Last year for the first time LEP and special education personnel were represented on teams for district training that focused on the elementary schools.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

The district curriculum and instruction coordinator stated the K-12 curriculum guide is based on State standards and is used for planning, implementing, and assessing instruction in the classroom. The district's focus is on both internal and external curriculum mapping. Internal mapping ensures a logical framework from kindergarten through twelfth grade, while external mapping links State and national standards.

The district is careful to correlate new resources with State standards and is currently making new selections in accordance with the State's six-year adoption cycle. Training is provided for teachers on State curriculum changes and this includes instructional homework guides. Teachers also receive training on the resources that support the new curriculum. The district curriculum and instruction coordinator stated that teachers are monitored and observed to ensure that State standards guide their instruction.

The district special education coordinator stated that she believes the alignment of instruction to State standards is beneficial for students with disabilities. She added that IEPs support and reflect the movement towards benchmarks and that the district is progressing well in this area.

The essential challenges in aligning instruction for SpEd-LEP students with standards are that the curriculum determines content instruction and these students do not have the same background knowledge or English language ability that the curriculum assumes. Time is the critical factor for these students, so it is important to select the most important content for them. The challenge is to stay individualized within a uniform system.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

State achievement tests are administered at grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 in reading and literature, mathematics, and science. There are also State performance assessments in writing and mathematics problem-solving. Kindergarten and first grade students' literacy development is assessed by the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy

Skills (DIBELS), which is administered three times each year. There is a district assessment in grades 2, 4,6, 7, and 9 in reading and mathematics.

The district follows State guidelines on exempting LEP students from Statewide tests. There is no policy in place specifying the number of years a LEP student may be exempt from Statewide testing. However, the intent is to exempt as few students as possible and not to exempt students for more than one year. If a student needs to be exempted for more than one year, this may indicate that he or she needs special education services. LEP students with a LAS and proficiency score of 1 or 2 are exempted from the reading/literature and science subtests.

Statewide assessment tests are available in Spanish, Russian, and English (in math and writing) for grades 3, 5, and 9. These tests are not considered an accommodation. Test questions will appear in one column in Spanish or Russian and in the other column in English. The State performance assessment in writing and mathematics problem solving may be written in the student's home language. When in Spanish, this is considered a standard administration. In Russian, there is a lack of sufficient samples on which to base the scoring, so it is considered a modified administration.

Students in grades 2,4,6 and 8 can be tested off-level. Students can be exempted from testing based on reading and writing proficiency scores, but math testing in Spanish is available. The LAS test is primarily used for reading and writing. The lowest score on a three-point scale would allow students to be exempted, but not necessarily from all tests. As an example, students might be exempted from reading and writing but not math. It is possible to exempt a special education student from taking a portion of a test. Students can receive an extended assessment or a career and life assessment, depending on the disability of the student. The form of testing is selected to produce a score nearest to the student's peers.

The district LEP services coordinator explained that the State mandates accommodations, including extended time, frequent breaks, and translation directions for some tests. Each test comes with its own list of accommodations. All students are eligible for accommodations: LEP students, Special Education students, and students with a 504 plan. The most commonly used accommodations are testing in the native language, testing in a small group, and simplifying, signing, amplifying, or translating the directions.

In the opinion of the LEP services coordinator, it is important to test students to track their progress. However, data is disaggregated so that classroom teachers do not exempt students to improve the appearance of their whole class scores. The State also disaggregates assessment data to evaluate individual students and different

groups of students. A district report is produced that includes all students. LEP students are included unless a modified assessment was taken. Some reports can be produced that disaggregate LEP students and students whose assessment test administration was modified. Test scores both are used separately and are combined with other data. The lowest 20% of students (both LEP and non-LEP) receive additional instruction in the five Title I schools.

The district has a database in which the State assessment results are entered. Teachers have access to the results for their students at each school site. A number of small programs to analyze the data can be used by teachers to analyze individual student results as well as class results in comparison to other classes. ESL teachers need to gain authorization from the building principal to access LEP student results since LEP students are included in general education classes.

The variables in the school district database include codes for: current LEP students, gender, ethnicity, grade level, English proficiency level, home language, enrollment date, talented and gifted program participation, and graduation year. Presently, no variable exists to identify students who are exempted from Statewide tests. A data form is under development for recording accommodations.

## V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The LEP services coordinator said that since the LEP population has increased dramatically, there is a tremendous need for increased staffing and staff development. Ongoing development training for regular education teachers has become a priority and ESL methods must be integrated into all teacher training. A larger budget is needed from the State. The district aim is to have a staffing ratio of one to thirty by classified and certificated teachers. The district needs a stronger newcomer program, consulting teachers, and team teaching.

According to the LEP services coordinator, the strong secondary program is primarily a result of energetic and creative staff. In this district, the importance of literacy in the first language is understood and supported. However, it does depend upon the availability of bilingual staff at each school. In addition, each student is in an inclusive environment and has a regular education teacher regardless of his or her challenges and strengths.

A strength of this district's program for SpEd-LEP students is the truly individualized approach to each student, noted the special education coordinator. The school

personnel are willing to 'role release' to best coordinate planning and effective services for each child.

The LEP services coordinator said that she was pleased with the district's coordination with a nearby university at which Title VII funds are used for teacher training. Students with required first languages who graduate high school are eligible for free community college classes towards teaching certification. The university then funds these students for the completion of their teaching certificates.

The special education coordinator stated that improvement needs to be made in the understanding of different cultural viewpoints and disabilities. The goal of special education professionals is to encourage parents and have honest dialogues, and to encourage questions. More resources in the form of outreach personnel would be most effective in increasing understanding on the part of parents and special education personnel.

The district director of curriculum and instruction commented that it is a challenge to meet the needs of the growing population LEP students. In her opinion, it is vital that those who know most about the needs of LEP students are included in all planning activities for that population. A larger proportion of the school district budget has had to be allocated so that the needs of this emerging population are being met.

The issues involving communication with the parents of LEP Students have also changed. Unless attention is paid to the needs of the LEP population, their parents will never be interested in coming to school.

# FIR SCHOOL DISTRICT

| District Characteristics | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Rural |
| Total students: | 2,052 |
| LEP students: | 1,063 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 180 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (100%) |
| Other languages include: | *NA* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

In this district, a dual language program has recently been implemented in the early grades (Service Type 8). The intent is to eventually support the dual language program through fifth grade. At the middle and high school levels, the district follows a more traditional ESL program (Service Type 3). LEP students who have recently arrived are assigned to a newcomer ESL class for one period per day for one semester to one year. All other LEP students are assigned to English language arts classes according to their English language proficiency. LEP students are mainstreamed for all other subject areas (e.g., science, math, physical education). Most teachers speak Spanish and use it informally during subject area instruction. They use ESL strategies in their instruction. Training is provided for teachers who are not certified in ESL.

Over-representation of LEP students in special education is a central concern in this State and has been in this school district. However, currently, 9% of the LEP student population in this school district receives special education services, compared to 13.5% of the LEP student population Statewide.

Referrals to special education for evaluation are made by teacher intervention teams. Since it can be difficult to distinguish between the effects of English language learning and an actual disability, the district addresses the issue of identifying LEP students for special education services in three ways. First, the teacher intervention teams are strongly encouraged to use multiple pre-referral interventions before determining the need for assessment. If a student is to be assessed, district policy recommends the use of broad-based instruments and testing in the student's dominant language. In addition, assessment instruments and data are reviewed closely to ensure accurate assessment results. Second, diagnosticians are encouraged to become aware of language and culture issues through staff development and other training events. For the past three to five years, the district has been working with a consulting school psychologist who specializes in bilingual special education assessment. Finally, special education teachers have been asked to include as many LEP students with IEPs in the general education classroom as possible. The special education teachers continue to support and monitor the students' academic and behavioral progress. In addition, they work closely with the general education teachers to modify instruction.

The goal of special education for LEP students in this school district is to help the SpEd-LEP students become successful academically and to move them into general education instructional settings as soon as possible. There is a range of special education settings available across the primary, elementary, middle, and high school levels. Educational needs are met in general education classrooms in which special education teachers serve as "inclusion specialists" who support LEP students with disabilities through instruction by team teaching, one-on-one tutoring, or small group instruction. If an IEP team determines that a student's learning needs limit the student's participation in general education instruction, special education teachers teach core content in a resource classroom, in a pull-out session. District personnel recommend that pull-out instructional time be limited to one to two periods of each school day. For those SpEd-LEP students who are unable to participate in any content instruction in the general education classroom, special education instruction is delivered by a special education teacher in a self-contained classroom. Some of these students may attend some classes with their same-age peers including art, physical education, or music.

A student's native language is used for instruction if the IEP team deems it necessary. Special education services are provided in English with ESL services where appropriate. Related services for SpEd-LEP students such as speech/language, physical, and occupational therapy are contracted through a special education cooperative that provides itinerant services to many school districts in the geographic locale. The staff at the cooperative works closely with the district.

At the middle and high school levels, LEP students are placed in English language arts classes according to English proficiency levels and are mainstreamed for all other classes. At the high school level, students exit from LEP status when they pass the State test.

For SpEd-LEP students, **exiting from LEP status** is a bilingual program process. A committee of teachers and other staff review student classroom performance and test data to determine whether the students need to continue LEP services. The team also considers the amount of support required for students to remain in general education classes. Despite the fact that these procedures are in place, the director of special education expressed concern that there is over-representation of special education students in LEP services. Most LEP students in special education are unable to meet the high criteria for exiting, so they remain in LEP status indefinitely.

After a student is **exited from special education services**, his or her academic performance and social behavior are monitored for one school year before he or she is officially dismissed from special education services. During this year, special education and general education teachers, in conjunction with assistant principals, monitor student progress. As needed, supports such as modifying classroom instruction and tests, providing individual tutoring, small group work, and team teaching in the general education classroom, are provided to students.

The staff has observed that many parents of LEP students are not fully proficient in English oral communication skills. Some lack the benefits of a high school education, while others are not literate in their dominant language. Parents of SpEd-LEP students are often uninformed about special education issues. The district invites the special education cooperative to speak to parent groups, especially concerning low-incidence disabilities, such as hearing or vision disabilities. In addition, administrators and teachers participate in a community-wide event to reach every family by walking through neighborhoods to talk to parents at their front doors. Parents are invited to become involved in their children's education and to begin to think of school as a place for them as well as their children.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Coordination of LEP and special education services at the district level is promoted by the State department of education, which provides guidance through regional service centers across the State. This school district receives pertinent information from the regional service center through the local special education cooperative agency. The district LEP services and special education coordinators collaborate, for

example, the coordinators work together to set agendas for training events that focus on LEP/special education issues. In addition, a local LEP services coordinator serves on a regional committee focused on educational issues for LEP students in special education.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

The district LEP services coordinator explained that the district was in a transition year in the revision of the State content standards. Previously, the State standards accentuated basic skills in the core content areas of language arts, math, writing, science, and social studies. In order to promote higher-order thinking skills development, there are newly revised State standards that emphasize the application of essential knowledge and skills in the content domains.

Special contracts are offered to teachers during the summer months to work in teams to align curriculum with State standards. The current emphasis is to develop activities that will combine the instruction of language arts and the instruction of social studies. Teacher training is ongoing to support the implementation of the State's new content standards. Building principals are included in training sessions so that they too are well informed and can effectively evaluate classroom instruction.

To ensure that standards-based instruction is delivered effectively, students are assessed every six weeks to monitor their progress toward achieving benchmarks. Progress also is assessed every two to three weeks between the benchmark tests so that instruction can be adjusted to better support each student's learning experiences.

The primary instrument for monitoring is the campus plan, which includes careful review of students' test scores. The campus plan triggers training needs, expenditures, etc. For example, literacy is a main goal for the district this year at all levels. The staff found that reading was holding LEP students back. They are becoming more current with what is happening with reading.

The office of the director of special education reviews all special education teachers' orders for new materials to ensure that the requests can be used appropriately to deliver standards-based instruction. Aligning instruction with State standards is considered when planning a special educational program for a LEP student. For example, IEP team members include representatives of all instructional areas that are necessary to meet an individual student's educational needs. As each member contributes to the development of instructional objectives, standards are intentionally embedded into the student's instructional program.

**The major challenge in aligning instruction** to State standards for special education is teacher training. Teachers need to be fully informed about the content of State standards and how to properly embed the standards in IEPs. Once an IEP is created, it also is essential that teachers understand how to implement the instructional objectives so that students reach their maximum academic potential. The director of special education indicated that it is difficult to be aware of the alignment issues that operate at the individual classroom level.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

A new criterion-referenced test that is aligned with the newly developed State content standards is being developed which will replace the original Statewide test. Not all content areas are tested each year. Immigrant students who are in the district for less than 12 months may be **exempt** from the State test. For those LEP students who are exempted from the regular assessment, a measure of English reading proficiency is administered from third through twelfth grades. For those LEP students who are not yet proficient in reading English, a State-mandated Spanish-language assessment is administered.

Spanish speakers have the option of taking the Spanish version of the State test in grades 3-6. The coordinator reported the school district has the goal of testing each SpEd-LEP student to the maximum level of participation that is possible. SpEd-LEP students are tested with the regular assessment or alternative assessment, with or without accommodations as needed. However, the IEP team may decide that participation in the regular or alternative assessment even including accommodations is not appropriate. In this case, the SpEd-LEP students are placed in an alternate assessment.

The key **challenge in implementing the Statewide testing** program for SpEd-LEP students is to ensure that teachers are providing quality instruction that will lead to the students' successful test performance and that meets State expectations for overall school performance. The special education director expressed concern for those students who are exempted from the State test and are instructed in a language other than English, since their instruction does not align with the State assessment content that is only presented in English.

There are no special **accommodations** for LEP students. They have access to the same accommodations as all students. For SpEd-LEP students, without exception, the IEP team decides which accommodations are appropriate. The most frequently used accommodations are extended test time and small group test administration. A few students usually need to have the reading portions of the math test read aloud.

District databases contain information on the performance and participation of individual students. There are separate cells for information on LEP and special education status that include ethnicity and disability category. However, exemptions for State tests do not necessarily have to be entered into the district database, nor does exit from second language services. Administrators from this school district are currently advocating for a change in the State database to collect information on LEP status as a measure of student progression through services over time. Accommodations data are also not collected at the district level, but rather on a school-by-school basis by guidance counselors. District data are used to generate school and district improvement plans that guide financial and instructional decisions.

The reading and Spanish language assessments that are used for LEP students who are exempted from the regular State test are reported only at the district level (without a report at the State level).

## V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The district philosophy supports the implementation of the LEP services program by recognizing the strengths that students bring to the school. "We know the value of having two languages," said one district staff member. It was in keeping with that philosophy that the district implemented the dual language program at the elementary level. This attitude was cited as strength of the district. The staff commented that many Latino parents have been conditioned to believe that "English is good" and it can be hard to convince them that their children should learn both English and Spanish in school. Previously, parents were responsible for teaching Spanish at home. Parents are concerned about the effectiveness of a dual language program. Also, they have seen many programs come and go, so they wonder what will happen when the current program/administration leaves.

The district invites parents to participate in school functions as well as encourage parents to support their children's academic progress. The district holds neighborhood meetings in the home of a school family. Administrators and teachers attend the meetings and talk about how to support students. The parent involvement specialist contacts the family who will sponsor it, and the district office provides support in the form, for example sending over food, and putting out flyers. In addition, the district conducts *"caminatas"*— community walks in which school staff knock on doors and talk to families about services at the school.

The teaching staff that provides special education services for LEP students in this school district was described as energetic, dedicated, and highly skilled. Part of this success is due to the high degree of alignment of teaching materials and students' IEP instructional objectives with the State standards. In addition, the district as a whole is taking over-representation of LEP students in special education seriously so that identification of new LEP students in special education is as accurate as possible, and those students who can be successful in general education are exited from special education as soon as they are able.

The director of special education indicated that it is unfair to students with disabilities who have high levels of English proficiency and are successful in school to remain in LEP services. These students may remain in LEP status unnecessarily for many school years, especially if they are exempt from the State test. He identified this concern as an important issue for the district to address.

# SPRUCE SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Suburban |
| Total students: | 12,460 |
| LEP students: | 589 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 36 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (36%) |
| Other languages include: | *Vietnamese* |
| | *Cambodian* |
| | *Russian* |
| | *Somali* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

In this district, there is an overall "special services" coordinator for both the LEP services and special education departments, with separate coordinators for LEP and special education services. The coordinator explained that because the district provides services through a pull-out model, all LEP students are in classes with mainstream students for at least some portion of the day. Also, some LEP students receive "sheltered ESL content" for social studies and English coursework; that is, they may receive content instruction in these subject areas through the use of English and instructional strategies that are adapted to the student's needs as LEP students (Service Types 3, 6). However, students who receive these "sheltered" classes will also participate in other classes, such as physical education and family and consumer sciences, with mainstream students.

When students exit ESL services, they are monitored for one year. Students "check-in" informally with their former ESL teachers, sometimes treating the teachers like guidance counselors. It has happened that a student who is both LEP and has a disability is exited from LEP status, but it is rare. In such a case, according to the special services coordinator, the IEP team, which includes an ESL representative,

determines whether to exit the student. If the student is exited from LEP status, the special education staff monitors the student's needs and there is no special ESL monitoring.

The coordinator stated that for SpEd-LEP students with more obvious physical disabilities, health issues, vision problems, and mental impairments, there aren't many challenges in identifying their special education needs. Identification becomes more problematic for language-based disabilities, emotional disturbances, and speech-language disabilities. Educators struggle with how to rule out the effect of language learning and cultural issues in order to know that a child indeed has a disability. The special education department has part of one staff position reserved for working on a special education assessment and on the referral process for LEP students. The department has published a handbook to provide protocol for the district, but the handbook is not widely used. The coordinator indicated that she would like to see some "middle ground support" for LEP students as an alternative to special education.

To assist with the assessment process, the district has a cultural liaison program with members of six different cultures available for consultation. (This program fits under a separate department in the district, the Diversity Services division.) The cultural liaisons carry out activities such as contacting families, and assist in special education staff in preparing for IEP meetings. However, translation is not typically one of their duties, since there is a separate set of translators that can be called in to meetings with parents. Unfortunately, district liaisons are not available for the Russian population or for some of the African language groups. Staff members have to find social service organizations for the student populations for which there is no cultural liaison.

The special education services a LEP student receives depends on the severity of the disability. Students with more severe disabilities tend to be in a separate setting in which there is consultation from the ESL staff. Students with less severe disabilities are in mainstream settings and receive pull-out services. The only languages used in special education classes are English and possibly sign language. According to the coordinator, the approach to special education services is the same at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The amount of time the student receives services may vary.

The coordinator stated that parent involvement is important in determining the needs of the students and the services that should be provided. Parent involvement for students with IEPs is required. The ESL program attempts to create family-friendly services. For example, when students are moving from an elementary to

middle school setting, there is a parent night at which parents can obtain information about the middle school.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES ANDSPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

In this district there is a "special services" coordinator who oversees both the LEP services and the special education departments. This structure clearly facilitates communication between the two departments. A Leadership Council that includes the lead special education and ESL teachers conduct focused discussions on the needs of both departments.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

The State has developed standards in ten different learning areas that outline what students need to know and be able to do in each subject and provides sample learning activities and performance assessments that can be used to measure students' achievement of the standards.

The district has developed standard performance assessments that teachers use. If LEP students in grades 9 to 12 complete standards-related work that has been significantly modified (e.g., in another language, or the content or rigor reduced), a team of educators must meet to develop an individual graduation plan for the student. Such a plan documents the individual achievement of each of the standards.

To assess achievement of the standards in the classroom, the district has developed some common performance packages that are completed across schools. Teachers also may develop their own packages as long as they receive a positive review from the district committee that is responsible for evaluating performance packages. Grading rubrics are provided to standardize how performance is graded.

The coordinator added that when LEP students first enter a school, the focus tends to be on acculturating them to the American school system, rather than on aligning their instruction with State standards. There is, however, a staff member in each building who is responsible for aligning instruction to standards, including the instruction that is provided to LEP students. Whenever there is training for teachers pertaining to the alignment of instruction to State standards, ESL teachers are included.

The coordinator explained that the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 required special education teachers to align IEP goals and instruction to State standards. In this district, according to the coordinator, there is close alignment.

The district curriculum coordinator outlined an online computerized student achievement tracking system through which teachers record students' progress regarding standards. The teachers use this system to ensure that instruction is aligned with standards. Principals and curriculum coordinators can tap into the results as well. The data become part of the district's continuous improvement process and help principals make decisions about alignment and identify changes that are needed.

The LEP services coordinator noted that the key **challenges** in educating language minority children are meeting the needs of children who are at very different stages in the acquisition of English language skills and preparing high school students to earn diplomas. The coordinator further noted that the standards are rigorous for native English-speaking children, which naturally makes them even more rigorous for LEP students.

The district curriculum coordinator sees staff development activities as an area of need in order to help teachers make the "mental shift" to accountability expectations for all students. In his opinion, the ESL staff at the district level share this view. The district has offered some staff development courses on the topic of standards as well.

In the opinion of the special education coordinator, the challenge for aligning instruction for all students is the "crossroads of the regular education pathway and the transition process." There is an assumption, she says, that mainstream education prepares all students; thus, it is the transition activity for non-disabled students. It is challenging to keep students with disabilities in the mainstream (the least-restrictive environment) and to add on transition activities. The coordinator commented that there simply is not enough time in the day. She noted that the transition issues for students with both LEP and special education needs are even more multifaceted because there are cultural issues that need to be addressed as well.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

There are four different types of assessments in the State assessment system. First, there are Statewide tests for accountability purposes that are given in reading and math at grades 3, 5 and 11. Second, there are tests that measure student attainment of standards defining what students should know, understand, and be able to do in

order to demonstrate advanced skills in ten learning areas. In these tests, students carry out specific assignments ("classroom performance assessments") that are graded by teachers. Students do not pass or fail these tests. The concepts and scoring criteria provide additional support for classroom instruction in that the results are used by teachers to make decisions about curriculum and instructional practices, and to evaluate individual student achievement.

The third type of assessment is a basic skills test that students need to pass in order to receive a high school diploma. The basic skills test in reading and math are taken for the first time in 8th grade. The test in writing is taken for the first time in 10th grade. Students have multiple opportunities to pass these tests before their senior year. The test results are also used for Statewide accountability purposes.

The fourth type of Statewide assessment is an academic English language proficiency assessment for language minority students in grades three through twelve. Scores are used to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional practices in helping students make successful transitions into English language classrooms. This test was given for the first time in 2002. Standard setting has not yet taken place so the available data do not yet indicate what level of proficiency students have achieved. In the future, this test will be given annually to determine which students qualify for ESL services.

In addition, an alternate assessment for students with disabilities is given to any student who does not take the basic skills tests or the State comprehensive assessments based on decisions made by their IEP or section 504 teams. The alternate assessment consists of rating scales completed by teachers to assess the student's developmental academic skills or functional living skills.

The assessment coordinator outlined several different testing guidelines. Participation requirements for LEP students vary according to which test the student is taking. For the Statewide accountability tests at grades 3, 5, and 11, LEP students are exempt from Statewide testing for one year after they have arrived. For the basic skills test, when it is being taken for the purpose of determining whether the student receives a diploma, the scores of students who have been in the U.S. for 3 years or less do not count. The students take the basic skills test if they have been in the United States at least one year, and their scores are used for Statewide accountability purposes. According to the assessment coordinator, newly arrived LEP students can wait as long as three years before choosing to have their basic standards test scores count toward a diploma.

Students with IEPs may participate in the State alternate assessment if their IEP team decides the regular test is not appropriate for them. The special services

coordinator indicated that usually the alternate assessment is for students with more severe disabilities. However, the State guidance directs the IEP teams to review a student's daily instruction to determine whether the instructional content overlaps with the content of the test. If there is an overlap between the content of instruction and the content of the test, then the student should be included in the regular test; if there is no overlap, then the student should take the alternate assessment.

There is no limit on the number of years a LEP student can have test accommodations. Translations of the math tests are allowed by the State and are provided in the top four languages. However, students who take translated tests receive notations on their transcripts that indicate they took translated graduation tests. Students are already allowed to test in a smaller setting but they don't have to be LEP to do this. All students also can have extra time.

The district assessment director pointed out that the IEP describes all of the accommodations for which students are eligible. There is a district-developed database that includes many kinds of data in addition to test data. State test data, district test data, and current enrollment data statistics are all included in the database. Users can track current LEP students versus former LEP students, students in special education, gifted and talented programs, and Title I. The test reports have a "flag" for whether the student received accommodations. The reasons for exemption also are coded.

The district website has publicly available test results that aggregate scores for a school by grade. There are no data specific to LEP students reported. Internally, there are other data available in school profiles that are used for school improvement which principals share with their staff and the school council. These school board reports often have data and these reports are made available on cable television. According to the district assessment coordinator, the district staff is considering use of State and local test data to renew LEP student entry into and exit out of ESL programs.

## V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

According to the LEP services coordinator, family involvement activities are a strength of the district. The special services coordinator listed many strengths of the district's program for LEP students with disabilities. These include a well-established culture of inclusion for students with disabilities and strong special education programming with supports in place. The district, she says, truly emphasizes high standards for all students and there is an inclusive orientation across

all settings for LEP students, students with disabilities, and LEP students with disabilities. The district's parent outreach effort is improving each year. Currently there is an "impressive" interpreter system and most communication that is sent home to parents is translated.

According to the LEP services coordinator, school staff members need an effective system that informs them how many LEP students they will have in a given year and that ensures that the corresponding resources are available to meet the needs of these students.

The special services coordinator commented that the most challenging area that the district faces is the identification of LEP students with disabilities. It is difficult to rule out limited English proficiency in determining whether a student has a true disability. The district has worked hard to establish guidelines for assessing LEP students for special education services, but the staff still struggle with how to address both LEP and disability needs. She believes it would be very helpful for ESL educators to learn to act as consultants for special educators in the way that special educators have learned to be consultants for mainstream educators.

# MAPLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Suburban |
| Total students: | 2,761 |
| LEP students: | 228 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 3 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (59%) |
| Other languages include: | *French Creole* |
| | *Igbo* |
| | *Gujarati* |
| | *Tagalog* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

In this school district, there is a self-contained bilingual program in kindergarten through second grade. Spanish is used in this program at least 25% of the time (Service Type 8). In grades three and four, students are pulled-out for native language arts and integrated science and social studies, which are taught by ESL teachers. (Service Type 7). For art, music, PE, and math LEP students are mainstreamed. Haitian students are pulled out by a Haitian ESL teacher and are taught English language arts and math support in English. (The native language is used 2-24% of the time: Service Type 7.)

In middle school (grades five through seven), newcomers are in a self-contained class with a bilingual Spanish teacher and a Haitian aide for Haitian speakers. Spanish is used 50% of the time, while the aide uses Haitian Creole to explain concepts. In

high school (grades 8 through 12), the program for LEP students is strictly ESL, although the district has just begun a Spanish language arts class for students. During the first year that a student is in the high school, there is a double period of ESL, a sheltered social studies class taught by an ESL teacher who is also certified in social studies, and a sheltered science class taught by science teachers with modified materials. (Type 8). In their second year, LEP high school students are in mainstream classes for social studies and science and receive a double period of ESL. Students are transitioned from a double ESL period to a single period and a general English class in their third year.

The district does not have a structured approach for supporting students as they transition into mainstream classes. The LEP district coordinator said that this is a gap in district services. Often, these students are picked up by the Title I program, but Title I can pick students up only if they are eligible.

The LEP services coordinator reported that the district has very few LEP students identified for special education services. There are three SpEd-LEP students in the district. Those three students receive both SpEd-LEP special education and ESL services. At this point in time, the services provided are very effective, but this might be a problem if identified student needs don't match the current program. The LEP coordinator felt that the biggest issue in identification is distinguishing between a "language difference and disability".

The district special education coordinator reported that there were no separate special education classes at the elementary level. Two resource teachers respond to some of the needs of the special education/504 students who are in the regular education classes. The resource center program serves bilingual/ESL classes, depending on the specific needs. The students may be in a regular classroom, in a pull-out program, or both. Under 504, some students qualify for speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, or other related services. Native language may be used in the resource center.

The middle schools have no self-contained classes. If one were needed, a program would be combined with the general LEP services. The SpEd-LEP education students would have access to resources and would be a part of the inclusion program and would receive the same services from special education or a 504 program. If supplementary aids or services were needed, they would be provided. High schools have resource centers with bilingual/ESL classes. If the student needs assistance, the resource program would be used.

The staff commented that there is not a lot of collaboration between the district staff and parents. Parent meetings are held, and if twenty of four hundred parents attend,

that is considered a good representation. Some parents participate in the development of the IEP. Parents are involved in an inclusion grant, which has a summer parent-training component.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The special education coordinator reported that the coordinators work closely together regarding the LEP and special education students, and that each has had special education training. The LEP services coordinator felt that the system has been working well to coordinate services. She reported that "there is very strong coordination and communication between programs."

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

According to the district curriculum coordinator, all curriculum guides were updated and aligned to the State core curriculum content standards and national standards five years ago. These curriculum guides also contain a cross-curricular and multi-cultural component. Since that time, the district also has integrated technology into the curriculum. The curriculum guide has been aligned to State- and locally-mandated tests. The district is planning a curriculum audit, which will be conducted during the next academic year. The training is the writing of the curriculum itself. There are two stages: during the first stage, the curriculum guide is written from the perspective of the regular education teachers; once it is in place, there is a second stage in which a special education teacher and a bilingual ESL teacher will apply modifications. In addition, all teachers are then informed of the modifications.

The special education and ESL teachers are essentially given the same resources and, in some cases, native language resources. In the opinion of the district curriculum coordinator, the district has been very effective in aligning standards to curricula; however, the district needs to put more effort toward curriculum mapping in order to ensure that curriculum and standards meet student needs. ESL teachers have copies of TESL standards and language arts standards, and training in alignment is ongoing. The LEP services coordinator believes that current training and materials are useful in that they assist teachers in becoming familiar with standards, but she feels more training is needed for classroom application.

From the district perspective, the primary monitoring of instructional alignment is the weekly evaluation of plan books and daily, weekly, and monthly walk-throughs

that administrators make. The district is also monitored by the State every seven years. During State monitoring, the district must present hard data that standards are being addressed. Building administrators reported that plan books are reviewed and classroom observations are made.

In terms of assessing instructional alignment, an English language proficiency test is administered to document students' progress in English. Spanish speakers are tested on a separate Spanish test. For other languages, the district uses an alternate assessment consisting of a performance-based portfolio with student work samples and a teacher checklist based on State content standards and TESL objectives. After the first year, students take both the Terra Nova and the State assessment with accommodations.

The special education coordinator explained that all IEPs are aligned to the general education curriculum and the core content standards. Instructional modifications are provided for LEP and special education students. The regular education program incorporates strategies and intervention techniques that can be used with all students.

The district curriculum coordinator expressed concern about having the financial resources to ensure that standards are not only aligned, but are also implemented in the classroom. She also mentioned that testing LEP students is a challenge because the district cannot provide accommodations or alternate assessments since they do not have access to native speakers in the languages of all of their students.

The LEP services coordinator reported that instruction is well aligned to standards in the elementary and middle school levels, but instruction is not well-aligned in the high school content areas, (e.g., math, science). The special education curriculum is the same as the general education curriculum; hence, the special education curriculum is also tied to the core content standards. The district special education coordinator reported that when an IEP is written, the objectives and activities are addressed through instructional modifications.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

The State assessment is administered in grades 4, 8, and 11 in language arts literacy and math. There is a standardized survey tool used to test high school students before school starts. If a student fails the State test in grade 11, then he/she must take it again in grade 12. This is helpful to the ESL population because it extends the time they have to pass the test. If a student is proficient in English, the standardized

test is used. The LEP services coordinator becomes familiar with school staff and acts in a consultative role; also specific teachers are trained to work with special populations.

The district follows a State policy which allows the exemption of LEP students from State assessments for two years. The district generally exempts students during their first year of attendance. Based on teacher judgment, a student may be included in the testing program during the second year at school. However, since there are only three grade levels at which State assessments are administered, this policy plays out differently in elementary, middle and high school levels. For example, at the elementary school level, the State assessment is administered at grade four. The lead teacher interviewed at this level stated that most LEP students are included, but a teacher can recommend that a student be exempted based on the student's English language proficiency level.

At the middle school level, there are no State tests administered. All students take the district test (Terra Nova). Newcomers (first and second year students) are tested in the native language or are provided accommodations on the Terra Nova At the high school level, first year students in grades 8 – 10 are exempt (there are no State tests administered in grades 9 and10). Generally, students are tested in grade 11, although a second year student may be exempted based on teacher and supervisor recommendations. The students recommended for exemption are usually students with low literacy levels in their first language.

All special education students are tested; however, the IEP is the determining factor for the type of test that the special education students take. Some students take an alternative proficiency assessment. According to district administrators, the following accommodations are provided on the State assessment: (1) more time; (2) bilingual dictionaries; (3) small group testing; and (4) native language instructions. For the lower functioning students, an alternative proficiency assessment is also available including a portfolio assessment. The lowest functioning students have been sent to another school district, and program implementation for these students is based on the IEP.

At the district level, State assessment data for LEP students are not combined with data from other students and scores are reported separately for general education, special education and ESL. The results are analyzed and provided to teachers. Strengths, weaknesses, and targeted skill areas are identified from in-depth analyses of the test, and special reports are generated by the testing coordinator and presented to the teachers at the designated grade levels. Test information is reported to parents in a disaggregated format.

The district has a database that was developed by the testing coordinator. Reports are generated that are presented to the board of education and to schools. A system is being developed to identify a student's teachers, date of entry, free lunch status, and to identify below level scores. Rates of growth are documented to maintain basic skills information for Title I services. Information is coded and submitted on disks to use the same type of procedures as used by the State. Information on migrants is not coded.

## V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The LEP services coordinator indicated that the greatest strength of the district's program is that it addresses student's needs and is not constrained by State mandates. The district has the flexibility to match the instructional program to a student's needs and simultaneously encourage the use of the native language. Furthermore, the coordinator reported that the district is proud that equal services are accorded to all students across the district and commented that the district feels like a "family" in meeting the needs of all students.

The LEP services coordinator sees a need for a program designed for low-literacy students in the middle school and high school programs. She also felt that the district needs a multicultural counselor for students with emotional issues. The coordinator stated that the largest barrier is finding the funding needed for services.

# MAGNOLIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

| District Characteristics | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Rural |
| Total students: | 373 |
| LEP students: | 169 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 0 |
| Primary language group: | Omaha-Ponca (64%) |
| Other languages include: | *Cherokee* |
| | *Navajo* |
| | *Kaw* |
| | *Kiowa* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The district's philosophy is that all instruction should be individualized as much as possible for all students. Whatever an individual student needs, the school tries to meet that need, whether it be reading skills, math skills, limited English proficiency, or a disability. Thus, currently in the district there are no specific services called "LEP services". **LEP students** in the district generally are Native American students who are native English speakers categorized as LEP in part on the basis of low English language arts achievement test scores. Since there is a high percentage of English-speaking students in the building who are current and former LEP students, instructional efforts are aimed at raising the level of academic achievement for all students. Title VII funds help to support the district's efforts.

The district is implementing an initiative to individualize instruction for all students by lowering class sizes and introducing use of cutting-edge technology. For example, class sizes in the elementary school are at about 12 students per teacher, and there are now several computer labs with an array of student learning software in areas such as English pronunciation, reading skills, and math skills. An AmeriCorps

volunteer works in the computer lab and assists teachers. Furthermore, each elementary and middle school classroom has personal computers in the classrooms, and 7th through 12th grade students each have use of a laptop computer. In addition to the small class sizes, the district is known throughout the country as an innovative one in which staff "think outside the box". It is held up as a model for other districts and, despite the district's remote location, there are frequent visitors who tour the building to observe and learn.

New students are typically identified as LEP before they are identified as needing evaluation for special education services. The parents complete a background form and a home language questionnaire. For Native American students, the district next looks at the student's achievement tests in English language arts. If the student 's scores are below the 50th percentile for the total score and/or a sub-area then the student is categorized as LEP.

Testing for special education typically comes afterward identification of a student as LEP. Once a student is identified as having difficulties, the staff initially try interventions in the classroom; if interventions are not successful, then the referral for evaluation is made. There are trained assessment specialists available through a State regional service center. However, there is a waiting list to schedule the specialists to visit the district and administer formal special education assessments to a student. Typically, the process has required two-three months, but it has been longer.

One of the biggest concerns, according to the special education specialist is that there are not enough certified persons qualified to carry out evaluations of students. The district has tried to hire a school psychologist but according to the curriculum coordinator, it is hard to get someone to come to a small rural district.

Special education students are mainstreamed. The mainstream teacher provides instructional modifications with assistance from the special education staff. At the elementary and middle school grades, students with IEPs receive pull-out special education services in the special education resource room. The amount of pull-out time varies depending on the type and severity of the child's disability. For example, a child with a speech disability might receive services twice a week for a half hour to an hour, while a child with more significant disabilities might receive 2 to 3 hours of pull-out services every day. The content of the pull-out services usually corresponds to the content area being taught in the mainstream class, and are shorter in duration than the content class. So a student with an IEP would attend reading class for a while with the entire class, would be pulled out to receive special education services in reading skills, and then would go back into the reading classroom. Students at the high school may be completely mainstreamed and only use the special education teacher as a resource when they need extra help with assignments. The elementary

school principal, who was once a teacher in the school, commented that the classroom teachers find it difficult to send students to special education services when the teachers feel they are already addressing the students' individual needs. However, the staff sends children to special education in the belief that it is good to expose them to other people besides their main classroom teacher.

According to the staff, one of the biggest issues the district faces is that many families do not see the importance of education as a whole. Many **parents** in the Native American population did not graduate from high school and the staff observed that some do not place a high importance on their children graduating. For example, one principal reported a tribal elder's concern that, once educated, students tend to move out and leave the community, and then are not there to help the elders.

The elementary school principal noted that the elementary school offers tutoring, after-school programs and various other optional academic opportunities for students. The principal further comments that there are some parents who always show up with their children, but that these are often the families whose children are already successful in school. The challenge has been to increase the involvement of all parents.

According to the district special education coordinator, who is a teacher as well as the coordinator, there is an open door policy in the district and parents are welcomed into their child's classroom at any time. In order to provide the parents with information about what is happening in the classroom, teachers have web pages for each class that show the students' assignments and what the class is working on. The schools held an information day for parents to show them how to access the website and get the information they need on what their child is doing. In the district special education coordinator's opinion, it is difficult to get parents involved in the pre-referral for special education assessment and yearly IEP meetings. One source of the difficulty is that some parents are without transportation and cannot get to the school. To address this, the staff has at times arranged to pick up parents and bring them to school for IEP meetings. On occasion, the staff involved have even gone to the student's home and held the IEP meetings there in order to ensure that the parents could participate.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The coordination between staff comes as a result of the regular half-day training and planning time on Fridays. In the opinion of the district special education coordinator, this 3-hour block of time each week plays a significant role in helping

staff coordinate with each other. During this half-day, staff have attended in-services on topics such as mainstreaming, technology use, and integration of services.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

The district staff emphasized that instruction for all students is well-aligned with State content standards. The State has had standards for many years, so the effort to align instruction with standards is not new for educators. What is new is that the district now tracks the progress of students on standards with a commercially available criterion-referenced test. The teachers administer the test in reading and math at least once a year, preferably twice. It is given on computer, and the teacher, along with administrators, has instant access to the student results. According to the LEP services specialist, this assessment provides much more detailed data than the State norm-referenced test, and teachers can use the information for making instructional decisions. It gives teachers specific information on the standards-based areas in which the student is weak. The elementary school principal feels that the data reports from the test are fairly easy for teachers to use; next year, the test will include other content areas in addition to reading and math.

Teachers in the district have an opportunity for on going professional development activities. They teach 4-½ days a week and have 3 hours each Friday in which to attend professional development activities in the building, go outside the building for other development opportunities, or meet with colleagues to coordinate instruction. For example, the English teacher meets with the science teacher to plan instruction and coordinate content and activities, such as having student write up the science experiment as part of their English classes. The elementary principal indicated that if teachers want training in any particular area, the school and district administrators bring it to them. For example, the district has provided training on how to use data from the State assessment for school and classroom decision-making. In addition, the district pays a stipend to teachers who present at conferences in the belief that presenting encourages teachers to work harder in the classroom and this in turn benefits the students. Teachers are paid for presenting at State and national conferences, and every year the district sends 3-6 teachers to the National Association of Bilingual Educators conference and also to the National Indian Conference.

According to the staff, IEPs must be written to incorporate State content standards. The teachers have received a lot of training on this topic. School staff determine the extent to which services are necessary to allow the child to make needed progress in the general curriculum.

The staff noted that it has been difficult to use the State accountability tests for monitoring of alignment efforts because the testing requirements have changed, sometimes significantly, from year to year. Several administrators spoke of their frustration with the inconsistency of State testing requirements. The elementary principal felt that the biggest challenge in aligning instruction for LEP students with disabilities is the number of hours involved, and the amount of paperwork required.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

The State has a multi-pronged approach to testing, with different tests given at different grades. Some tests have been in use for several years and others were just offered for the first time this year. In 2001-2002 the State implemented the SAT 9 test for 3rd graders. It is administered annually. In grades 5 and 8, there is a State-developed, curriculum-based test that is aligned with State standards. In 10th grade there are English and History end-of-course tests. In the future there will also be end-of-course tests in biology, algebra and writing, but these are being field-tested now. Next year, according to the district staff, all the tests are supposed to be in effect but that may change with the new federal Title I legislation that requires more testing.

None of the State tests are "high stakes" in the traditional sense of being tied to a student moving up to the next grade level or receiving a diploma. When the 8th grade test was first implemented, the State was considering making it a high stakes test that a student needed to pass in order to graduate. This policy was never adopted. However, it is required that students in this State read at an 8th grade level to obtain a driver's license. While there are some other options for how students can demonstrate that 8th grade level reading proficiency, it is typically done with these test scores. However, special education students may get a waiver for the reading test; and still obtain a driver's license. According to the middle school principal, for a time, students who did not pass the State tests had to retake them each year until they passed. During that time a student could fail the test initially in 5th grade and then retake the 5th grade test each year. Schools were required to provide remediation for the student in the areas not passed. Now remediation is no longer required and the student does not have to retake a test they have failed; rather, they take the test required in their current grade. Native American students are tested with their native-English speaking peers. There is a one-year exemption allowed for new LEP students who are non-native speakers of English, but the district has not had any students eligible for exemption.

The special education specialist indicated that State policy allows students with IEPs who have severe disabilities to be exempted from the regular State test and to participate in an alternate portfolio assessment.

Although the State offers **accommodations** for LEP students, the district does not currently have any students who need these accommodations. There are different testing accommodations allowed for each of the different tests offered. For example, the State developed test given in grades 5 and 8 allows unlimited time but the SAT9 given in grade 3 has definite time limits. The testing coordinator also mentioned that IEP students could have some parts of the test read to them. Students can also test in a small group in a separate place.

According to the local district LEP services specialist, the local district cooperative staff do a comparison of LEP and non-LEP students and of Native American and non-Native American students in all core subject areas, and examine the amount of change from year to year. They use these comparisons to identify strengths and weaknesses and to guide staff development.

The district does not yet have a database of its own. The district testing coordinator is working on creating a simple one in EXCEL until the district can transition into something more sophisticated. At this point in time the district-developed database gives aggregate information by grade and does not disaggregate by LEP or Special Education status.

## V. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The administrative staff of this small district listed several strengths relating to specific efforts the administrators and teachers have undertaken. The LEP services specialist felt that LEP students are not singled out as noticeably different from other students and this is definitely to their advantage. In fact, she said " I am not sure the child knows they are LEP at any given point." The elementary principal felt that the individualized curriculum is a definite strength for LEP students. Within a classroom, students' abilities can span the spectrum and no one is critical of the abilities of anyone else. Several of the staff members cited the district's ability to provide students with exposure to a wide variety of experiences and exposure to different kinds of people. Some of the students live in isolated areas where they have had little exposure to people outside the community or the tribe. The middle school principal described how, when he first started holding a basketball camp in the school gymnasium, the girls on the local team were quite shy around other girls who came from outside the area. They did not know how to mix with people they had not met before. Since that time, the district has worked hard to provide students with opportunities to mix with different types of people. Also, every year the high school

students go to a technology day at the capital and make presentations. The students have been invited back every year due to the district emphasis on the integration of technology into teaching and learning.

Another strength of the district services is the exposure students are given to many different types of careers. Grant money was obtained to pay for state-of-the-art equipment for areas such as computer drafting, woodworking, metalworking, and sewing. Experiences with this equipment add to students' practical skills and to their awareness of the different job opportunities that might be available to them after school. Also, during the summer, the school building is used for camps and a summer program where students keep up with their reading and math skills while also participating in fun activities.

Finally, one of the biggest plusses of the district, in the unanimous opinion of the inter-district and district staff, is the people. There is strong, innovative leadership from administrators who are not afraid to "think outside the box". This innovation has made the district a model for others across the State. The superintendent commented on the dedication of the staff. This year three teachers were nominated by the district for the State technology teacher of the year competition. The three teachers took three of the top four places in the competition, and the winner was the science teacher.

According to the district special education coordinator, one of the strengths of this district is the awareness of the cultural background and values of Native American students. Many of the interlocal cooperative staff, district staff and teachers have some Native American heritage. The administrators maintain regular contact with the tribal elders and know what is happening in those tribes with the largest representation in the district.

One of the biggest concerns of the staff is that their ability to provide services may suffer as a result of the changes in funding mechanisms being implemented under the new No Child Left Behind Act. Funding that has in the past come directly to the district will now pass through the State, and the level of funding is expected to decrease substantially. The staff is concerned since the district has already experienced cuts in the gifted and talented program for LEP students due to a lack of funding. They would like to reinstate this program but do not know where the funding would come from.

An area in which the staff would like to make improvements is parent education and communication. They would like parents to be more involved in school activities. A recent parent information meeting on the student laptop program in grades 7-12 was poorly attended. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) was disbanded because

only a handful of families came and they decided they could volunteer in the school without having the PTO. The elementary principal expressed in interest in trying to reach parents through cable or satellite television. The district is waiting for channels to be digitized so that broadcasting television programs is easier and less labor-intensive.

# WALNUT SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Rural |
| Total students: | 917 |
| LEP students: | 68 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 5 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (92%) |
| Other Languages include: | *German* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

In this school district, **LEP students** receive services supporting regular instruction (Service Type 3). State policy requires that all LEP students learn English as rapidly as possible. The school district follows this policy by placing all LEP students at all levels of English language proficiency in regular education classes in both elementary and middle school. In order to help classroom teachers make academic learning accessible to LEP students, ESL teachers advise general education teachers on the most effective methods of working with these students. They also provide language services through pullout ESL classes and occasionally will work in the classrooms at the request of a teacher.

Staff development throughout the school year includes consideration of the needs of LEP students in all curriculum areas. In both the elementary and middle school, the LEP students are mainstreamed and receive some of their instruction with modifications. At the middle school, the ESL teacher provides grade level teachers with a scope and sequence chart of what to expect from the LEP student, which the teachers report to be extremely helpful. The ESL teacher also is responsible for providing in-service sessions to other teachers and monitoring students' progress through all the steps of learning English.

The elementary ESL teachers in the district advise teachers on the best methods of working with LEP students. They also take students with the most limited English proficiency out of the grade level classrooms to work on English language development and, if time allows, will work in the mainstream classroom.

The district LEP services coordinator explained that guidelines for re-classifying LEP students to the mainstream are very difficult to meet and consequently students are not exited. A new State assessment is being implemented this year that tests students in reading and writing in English, and which will provide new standards for reclassification, utilizing a more normal view of English proficiency. Now LEP students are weaned from pull-out programs and monitored in their mainstream classes for expected progress.

The district special education coordinator did not specify any difficulties in identifying SpEd-LEP students. He stated that nonverbal cognitive assessments as well as bilingual translators are used for identification testing as needed. The coordinator explained that elementary grade level SpEd-LEP students are in one of two possible settings. If they require a setting providing services for less than fifty percent of the day, they are placed in a Resource Specialist Program (RSP). If the student requires more than fifty percent of their day in a special education setting, he or she is placed in a Special Day Class (SDC). In order to maximize resources, a decision was made not to use an inclusion approach in this district; therefore, special education teachers do not go into the regular education classrooms. The special education coordinator also stated that bilingual aides work with SpEd-LEP students. District policy is to encourage parents of SpEd-LEP students to use their first language at home. Title I services are occasionally provided to these students since the Title I teacher is also the ESL teacher. Also, an after-school tutoring service is provided for SpEd-LEP students twice a week after school.

With regard to the middle school students, the special education coordinator stated that there were no SpEd-LEP students at the middle school and he did not believe there had ever been any in this district. He noted that occasionally students have been classified as SpEd-LEP in elementary school, but by middle school, they have no longer required LEP services. However, he said that if there were any such students that he would counsel them to use their first language at home and would focus on building their academic English skills in school.

The special education coordinator noted that the county holds parent involvement classes to help parents understand education issues and LEP parents are included in the IEP process just the same as English speaking parents. Parents are invited to attend Student Study Team meetings and the county office of education has council meetings every month for parents of special education students, including LEP

special education parents. In addition, the county provides an excellent migrant translator from the county migrant program.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The district LEP services coordinator said that there are no problems pertaining to the coordination of LEP and special education services because it is a very small district. Communication is easy and there is a comfortable exchange of ideas and a great deal of information passed along about students. The district special education coordinator made the same observation.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

The principals monitor instruction for alignment, and as part of the teacher evaluation cycle, it is required that lesson objectives and goals mirror State standards. However, links to State standards are not required for informal observations. The district LEP teachers all have classroom experience and are trained in State standards. The schools use benchmark testing three times a year to monitor student standards and progress in reading, writing and math.

The district special education coordinator believes the district does an excellent job aligning instruction for SpEd-LEP students since IEP objectives are linked to State standards. IEP progress reports are prepared every nine weeks. The IEP goals are updated and are always linked to State standards.

The district LEP coordinator stated that one of the challenges in this district regarding the alignment of instruction for LEP students is the small number of LEP students, since it is easy for teachers to overlook their needs. However, this is addressed through staff development. There are three staff development days a year and eight minimum days. The "minimum days" are devoted to curriculum, and the last two or three years, the district has focused on aligning curriculum with State standards. In addition, subject area and grade level meetings are held regularly to define and work on classroom instruction. At those meetings, the additional component of children with special needs, including special education, LEP, SpEd-LEP students, is included. Most recently, a district curriculum committee organized representatives from all grade levels to work on an articulated curriculum. The middle school is having similar meetings with the high school.

The district special education coordinator does not consider LEP student instruction to be in alignment with State standards as far as instructional materials are concerned. She noted that the district knows what they need to do, but it is hard to find materials with the appropriate concepts and vocabulary.

The county has designed its own computer program to help the teachers write goals and objectives for IEPs that are aligned with State standards. The special education coordinator considers the main challenge in aligning instruction for SpEd-LEP students to be the assumption that the students can speak, read and write English.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

The State has introduced new English proficiency tests focusing on speaking, reading and writing. Previously, the State used the LAS test and teacher recommendations to determine the English proficiency levels of LEP students. The district testing coordinator explained that students are tested every year through 8$^{th}$ grade and that all LEP students are included in this testing. The only time students can opt out is when their parents request exemptions. This year, 100 percent of the district's students took the test. According to the special education coordinator, there is no difference for SpEd-LEP students, since the State policy includes all students. The greatest challenge in testing, according to the special education coordinator, is the fact that cognitive standardized instruments are needed for minority populations.

The testing coordinator stated that accommodations for all special education students, including LEP students, are written into their IEPs. The most frequent accommodations included extended time, testing in small groups, and out of level testing. Bilingual dictionaries are not considered to be an acceptable accommodation. There are no limits on the number of years that SpEd-LEP students are able to receive accommodations.

The district testing coordinator explained that test data for LEP students is both combined with data from other students, and is presented separately. LEP student data are included in the total data test report and disaggregated on reports. The data are not used to make policy or program changes for LEP students. Statewide test scores for SpEd-LEP students are also reported separately and aggregated with other students' scores. Schools receive printouts of scores. The data, which are used for instructional purposes, are reviewed by teachers and administrators.

The district testing coordinator further noted that the database for Statewide testing is sent out in a CD form. Coded variables in the data include: LEP, former LEP status, native language, and IEP status or disability category. She was unaware of

any LEP proficiency codes. The CD provides a copy of a test score printout for each student's cumulative folder. The printout does not provide variables other than fluent English, re-designated fluent English, and limited English. There are no other language codes. This year, for the first time, a list of students who have been exempted from Statewide tests will be available.

## IV. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The district LEP services coordinator considers the **strengths** of the district's program for LEP students to be a strong curriculum, high expectations for LEP student success, and a dedicated staff.

The district special education coordinator stated that the special education program is excellent regardless of LEP student status, and that the special education instruction is effective for LEP students. For example, SpEd-LEP students work hard on vocabulary development and have the curriculum presented at a slower pace with more reinforcement.

One **area for improvement**, according to the district LEP services coordinator, is the identification and reclassification process. She is optimistic about the new State English language proficiency test because it will not be as subjective. She felt strongly that a State standard was extremely necessary. The next step, in her opinion, should be to provide school districts with a sequential program for LEP students in reading, writing and math. Better supplementary materials for content are also needed. The district has the funds to purchase more materials but cannot always find what it needs. The district special education coordinator noted that it is often a challenge to determine whether a LEP student has a learning disability or a second language problem.

# CHESTNUT SCHOOL DISTRICT

| District Characteristics | |
|---|---|
| Geographic setting: | Rural |
| Total students: | 7,231 |
| LEP students: | 27 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 0 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish (50%) |
| Other languages include: | *Urdu* |
| | *Cantonese* |
| | *Russian* |
| | *Latvian* |

## I. SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The small LEP student population in this district is spread across several schools, so there are generally only a few LEP students in any school. The small numbers of LEP students has led the district to join with two other local districts with small LEP student populations to form a consortium that shares one full-time LEP services coordinator. There are two general models for LEP services provided in the county:

- Special ESL teachers/tutors confer with the content teachers to determine a student's needs, and then work individually with the student up to a maximum of one hour per day, five days a week. In most cases, the assistance is provided entirely in English (Service Type 3).
- In a few cases, the tutor may know Spanish and may provide some vocabulary assistance in Spanish (Service Type 4).
- In the one high school with LEP students, there is a special ESL class provided if needed (Service Type 6).

The decision on the amount of time the ESL tutor in a school will work with an individual LEP student is a joint decision, involving the school staff, the tutor, and the district LEP coordinator. Since the numbers of LEP students in each school are

so small, the LEP services coordinator explained that the approach to services in the district is very personal. Each school views the assistance provided to any LEP student as a special project/responsibility for all of the staff. The coordinator also noted that the district has an active migrant program that operates in the summer, and many of the district's LEP students receive services through this program as well.

For newly entering LEP middle/high school students, the guidance counselor carries out initial assessments, the student is given an orientation to the school, the student is placed immediately with an ESL teacher (or in the high school ESL class if available and needed), and may be paired with another student in the school. The student's progress is followed and discussed by the grade level team at team meetings.

According to the LEP services coordinator, a newly entered 14-15 year-old student will definitely be able to attain a diploma. The coordinator commented that in the county's experience, the parents usually provide support at home, and encourage and support education, and also support working toward a diploma. In fact, the district has generally found that the LEP students have the "best attendance."

The district uses a number of factors in determining whether a student should be exited from services and from LEP status. The student must first obtain a "fluent" rating on an oral English proficiency test for two years. After the first rating of a "5" (fluent) on the oral test, the student's performance is monitored. The ESL tutor checks-in periodically with the student's teachers, and checks the student's report card each period. If the student again achieves a fluent rating, results on literacy tests, teacher ratings of proficiency and teacher judgment, as well as writing ability in English, classroom performance, and parent input are used in making the decision to exit the student from LEP status.

Once a student is exited, there is an informal system for transitioning of students into mainstream instruction. The classroom teachers are informed that the student was formerly a LEP student, and that there can be support from the ESL tutor if needed. In addition, the information about the student's prior LEP status would be in the cumulative folder, and the counselor usually is aware as well. The guidance counselors track students and keep informed of their progress.

The identification of SpEd-LEP students begins with a language assessment in order to rule out language barriers. The district LEP services coordinator sees the key issue as making the difficult distinction between second language issues and disabilities as the source of an observed problem. The special education coordinator described the SpEd-LEP student identification process as essentially the standard special education process, and as one which is well-defined. There is testing, initiated by the teacher,

and review of the results with parents, and others. The coordinator reported that special attention is given to identification at the elementary level in order to be pro-active. However, identifying an appropriate assessor for LEP students who are being evaluated has been an issue because the district prefers to use someone who is fluent in the child's native language, since a determination for special education must rule out language difficulties.

As reported by the coordinator, there are currently no LEP Special Education students. However, one elementary grade student was recently identified for evaluation, and is in the process of being tested. While the district has had SpEd-LEP students at the elementary and middle school levels in the past, the coordinator noted that they have never had any high school level SpEd-LEP students.

The special education services coordinator described the special education services offered by the district as individually designed programs. She stated that there is a focus on inclusion services, provided in neighborhood schools, and that there is an emphasis on providing appropriate related services and support staff in all schools, with allocation of resources across all schools according to student need.

A general continuum of services is available to any special education student, including consultation services, one-on-one related services, speech, occupational/physical therapy, parent training and even peer-support services in the classroom. Instructional services guaranteed by the district at the school level include: language interpreters, small group instruction in regular or pull-out programs, alternative materials, mobility assistance, or a general smaller setting. Also, job training for "life experiences" is available for students who will receive special education certificates rather than diplomas.

The district guidelines for exiting special education students mandate that all students must have complete assessments every three years to determine the status of the disability and achievement levels of the students. In addition, the special education students are monitored quarterly and teacher specialists track the students' performance levels as well as ensuring that IEP requirements are being met.

## II. COORDINATION BETWEEN LEP SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

At the district level, the LEP services and special education services coordinators have offices in the same building, although in very different wings of the building. The LEP services coordinator indicated that there are no issues in coordination with the special education coordinator, and that there has not really been a need for

coordination given that there have been very few SpEd-LEP students in the district. The special education services coordinator reported that coordination occurs at the school level, as part of the IEP process, and in the LEP planning teams.

## III. ALIGNMENT OF INSTRUCTION

The district curriculum coordinator reported that the curriculum and instruction are aligned with the State goals/standards and tests, and that aligning instruction with standards is an ongoing process.

The LEP services coordinator indicated that instruction for LEP students is as well aligned with standards as is instruction for all students. To support alignment of instruction for LEP students, the ESL tutors are encouraged to attend regular faculty meetings and to work closely with teachers. The tutors usually follow the regular English language arts curriculum and support these through ESL approaches. The LEP services coordinator also indicated that all standards are incorporated into staff development activities, and reported that there were no areas in which LEP student instruction would be described as not in alignment.

SpEd-LEP students would receive the same curriculum as other students, although the instructional presentation would differ. In order to ensure that State standards guide instruction, monitoring is carried out both by the school building administrator and by district teacher specialists. Instructional support materials have been developed by the district for each content area beginning with English and foreign language. These aids have been designed to supplement and complement the instruction of teachers who work with students who have special needs.

The curriculum for special education students is the same as for regular education students; it is this curriculum that guides the development of the students' IEP. The curriculum coordinator described the process of trying to effectively translate the meaning of the standards into the IEP as one that requires the "wearing of many hats." The IEP must reflect the standards, and only those listed specifically on the IEP become a part of the students' instructional program.

When asked about **challenges to alignment,** the district curriculum coordinator reported that understanding the nuances of the standards and helping to communicate them to teachers has been a challenge. The changing population of teachers and students requires a constant effort to ensure that the standards are understood and implemented. Many recent new hires are not from the State and do not understand the State's standards. The curriculum coordinator further noted that although the LEP standards are the same as the State standards, teachers of LEP

students need considerable assistance in their implementation in the classroom. In addition, the curriculum coordinator noted that there is a real challenge in maintaining close contact with the ESL tutors on the issue of standards, and continuously updating the standards and goals to ensure matching and modification as the State makes changes.

## IV. PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS

The State assessment is administered annually and students are tested in grades 3, 5, and 8 on a State-developed standards-based assessment. In grades 2, 4, and 6, students take a norm-referenced, nationally standardized test, the CTBS. In addition, students must pass content areas exams in Algebra, Geometry, Biology, Government, and English 1, which are given in grade 9 typically. Finally, as part of a graduation requirement, students must pass the State functional test in basic skills areas (reading, writing, mathematics). There is the option of taking this test in middle school, and usually it is first given in grade 6. There are no alternative/alternate tests provided for LEP students.

There is strong guidance from the State on policies related to LEP students and testing, and the district adheres to State policy. The State conducts random audits of exemptions to ensure compliance with policy. In general, it is very difficult to exempt students and there are very seldom exemptions for LEP or special education students. If a student enters in the second semester of senior year, and is new to the State, then he/she will be exempt. In all other cases, a LEP student is exempt from one administration of an individual assessment. However, students who are not seeking a diploma (e.g., some special education students) may be exempted from regular assessments but would take a separate State assessment of life skills. In addition, a student may in very special circumstances be excused from testing by the school.

In all, there are three criteria that are used to determine whether a LEP student may be exempted from any individual assessment: (1) The student must score as non-English speaking on two out of three areas on the English language proficiency assessment; (2) the student must have been in an English-speaking school for no more than two full academic years; and (3) this must be the first administration of the test for which the student is exempted, since a student may be exempted from each assessment only once. For example, if a student is exempted from the CTBS in one year, then that student must take the CTBS in the subsequent year. The exemption rule is applied to each assessment individually. Any exemption must be recommended by a teacher, agreed to in writing by the parent (guardian), certified by the school principal, and documented in the student's record.

As an example of the strict policy regarding exemptions, the district testing coordinator reported that on the most recently completed State test administration, there were only three students exempted district-wide. These students were not working toward diplomas and all three were special education. In order to exempt any student, the district testing coordinator reads the student's IEP, meets with the special education specialist, and visits the school before approving use of an accommodation.

The State has provided an accommodations booklet, and the district coordinator selects those accommodations that would not invalidate the specific test. The school ESL team or IEP committee reviews documentation to determine that accommodations are needed, and then decides which are appropriate for the student based on the student's performance in class and English proficiency. This decision is documented on a State form and requires several signatures, including the signature of the parents, the district testing coordinator, the district LEP services coordinator, and the ESL tutor. The district LEP services coordinator reported that approximately 8 percent of LEP students received some accommodation in the most recent Statewide assessment; the accommodations provided were extra time for completion and individual or small group administration.

Testing policy for special education students follows the same requirements as for other students. Starting in grade one, students must be taught and assessed on the State learning outcomes. If they are not taught according to the State learning outcomes, then they must be working on life skills and will be assessed using a State life-skills assessment. Thus, special education students are fully included in the State testing system; there were only two exemptions for the past school year. Accommodations for students with IEPs are made based on the IEP and diploma requirements for special education. An alternative special education test is also administered to students. There are IEP accommodations and exemptions if students are included in the special State alternative test.

According to district staff, test accommodations are based on the IEP requirements for instruction. The classroom instructional accommodations are established by the school team, documented in the IEP and become a part of the evaluation system. Accommodations for SpEd-LEP students would be the same as those used for the general special education population.

The State assessment is used for accountability purposes and scores are reported by categories: LEP, special education, and general population scores are disaggregated in the reporting. There is no separate reporting for SpEd-LEP students. School improvement teams meet and review the data to determine if they are making

progress against goals. Each school has three days to evaluate the data and to report back to the district on the outcomes of its review. The district also brings schools together to review and discuss the data overall. Reports of testing results are also sent out to parents.

## IV. PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICES FOR LEP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEP STUDENTS

The district LEP services coordinator noted that with such a small population of LEP students, there is a lot of support in the schools and at the district office. She feels that the services for LEP students are taken seriously and given respect from the school and district.

The coordinator also pointed out other areas of services provided by the county that benefit the LEP student population. One such service is the Adult Education ESL programs for parents. There are four ESL classes, which are held twice a week in the evenings. Parents often bring their children with them, and there is one high school LEP student who also attends. The teachers make efforts to include the children in some way, by bringing in work sheets and crayons, for example. The summer migrant program, which has been in existence for many years, provides instruction, recreation and supervision, and many of the LEP students participate in this program.

The coordinator mentioned the need to have a system within the cumulative folder that can travel with the student from school to school. The folder would include information on whether the student is a LEP or former LEP student and would provide additional information, including for example information on the home language and the extent of English language support available at home for the student. The coordinator mentioned that she talks often to parents whose first language is not English. She recognizes that when the adults in the home do not speak English then the child is missing important support at home that is needed particularly as materials in the class become more advanced.

The LEP services coordinator commented that the way to improve services for SpEd-LEP students would be to improve the ESL services. She referred to some steps taken recently in assessing one student for special education. In assessing the student, the LEP services and special education coordinators decided that it was important not to duplicate services and to ensure that they provide parallel but not overlapping services. As a result, the two teachers involved are informally sharing information as they work with and evaluate the student.

The district special education coordinator identified as a challenge the improvement of inclusion services for special education students. She noted that a first step would be providing teacher training for inclusion to all student-teachers and co-teachers. A co-teaching element would augment programs, particularly for students at the elementary grade levels.

# 4. FINDINGS FROM SELECTED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

In this chapter, findings from the interviews conducted in five elementary schools. The name of the district in which the school is located is incorporated within the school's name. Thus, Date Palm Elementary is located within Palm School District.

# DATE PALM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | K-6 |
| Total students: | 1,288 |
| LEP students: | 517 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 16 |
| Primary language group: | Haitian Creole |
| School District: | Palm School District |

The principal of this elementary school reported that approximately 94% of the students are black and the remaining 6% are Latino. Within the school's black population, approximately 80% are Haitian. Almost 40% (38.8) of the students are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program.

The special education coordinator explained that the Haitian students generally start school with very limited English skills. Although many of the students were born in the United States, their parents do not speak English, and young children often have more advanced English skills than their parents.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

The services a LEP student receives depend on his or her grade level and English proficiency level. LEP students are likely to take native language arts and to receive curriculum content instruction using the students' home language (Spanish or Haitian-Creole) and English. The goal of the content instruction using the native language is to ensure that LEP students develop skills, concepts, and understandings comparable to those developed by native English speakers. Service types 7 and 8 are most common in this school. Students typically receive LEP services for approximately three years.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The district has offered numerous training activities and ongoing workshops. According to the principal, the district staff strives to be available to provide support to school staff. The district provides teachers with opportunities to strengthen their areas of concentration and earn additional degrees and certification. This principal believes that the district's efforts have been successful. The principal uses the PACES, an instrument designed to evaluate teachers' instruction during classroom observations. While observing classrooms with this

instrument, he looks for evidence of the standards in lesson plans and instructional strategies.

The teachers of LEP students have been provided with many professional development opportunities and materials pertaining to the alignment of instruction with State standards. The LEP services coordinator at the elementary school observed that LEP services teachers actually receive more training and assistance pertaining to alignment than do mainstream teachers. Teachers recently attended an ongoing "Best Practices" workshop that taught reading instruction strategies, including specific skills assessed by the State test.

The greatest challenge in aligning instruction for LEP students with State standards, according to the elementary school LEP services coordinator, is the "language barrier." She explained that the LEP students are expected to achieve very high standards, yet their English skills are extremely limited. This is particularly difficult when parents don't have English skills to help their children.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

According to the LEP services coordinator, if the LEP committee observes that a student appears to be having difficulty, the student may be evaluated by a bilingual assessor. A child study team may convene; the team includes a psychologist who reviews the results from the bilingual assessment and makes recommendations for instructional interventions. If the recommended interventions are not effective, then special education services would be an option, although typically, a student will not receive special education services prior to second grade.

The special education coordinator explained that many Haitians start school in another district prior to entry to this district. If a student arrives without any school records, the school first administers a home language survey. If a student has already been identified as a special education student and has been in this school district before, the homeroom teacher coordinates with the special education teacher to provide services until the IEP meeting. The special education coordinator noted that if the child is transferring in from another school district, parents might bring temporary IEPs.

*Instructional Services*

The special education coordinator tries to work with each child according to the student's individual level. She commented that she would like to have extra staff in the special education classes so she could engage in more one-on-one work with students. Because she serves kindergarten through fourth grade students in one room at the same time, she explained, it is hard to address the needs of all the students.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The greatest challenge in aligning instructional services, according to the special education coordinator, is that because of the relatively high level of State standards, students might not

be able to achieve them, particularly in reading. She believes that she often does not have enough time with each child to prepare them to meet the standards.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

Teachers who instruct LEP students in classes that use the native language meet with the students' homeroom teachers in order to coordinate instruction. The principal provides teachers with common planning time. Such teacher meetings facilitate students' transition from LEP services to mainstream instruction.

The LEP services coordinator commented that teacher collaboration and coordination are excellent in this school. She stated that during the past year "teachers are less territorial and more collaborative." She also said that the school staff has "defined our expectations for special education students more clearly." She commented that LEP and special education teachers are now teaching writing in the same way writing is taught in the mainstream classes.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

All students are included in testing, but LEP students' scores are not included in school report cards for two years. The special education coordinator explained that children could be excluded if there is an alternative test available. However, an alternative test in Haitian Creole is not available, so the students in this school are not exempted.

Accommodations provided to LEP students include the use of dictionaries, additional time (40 additional minutes), and translation of instructions by bilingual proctors. For SpEd-LEP students who are in ESL levels one and two, accommodations include testing in a separate setting from mainstream students, the use of flexible periods and extended time, and the use of proctors who may read parts of the test aloud. For SpEd-LEP students who are in ESL levels three and four, the school staff is more stringent with the accommodations because these students' test scores count toward the school's "grade."

Prior to taking the State assessment, students are taught test-taking skills as well as skills that pertain directly to test items (e.g., identifying synonyms and antonyms). The scores of students on Statewide tests have been used to gauge students' progress and guide instruction. In addition to the actual test, the State provides the school with progress tests that are related to the test. The district provides a pre-test to assess children's skills at the beginning of the school year.

The special education coordinator expressed her belief that the identification process takes too much time. She explained that when a child is learning disabled and learning a new language at the same time, "problems create frustrations and frustrations create misbehavior." The school system once had a newcomer school for LEP students that had the resources to implement special education testing. It was never widely advertised that this school existed, according to the special education coordinator, and it has since closed.

# IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

Students feel comfortable because their ethnic group is in the majority. There are a large percentage of teachers who speak Haitian-Creole. Furthermore, teachers are very well-trained. The district provides excellent materials and workshops. In this particular school, LEP students are a priority.

According to the staff members who were interviewed, the LEP services and special education programs are both strong and are building on each other. In the past, the special education program was perceived to be the stronger, but the LEP services program is improving.

*Weaknesses*

Scheduling instruction for LEP students is challenging because it involves a lot of transitions. The large number of students in the school makes this particularly difficult. Often classes consist of 35 students. The staff noted that this school could benefit from more teachers so that class size is reduced. Another problem observed by staff is the tendency of the State assessment to create a lot of stress for students who are new to the United States.

# NOBLE FIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | K-2 |
| Total students: | 454 |
| LEP students: | 348 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 15 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Fir School District |

The primary school consists of an early childhood center for students ages 3–5 and an elementary school program for students in grades K-2. Most families in the community emigrated from Mexico originally and speak Spanish at home. Many students in the primary school are considered "at-risk" as determined by language assessments.

The school is located in an agriculturally based community just a few miles from the Mexican border. Many students (approximately 40%) come from families who do migrant farm labor in the fields surrounding the school campus. All students qualify for free/reduced lunch.

Because the parents of the children who attend school in this school district are living in poverty, the families' primary focus is to provide shelter, food, and clothing. Thus, children often begin school with limited early literacy experiences. Since few parents speak English, reading to children in English or listening to children read in English rarely happens at home. Some parents are not literate in Spanish or, if they are literate in Spanish, lack the free time to read to their children.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

The LEP services coordinator identified the service model for LEP students as Service Type 8 because the school is in the process of implementing a dual language model of instruction for all students in grades K-2. Currently, the kindergarten classes have fully implemented the intended dual language model and the 1st and 2nd grade classes are in the process of transitioning from a previous two-way model to the current one. Full implementation in grades K-2 is expected next year.

Under the dual language model being implemented, students receive language arts instruction in their primary language (Spanish or English) at the kindergarten and first grade levels. Beginning in second grade, they receive language arts instruction in both languages. Students at all grade levels receive math instruction in English and social studies and science instruction in Spanish.

In this model, the teachers team-teach. One teacher delivers instruction in English; the other in Spanish. English language instruction and Spanish language instruction are embedded in content area instruction. Almost all teachers in the school are bilingually certified (i.e., out of 47 teachers, all but 5 have bilingual or ESL certification).

Two different perspectives emerged from the interviews with the special education teacher and the LEP services coordinator. The special education teacher indicated that when migrant families register their children in this school, the right to instruction in their native language is often waived. According to the LEP services coordinator, however, this is rare. In cases where parents want to waive their right, the school tries to counsel them out of it. With the dual language model, it creates a difficult situation for the children if the parents waive native language instruction.

All students in K-2 participate in the dual language program. The goal of the program is to foster literacy development in both Spanish and English; therefore, no students are exited. In a few cases, parents have refused LEP services for their children. In those cases, the school tries to counsel the parents, explain the program, and persuade them to keep the child in the dual language program. For parents who refuse, the child goes to language arts class in English. (This is difficult for some students because they are placed in a class of English-dominant students). The counselor keeps track of these students in an individual student file.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The Spanish language arts standards are implemented side-by-side with the English language arts standards at each grade level. The ESL standards are embedded throughout the instruction of all content areas taught in English, particularly English language arts.

The district requires that the school come up with timelines for covering the State-mandated curriculum. The primary school principal described the district as being "proactive" in this area. They provide the school with staff development, funding, training, workshops, directives, regular meetings and review assessments in order to ensure that the State standards are being implemented.

This first-year principal describes the assistance the school receives as "very effective" while acknowledging that "we still have a way to go but we are getting there." He has seen an improvement in reading levels over the course of the year and points out that the training, timelines and accountability system contributes to that.

The LEP services coordinator also describes the training as "very effective." The school has done a lot of training for the dual language program. Teachers have written curriculum using the State standards.

The principal indicated that teachers of LEP students receive the same training and materials as other teachers and "more so." Because of the high numbers of LEP students in the school, the focus tends toward their needs, for example, in the purchase of library books, textbooks in Spanish, and materials. He pointed out that the school district gets outside funding to address the needs of the student population, and this has helped considerably. The State has an evaluation instrument for evaluating teachers, which is tied to student performance. The principal also conducts "walk-throughs" periodically. The school conducts benchmark testing every 6 weeks. The data are reviewed and the principal meets with the teachers or grade levels accordingly to target specific areas.

Up until recently, assessment results were not used to guide instruction. With the recent change in the school administration, this is changing. The administrators look at the assessment scores over the course of the year and identify students who are behind for services such as a tutorial, reading lab, assessment for possible learning disabilities, or other needs. The principal "wants the new teachers to understand the importance of the test…attitudes are starting to change."

The LEP services coordinator indicated that the biggest challenge is trying to get all the teachers to look at the State-mandated curriculum, understand it, and know how it should be taught. They need to take the time so that teachers develop a thorough understanding of curriculum objectives.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

The process for identifying LEP students for special education begins with a referral to the Student Intervention Team who provides multiple pre-referral interventions in the general education classroom. Generally, this process takes 90 school days. A longer period of time is taken to provide students with every opportunity to be successful in the regular classroom before labeling the student in special education. The key issue in identifying a LEP student with a disability is to determine the difference between English language learning and a disability. To meet this challenge, the primary school uses strong teamwork among a staff that is predominately bilingual. In addition, students may not be referred to the SIT during the first six weeks in any grade level.

According to some school staff, identifying LEP students in need of special education services is a challenge because the school currently has an over-representation of LEP students in special education. However, the school data show only approximately 4% of LEP in special education. They need more understanding of LEP issues on the team. The LEP services coordinator feels that the continued implementation of the dual language program will help to build this awareness because teachers will have the opportunity to see

how the students are doing in both English and Spanish, thereby gaining a better understanding of these issues.

However, as reported by other staff, the number of LEP students in special education is relatively low as students are screened and evaluated accurately when referred for a special education assessment. Only those students who are in need of special education services are accepted into the program.

*Instructional Services*

Once a LEP student is identified for special education services, the special education teacher attends an IEP team meeting to make instructional program decisions. This special education teacher indicated that it is difficult to decide the amount of service time appropriate for a student to attend special education instruction in a resource classroom and general education instruction in a regular classroom. LEP students in special education require adequate time for instruction in multiple modalities and time for instructional repetition. On the other hand, dual language instruction also requires adequate time in the regular classroom. Balancing instructional time appropriately between the two programs is critical for student success.

Once students are placed in special education instructional settings, adequate instructional time is provided for "one on one time with the child." Adequate resources are easily accessed for the special education program in the primary school. Appropriate teacher training is provided throughout the school year and teaching materials are readily available. Even though this primary school is located in a relatively small school district, all related services such as speech/language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy are offered if an educational need is identified.

*Alignment of Instruction*

SpED-LEP students are generally functioning below grade level (e.g., 2nd grader learning at a kindergarten level). The greatest challenge and difficulty in aligning instruction for SpEd-LEP students to State standards is the pressure to have students function at grade-level even though it is best to instruct the students at their own learning pace. To address this issue, the primary school has developed a reading lab in the school building, created extended school day tutorials, and continues to emphasize increased parental involvement.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services in the School*

In the dual-language model being implemented at the primary school, the teachers team-teach. One teacher delivers all instruction in English and the other all in Spanish. The teachers coordinate their instruction during daily common planning periods at each grade level. In addition, the grade level teams have an extended planning period for 90 minutes every 2 weeks. The LEP coordinator described this common planning time as "very effective." She gets positive feedback from the teachers. With the common planning time, there are no time conflicts and there are ample opportunities to share information.

Additional planning times are arranged as the need comes up and substitutes are arranged when needed for special training sessions that support school objectives. The principal feels

they are doing well with horizontal planning but would like to improve vertical planning—i.e., to get teachers together across grade levels.

According to the primary special education teacher, the coordination between the LEP and special education services in this primary school depends on the interest and attitude of the general education classroom teacher. Some general education classroom teachers, who incorporate LEP techniques into their general education instruction, set high expectations for special education students, provide highly structured instruction when needed, and request instructional and test modifications. This positive attitude seems to evolve as individualized instruction effectively moves the special education student through the regular curriculum. Other teachers, however, assume that special education students cannot meet grade level expectations, so are less likely to want to coordinate their services with the special education department.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

In this State, students begin taking the State test in the 3rd grade, thus the kindergarten through 2nd grade children who attend this school do not participate in the State test. However, all students including SpEd-LEP students in the primary school receive practice materials to begin practicing fro the 3rd grade test in the primary grades.

For students in grades K-2, the school administers the State-mandated assessment for fluency and comprehension in oral language. The English and Spanish versions of this assessment are administered to all students at the school.

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

The principal mentioned a number of strengths of the program for LEP students. First, he noted the high percentage of teachers on staff who have ESL or bilingual certification and pointed out that many staff members, including teachers and paraprofessionals, are Spanish speakers. The principal noted funding as another strength. There is money available to provide the resources needed. He was able to hire the LEP services coordinator to oversee/facilitate the dual language program, as well as paraprofessionals. Funding opportunities have also allowed instructional assistants to go back to school to become teachers and for teachers to get Masters Degrees in bilingual education.

The students and families were also mentioned as a strength, particularly "the humbleness of the people." The principal pointed out that this school district hasn't seen some of the problems that large urban districts have. He pointed out that only 5 out of 268 students in the school show unusually aggressive behavior or present discipline problems.

The principal and LEP services coordinator both mentioned the benefits of the dual language program as a strength. The LEP coordinator noted that the dual language program addresses the needs of all students and values the language the students bring to school. They have provided intensive training for teachers, which enable them to understand how to best teach literacy to students so they can be successful.

Further, the LEP services coordinator mentioned administrative support, commitment and the enthusiasm of teachers as strong points of the program. The leadership at the district office was also mentioned as a strength, the coordinator noted in particular the district staff's knowledge and experience with bilingual education.

*Weaknesses*

The principal mentioned a number of areas for improvement. First, he noted that it is a challenge to educate parents and keep them informed about changes in the school's programming. He commented that some parents believe that their children attend school to learn English only and thus are resistant to including Spanish language instruction in the school program. The LEP services coordinator also noted that more parental education is needed regarding the dual language program.

The principal pointed out it is also a challenge to hire and retain certified teachers. He noted that often teachers work in the district for their first years of teaching and then move on. They initially come when they are partially certified (because larger districts require full certification) and move on once they are fully certified.

The LEP services coordinator indicated that more district coordination is needed between the primary school (K-2) and the elementary school (grades 3-5). There is some concern within the elementary school staff as the dual language program moves into the next grade levels. The coordinator noted that although there is district commitment to the program, the whole district hasn't been sufficiently prepared.

Even though the special education program for LEP students is thriving, the primary school continues to strive to improve service delivery that appropriately meets educational needs of SpEd-LEP students. There is a strong push in this school district toward an inclusion model of service provision. Although she acknowledges that valuable learning time may be lost in the transition from one classroom to another, her preference is for a resource program because she believes that it enables students to meet their IEP objectives more quickly.

# WEEPING BIRCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | K-6 |
| Total students: | 1,165 |
| LEP students: | 315 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 26 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Birch School District |

According to the principal at this elementary school, which is located in a western district, approximately half of the students in the school are Latino, while the other half are Caucasian. The school also is split evenly between students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and those from middle class backgrounds. (The principal estimates that there are equal numbers of Caucasian and Latino students from lower and middle socioeconomic backgrounds.) The school operates on a year-round schedule, with different groups, or "tracks," of students beginning and ending the school year at different times. Two of the four tracks within the school are bilingual education programs, while the other two are general education programs.

Thirty-four percent of special education students in this district are identified as English language learners (ELL's). Some of these students are classified as migrant, as defined by the Federal formula. The majority of the special education students belong to the "Speech and Language Impairments" disability group.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

The LEP services coordinator explained that students in grades K-3 receive Service Type 8 (extensive LEP services, significant native language use). Many students arrive at the school as monolingual Spanish speakers. By the time students are in grades 4-6, they receive Service Type 6 (extensive LEP services, all English). Some fourth graders, however, might receive Service Type 7 (extensive LEP services, some native language), if they are in the process of transferring to all-English instruction because they have achieved fluency in English.

All elementary school students have only one teacher. They take classes such as reading, math, social sciences, art, music, physical education, health, and science. When students

arrive as kindergartners, no English is used in class for the first 30 days so that students have time to acclimate to the school setting with minimal language confusion.

The principal explained that teachers meet monthly in groups by grade level. The staff also meets once per month by track and twice per month as an entire faculty. The principal commented that he supports these meetings and he believes that the track meetings in particular are critical to coordinating instruction between teachers who share the same groups of students over the course of the students' education.

At this school, students transition to all-English instruction in fourth grade. The principal explained that by the time a child enters fourth grade, his or her teachers have been meeting together for three years. These meetings help "smooth" the transition to mainstream education, because teachers within each track become familiar with the same group of students.

*Alignment of Instruction*

According to the LEP services coordinator, the district has sponsored effective staff development opportunities pertaining to the alignment of instruction with State standards. Both teachers and administrators are knowledgeable about the standards, largely as a result of these professional development opportunities. The alignment of ESL instruction with State standards is new to the district, but a gradual shift is occurring. The LEP services coordinator commented that the use of standards to guide ESL instruction is "equalizing" the education of LEP students with mainstream students. In her opinion, the greatest challenge in aligning the instruction for LEP students with State standards is the lack of high quality bilingual instructional materials.

The principal explained that the district provided teachers with a "curriculum map" that aligned every standard for each grade level in reading and math. Teachers provided their input before the map was finalized. He has observed that this instrument has been particularly helpful for new teachers.

In the opinion of the principal, the materials and training provided to teachers pertaining to alignment have been effective. All teachers, including bilingual education teachers, have received the same materials. Teachers now have more guidance about how to focus their instruction, even though the alignment of instruction with State standards is still a fairly new concept in this district.

In this school, the alignment of instruction with State standards is monitored through classroom observations conducted by the principal. The principal also commented that student assessment scores also are a good index of the degree to which instruction is aligned with State standards. Students' test scores are reported to teachers who use them to guide instruction. The principal stated that teachers' reactions to State assessments vary. While some view the assessments as a helpful tool to guide their instruction, others are concerned that students in the district are being over-tested.

The greatest challenge, according to the special education teacher, is that teachers need more training on modifications they can use in aligning instruction to standards. She explained that some teachers need additional training in developing a curriculum specifically for SpEd-LEP students that is aligned to standards.

The school is doing several things to address some of the issues that revolve around aligning instruction to standards for LEP students. The school has a mentorship program and training for new teachers. In addition, there are six workshops each semester. The Special Education Planning Agency provides workshops for free on various topics throughout the year. There also is an annual conference held every year to strengthen parent understanding of the services that are available to their children.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

The process for identifying LEP students who are in need of special education services is quite defined. A teacher or parent refers a student to the Student Success Team (SST). Decisions about placing LEP students in special education classes are made by a student study team composed of general education teachers, the LEP services coordinator, resource teachers, and the school psychologist. Often a student's parents are involved as well. The Student Success Team meets to discuss the child strengths and weaknesses. All members contribute to the overall strategic plan. According to the special education coordinator, a teacher who understands second language acquisition is always involved in this process. The strategic plan is implemented and the team reconvenes after three months to reevaluate the progress of the modified instruction. At this time, there is a discussion of whether there should be full assessment for the student. If it is decided that a student should be fully assessed, an assessment plan is sent to the parent within 15 days. Once this plan is signed, an IEP is written within 50 days.

The LEP services coordinator has observed that LEP children who need special education services may go without the services for too long because there may be assumptions that their difficulties are due to language limitations. Because of this, in the next year, the school staff is going to try to focus on identifying children in the lower grades (one and two) who may be in need of special education services.

Further, the special education coordinator agreed that one of the major challenges for the school is identifying LEP students who have special education needs. The language and vocabulary development at home is often very limited. It also is very difficult to rule out the language barrier as the primary barrier to academic gains.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

Teachers who work with SpEd-LEP students often coordinate with each other in several ways. There is a pre-planning meeting at the start of the year. Collaboration is ongoing. Teachers also try to meet immediately to resolve issues when they arise. This helps create

an environment in which teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of the student and how to address the individual needs of the students.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

All LEP students participate in the State assessments. Parents may sign a waiver that exempts their children from testing, but this is rare and it is discouraged by the district because the goal is to familiarize all students with the testing process. LEP students are not provided with any accommodations on State assessments.

Preparation for taking the State assessments is provided to all students, including LEP students. This entails providing instruction in test-taking skills, such as pacing oneself, making "best guesses," and how to approach different types of items. Students are provided with exercises that are similar to those they will encounter on the assessments. The primary goal of school staff, according to the LEP coordinator, is to "take the pressure off" and make students feel more comfortable with testing situations.

Decisions regarding the inclusion of SpEd-LEP students in Statewide testing and the use of accommodations are made by IEP teams. These decisions are made based on the child's academic level. The most frequently used accommodations are flexible scheduling and alternate settings, as well as testing out of grade level.

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

In the opinion of the school LEP services coordinator, the LEP services staff is very strong, with strong credentials. Another strength of the school, according to the LEP services coordinator, is that many teachers are bilingual. The school district's commitment to, and belief in, the effectiveness of bilingual education was described as another strength.

The school's program for SpEd-LEP students has several strengths, according to the special education coordinator. Each student's plan is tailored to help him or her meet goals. There also is good communication between parents and school staff and among teachers. The use of tracks allows students to be taught by the same teachers until they leave the school or transition out of LEP services.

The principal cited the diverse student body as a strength. He also noted that the bilingual students have the opportunity to mingle with the mainstream students (students in other tracks). In addition, he has observed that parents try to be supportive of their children's education and they have high aspirations. He explained that the district has a large adult basic education program because parents are also interested in furthering their own education.

The principal also cited the low turnover of staff as a strength in his school. Last year, for example, he only needed to hire one new teacher. Like the LEP services coordinator, he also cited the staff's strong credentials as a strength.

*Weaknesses*

An area in which the school needs to improve, according to the LEP services coordinator, is the identification of LEP students in need of special education services. She believes that the identification process takes too long. She also expressed her belief that the program for LEP students needs to focus more on oral language development and less on reading and writing. She has observed that LEP students often learn a lot of slang without learning proper English grammar. Finally, although parents have demonstrated an interest in school activities, she feels that the school needs to focus more on parent involvement activities.

The special education coordinator commented that one of the areas that create the greatest challenge for SpEd-LEP students is the huge amount of paperwork involved. For example, IEPs are typically 15 pages long and their preparation often takes time away from instruction. It also is difficult to successfully serve migrant students and students who transfer from school to school.

The principal stated that the greatest challenge he faces in improving instructional services for LEP students is the fact that the school's philosophy for educating LEP students conflicts with the State's philosophy. (The State endorses structured immersion while the district is committed to bilingual education.) Not surprisingly, there is tension between State politicians and local school board members. He made the observation that students' scores on the SABE (Spanish Assessment of Basic English) are consistently higher than scores on the SAT-9 (Stanford Achievement Test) since the students arrive in the school district with stronger skills in Spanish.

# LOBLOLLY PINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | K-6 |
| Total students: | 674 |
| LEP students: | 146 |
| LEP Special Education students: | Not Available |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Pine School District |

This suburban section of a mid-sized city contains the largest trailer park in the United States. Thirty five percent of the elementary school enrollment is Hispanic and of those, fifty percent have been identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Spanish is the only language other than English spoken by the students.

The LEP students live in families whose annual income is below the poverty level. Newly arrived immigrants generally do not speak any English and lack basic school skills. They enter school without knowledge of general school routines because they have not attended school in their home country, generally Mexico. Consequently, they are not familiar with typical American school expectations such as raising a hand to speak in class, keeping their belongings in a school locker, or following classroom directions as a group of students. These students also tend to lack school readiness experiences because few elementary-aged LEP students have family members who have literacy skills in English. Some families do not have literacy skills in Spanish so these children have not been read to as young children.

There is a year-round school calendar, which is viewed as educationally advantageous for the students; thus, the academic schedule for this elementary school has multiple tracks spread over twelve calendar months. The year-round schedule allows the school to instruct more students by holding sessions for 230-240 days out of each calendar year. Since a student's school year remains 180 days, the year-round plan makes it possible for the school to accommodate 25-33% more students. Students attend school for three months consecutively followed by one month of vacation. A half-day intersession is offered for two weeks to provide additional instructional support.

# I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

Most often, LEP students in all elementary grade levels receive some LEP services combined with some native language instruction (Service Type 4). This service type is delivered by an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and two of the three ESL assistants, each of whom are bilingual in Spanish and English. In this way, some home language instruction in Spanish is provided within the ESL classroom. The second most utilized service is Type 3, (some LEP services, all English) which is offered by an ESL assistant who does not speak Spanish.

This elementary school's ESL department is made up of one ESL teacher and three ESL assistants. The ESL teacher was formerly an ESL assistant at another school in the district while completing coursework at a local college to earn teacher certification with an ESL endorsement. He had completed a degree in Mexico before immigrating to the U.S. eight years ago.

The ESL teacher serves as the LEP services coordinator in the school, and is responsible both for coordinating the ESL program and supervising the ESL assistants. Supervision of the ESL assistants is complicated since the ESL teacher is assigned to one school-year track while each of the ESL assistants are assigned to the other three tracks. In this way, LEP services are thus provided for students throughout the multi-track system. ESL assistants provide general language assistance in a classroom or specific instructional support on a pull-out basis.

Some parents of kindergarten students refuse LEP services because they want their children to speak only English at all times in mainstream classes. Every LEP student is also in a grade-appropriate, general education classroom, so that ESL instruction is guided by grade level instruction. The principal feels that ESL students are integrated into each classroom without being stigmatized. All elementary teachers are consistent in helping all students.

*Alignment of Instruction*

This school district has assisted the elementary school in aligning instruction with State standards by providing all core content teachers with training in their specific content area. The training is focused on specific content area standards that are used by all school districts across the State. Teachers were provided with written copies of the standards for use in their development of classroom instruction.

The elementary principal thinks that teachers are well supported in aligning curriculum with State standards. This support is provided through a variety of means. Content standards are printed and dispersed to all teachers in the school. District-level training focused on integrating standards into the curriculum is provided for all teachers. Textbook adoption committees select textbooks with content that is aligned with the standards. "Alignment days" have been organized at the elementary school so that adjacent grade level teachers can meet to plan curriculum across grades. In addition, opportunities are available for re-certification credit for teachers who attend workshops on aligning instruction with

standards. Teachers report to parents through classroom newsletters as to how students are meeting standards.

The LEP services coordinator is a regularly contracted teacher; he is expected to meet the same requirements as other elementary teachers in terms of aligning instruction with State standards. However, he indicated that no training or assistance had been provided to help him to align his instruction with these standards. He did state that he hopes to have an opportunity to participate in training in the future. This school year is his first year teaching as a certified ESL teacher. Based on his prior experience as an ESL assistant, his opinion is that the standards are primarily a policy on paper. He noted that ESL assistants are not held to the same requirements as regularly contracted teachers, and are not expected to attend teacher-training sessions. The coordinator also observed that it is challenging for LEP students to meet instructional standards due to their language proficiency, and he would like the district's ESL central office to provide additional guidance in this area.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

The identification of LEP students in need of special education services is generally carried out at the Newcomer's Center. After LEP students begin attending this elementary school, identification usually is the responsibility of the general education teacher because he/she sees the students the most. The LEP services coordinator (ESL teacher) will be included in meetings to identify LEP students in need of special education.

The coordinator noted that the greatest challenge in identifying an elementary-aged LEP student with a disability is to determine the appropriate amount of time to allow for a child to acquire English language skills and school routine skills. When young LEP students are not given enough chances to adjust to American schools and culture, it is especially challenging to identify the impact on learning attributable to the various factors involved, such as acquiring a new language, adjusting to school routines, making up for the lack of early literacy exposure, a "true" disability, or the interaction of the some or all of these factors.

To address this concern, the elementary special education coordinator indicated that the provision of extra time coupled with greater attention observation skills, can assist in the purpose of appropriately identifying LEP students with disabilities. In addition, it is important to continue to provide supplemental services, such as the after-school reading program, to combat the lack of exposure to early literacy experiences.

The ESL teacher expressed concerns about the possible cultural bias of the assessment instruments used to identify LEP students for special education services. Administering the assessments in Spanish may not avoid test bias if the Spanish used is not culturally appropriate for this specific student population from Mexico. The special education identification and placement may be negatively influenced by a lack of familiarity with a student's ethnic background.

*Instructional Services*

Based on the interview data from one special education teacher, services for SpEd-LEP students are provided throughout the regular school day and after school, on weekends, and during school breaks. During the school day, SpEd-LEP students receive special education instruction in either a special education resources room, in the general education classroom with or without an instructional aide's support, or on a combination of these settings. Instructional content focuses on any core content area that is identified as an educational need and goals and instructional objectives are written into the students IEP. Learning strategies, organizational study skills, attention skills, and social behavior can also be a focus if there is an educational need identified in the student's IEP. For lower functioning SpEd-LEP students, a comprehensive life skills curriculum is offered that supports the acquisition of independent living skills.

SpEd-LEP students also receive ESL services if their oral language proficiency test scores (LAS-O) demonstrate an English language learning need. These services are provided by an ESL assistant through small group instruction within or outside of the general or special education classroom. The ESL assistant does not have a teaching certification, but has college coursework toward ESL licensure. Instruction is always delivered in the presence of a certified teacher under the supervision of a certified ESL teacher. Generally speaking, instructional services are matched to SpEd-LEP students' learning needs.

Educational services are provided outside of the school day as additional support in acquiring basic reading, math, and writing skills in English. The after-school reading program, which also includes family members, contains 40 minutes of reading aloud to students and 40 minutes of math and writing tutoring. This program meets weekly throughout the school year. Another reading program, Read to Success, provides 30 minutes of reading aloud to the students and provides books written in English for students to take home and keep. The Parent-Teacher Association sponsors a Read All Night activity where the students stay overnight on a Friday night at school to read all night. Finally, the elementary special education teacher maintains a personal lending library for her students that contain books written in English primarily with some books written in Spanish. Students may check books out to take home and return.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The preparation of SpEd-LEP student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) includes a discussion of content standards that apply, and IEPs are then written as standards-referenced documents.

Special education teachers identified challenges in aligning instruction in that they need to continually remind general education teachers that the instruction of students with disabilities requires a developmental progression of skill-building that begins at individual students' levels of functioning. Even though students are enrolled at a certain grade level, students with disabilities need to learn at their own individual paces and this may be lower than the grade level in which they are enrolled. To address this issue, Teacher Learning Teams have been organized in which teachers select a specific learning focus. This school

year's topic is standards-based instruction for all students including SpEd-LEP students. Local administrators then supervise site trainers who present training content that addresses the teams' specific learning focus selected for that school year.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

While some school staff across the elementary, middle, and secondary schools have well-coordinated approaches to service delivery, the degree of coordination tends to vary according to the number of years that a teacher has taught in this school district and the number of students on a particular teacher's caseload. The LEP services coordinator stated that this was his first year in this school and that there was not much coordination. He tries to share research findings and information about the home cultures of the students with the regular classroom teachers.

In general, services for SpEd-LEP students are well-coordinated at the elementary level for both instruction and student special activities and programs. Collaboration between special education, general education, and ESL services receives strong administrative support as the elementary principal has a strong special education background. The LEP service coordinator, who provides most of the translation needed at IEP team meetings, has a special education background also. Representatives from all services are regularly included in IEP team meetings.

This collaborative approach to elementary instruction for SpEd-LEP students is attributed to three factors. First, the elementary staff is described as a "caring staff" that works hard to establish a comfortable rapport with each other and with students' families. Second, special education and ESL services share the same school space, which promotes continual formal and informal communication about students and services. Third, there is a strong network of educators within and outside of the elementary school. Within the school, students observe special education and ESL teachers talking and working together to provide a rich, happy environment that is conducive to learning. The underlying assumption is that SpEd-LEP students are not "our children," but rather all children in the school are important to all teachers. Outside of the school, many elementary teachers have attended the local university that provides cross-disciplinary coursework. Not only do teachers have common training backgrounds, but strong relationships with other teachers develop in working toward advanced degrees in education. For those teachers who intern in special education, their supervisors are the elementary principal and special education teacher who seek to support student teachers in developing cross-disciplinary collaboration skills. In addition, the district tends to hire former teacher interns who are already familiar with the students, families, teaching staff, and curriculum. New teachers are also assigned experienced teachers as mentors who support them through the first year of teaching. All of these efforts combined to positively affect the instruction of SpEd-LEP students.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

This State's large-scale assessment program currently includes the Terra Nova, administered at grades 4, 8, and 10; writing assessments administered at grades 4 and 8; a high school

proficiency exam; and Statewide and district Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) that measure student progress against State standards.

District policy has varying guidelines depending on the grade level of the student and the large-scale assessment that is administered. Regarding the district Criterion-Referenced Tests, the LAS is used to determine the participation status of a LEP student. For those LEP students in first grade, oral skills are assessed using the LAS prior to the district CRT. LEP students participate in the reading and mathematics sections if their scores are 4 or 5; students who score below 4 are exempted. All second grade students participate in the district CRT except for those students who are newly arrived to the U.S. LEP students who have exited from the Newcomer's Center enroll in elementary school. Those LEP students who have been enrolled for less than one school year are exempted from district testing. As for earlier grades, the LAS is administered prior to the district CRT in grades 4 through 6. Students with scores of 3 (oral), 2 (reading), and 2 (writing) or higher on the LAS participate in the district CRT. Students who score at lower levels are exempted, although students may participate in the district CRT at teachers' discretion.

The LAS is also used to determine participation in the Statewide test. The LEP services coordinator indicated that a student must score a 3 on the oral section of the LAS, a 3 on the reading section of the LAS and a 2 on the writing section of the LAS, before they are eligible to take the Statewide assessment. LEP students with lower LAS scores can be exempted from Statewide testing. When an LEP student is exempted from Statewide testing, the oral section of the LAS is used as an alternate assessment to replace mandated participation in the State test. Documentation of the LAS proficiency scores is required and this must be signed by a school official.

Since this school has school-wide Title I funding, participation in Statewide testing is encouraged for all students. Few LEP students are completely exempted from State tests; LEP students are encouraged to take at least the mathematics portion of the assessment.

It is an IEP decision as to whether and how SpEd-LEP students participate in Statewide testing. Parents and other family members are considered fully participating members of IEP teams. Generally speaking, parents of SpEd-LEP students who are of elementary school age seem to understand the process of deciding whether or not their child participates in the State assessments. If so, parents also appear to understand the purpose and choice of testing accommodations. Generally, discussion with the family about Statewide testing opens with a presentation of parent rights that are translated into the family's native language if needed.

The elementary staff has two written policies available for use in accommodating students on either the Statewide or the district wide test. Students in special education including SpEd-LEP students, have a relatively large array of permissible test accommodations. On the other hand, LEP students have fewer test accommodations available to them during testing. Written policy also states that test accommodations for both LEP students and SpEd-LEP students must be consistent with those accommodations received during typical classroom instruction.

The LEP services coordinator indicated that no accommodations were available for LEP students even though the district test coordinator provided copies of the written accommodations policy available for use in the elementary school's LEP program. In addition, there is a proficiency testing record, used also for LAS score documentation, which is available for use in selecting appropriate accommodations for LEP students.

The elementary school staff has no test accommodation policy to use when accommodating SpEd-LEP students. Generally speaking, when selecting an appropriate test accommodation for a SpEd-LEP student, the special education guidelines developed for test accommodations are followed. An accommodations worksheet, which is provided by the State Department of Education, must be completed for a SpEd-LEP student to document accommodations used.

Small-group test administration is the most frequently used accommodation for SpEd-LEP students in this elementary school. Reading and re-reading aloud test directions and allowing extra time also are frequently used accommodations. Allowable accommodations may vary according to the State test. For instance, extra time is an allowable accommodation for the writing portion of the CRT only. Smaller group test administration is allowable for both the NRT and the CRT, but the Terra Nova is administered in the special education resource room where breaks from testing can be provided at the teacher's discretion. On the other hand, the CRT is administered in the back of the general education classroom, because moving a student to an alternative setting is not allowable when administering the State standards-based assessment.

When providing test accommodations within the administration of this State's two Statewide assessments, the most pressing issue is one of logistics, since multiple tracks of students are tested simultaneously. Consequently, it is often difficult to locate adequate and appropriate space for testing small groups of SpEd-LEP students.

Statewide test scores are reported at the student level, the State level, and the district level. Student level data provide test scores for one student's performance on a single State or district assessment. The student score reports are distributed to parents as information on their child's test performance in relationship to other students in the U.S. or in making progress toward achieving State standards. District level and State level data are first reported aggregated by grade level as well as disaggregated by LEP status and disability status. The test data from students with disabilities is further disaggregated by disability category.

Student raw test scores and class mastery reports that describe progress toward achieving standards are returned to classroom teachers as soon as possible after testing. State law stipulates that the test results must be reported to school districts within 14 working days after the State department of education receives the test data. From there, test results and summaries of these data are provided for the elementary school in administrative reports "in a timely fashion." School level data are used in improving future instructional delivery and curriculum planning. These expectations are included in written guidelines as policy to

guide the administration of the criterion-reference testing. In addition, student test data inform standards-based instruction on an individual basis. The school district has a Center for Teaching and Learning that supports teachers in learning how to interpret and use test data appropriately.

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

The principal identified the elementary school climate as a strength in instruction for elementary-aged LEP students. In describing the school's climate as "wonderful," he thought that the elementary program was especially conducive to integrating students from diverse backgrounds. He further indicated that there are few socioeconomic differences among the families whose children attend this elementary school, which may account for the high degree of tolerance displayed by the students. In addition, the LEP services coordinator perceives the LEP students as feeling comfortable at school, which may promote an easier acculturation process. Another important strength of this school program is the emphasis on acquiring English reading skills. To this end, the LEP services coordinator is learning some new instructional techniques to increase his ability to teach reading and writing.

Overall, the elementary special education teacher described this school's program as containing a well-coordinated teaching staff that value collaboration, life-long learning, and providing supplemental programs for their students and families. Educators in this elementary school have a strong professional network with their local university program and many of these teachers have master or doctoral degrees. Journal reading is valued once teachers have completed their advanced degree program.

More specific to SpEd-LEP students, the special education coordinator was able to identify multiple strengths in the elementary special education program. First, collaboration between special, general, and ESL teachers for organizing special school activities and coordinating instruction is an important component of instructional delivery in the school. In addition to regular classroom activities, the collaboration also focuses on supplemental activities outside of the students' school hours which is another strength of the instructional services identified through this interview. Finally, the interviewee described the teaching staff as "devoted" and "dedicated" to all of the students in this elementary school.

*Weaknesses*

The principal feels that it is important to increase the mainstream experience of LEP students while continuing to improve their academic and English language skills.

Within the strengths of this school's program for SpEd-LEP students, challenges remain. Within the confines of the elementary school, general education teachers are in need of increasing Spanish-speaking skills to enhance their communication with LEP students. Teachers in general education are also frustrated by the lack of school readiness skills and English language skills in the SpEd-LEP students included in their classrooms. The special

education teacher also identified challenges that concern the students' families beyond the scope of daily programming. Even though access is difficult, there is a need for teachers to spend time in their students' home to better understand family backgrounds and to develop better school and family relationships. In addition, a continual challenge is finding a proper balance between honoring and respecting families and their culture while meeting food, housing, clothing, transportation, employment, and legal information needs. Finally, providing stronger programming, especially programs that target adult literacy, is a persistent problem.

# RED CHESTNUT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 3-5 |
| Total students: | 385 |
| LEP students: | 5 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 0 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Chestnut School District |

This elementary school has 385 students in grades 3-5, with 5 students identified as LEP. Two of the LEP students are Spanish-speakers, two are Russian, and one is from Sierra-Leone. Overall, the student population is about 18 percent minority, with about 21 percent eligible for free or reduced lunch. Most of the children have grown up in the county. The school has always had a few LEP students, but very few with special needs.

The school is located in a semi-rural setting and is relatively small. A system for identifying those who reflect specific needs has been developed. A well-defined committee has structured a plan and process for the general staff in order to serve the population.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

The LEP services coordinator indicated that the most frequent type of service provided to LEP students in the elementary school were Type 6 services (extensive LEP services, all English), and Type 5 services (some LEP services, significant native language use) Services are provided by an ESL tutor, who works with students in pull-out sessions up to 5 hours per week. Some students also receive separate math instruction, and accommodations are also made within the regular mainstream classes, e.g., there is extra time allowed for work, more small group work, and some individualized work. The ESL tutor works out the schedule for working with the LEP students with their teachers so that the students don't consistently miss instruction in a specific subject area.

In addition, the principal mentioned that one of the LEP students fits in well with a small group comprised of special education students in an inclusion setting. The student joins this group for a half-hour in the morning and meets with the ESL teacher for an hour and 15 minutes in the afternoon.

There are no students in the school currently who are LEP but are not receiving LEP services. If parents refused services, then the school would not track the student's performance, and parents would sign a form to indicate that they have refused services. Teachers who work with LEP students coordinate their instruction through regular grade level meetings to share strategies and discuss instruction. There is a common time provided once a week for the grade-level teams so that the team members are able to communicate and plan activities during that period.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The district provides staff development in certain areas. It also provides assistance either monetarily or through in-service support. The school schedules its own staff development events and asks the district for assistance. Workshops and in-service programs are offered during the summer to staff members to promote their development. For example, a week-long institute on assessment is made available to the staff during the summer.

Teachers of LEP students receive the same materials and training as do all other teachers in the district. The LEP services coordinator indicated that teachers of LEP students ensure alignment of instruction by adhering to content guidelines, and by knowing what accommodations are approved for students.

The school principal believes that there is a long way to go in understanding the outcomes and indicators related to standards. She attended a State training workshop on knowledge of the standards, indicators, and outcomes, and she is concerned that there is a very wide range of interpretations regarding these. In addition, the principal feels that the textbooks are not in alignment. For example, the fifth grade textbook in science doesn't include one of the required indicators.

To ensure that instruction is aligned with State content standards, the district carries out brief (10-minute) visits to each class, and then gives comments and recommendations to the various staff teams. The principal believes that it is helpful to have the outside input. Generally, the role of the observer is as an improvement coach and is described as being very helpful. However, the responsibility is dispersed when conducted with the staff teams, rather than with individual teachers. The principal would like to have more observations focused on individual teachers for longer periods of time. The principal also does her own monitoring as best she can. Most of her visits to classrooms are unannounced. She conducts about 8 visits a month, and approximately 80 by the end of the year.

LEP students are included in the regular classrooms and so they are observed as part of the regular monitoring. The school gathers milestone data on every child at every quarter, so each LEP student's progress is assessed along with all other students. The assessments are based on chapter tests and classroom grades.

In addition, monitoring is also accomplished by a very careful analysis of test results, broken out by the teacher. The principal looks at how the students in each teacher's class perform on the State standards test and on the CTBS, and relates these to the proportion of minority

students in the class, and looks to see how well the teacher is able to facilitate student progression.

The LEP services coordinator indicated that challenges arise when there is a LEP student in an upper grade (e.g., fourth grade) who is just beginning to learn English. That student will be able to learn only a fraction of the content area for the whole year and standards won't be met unless accommodations are very clear and very specific about goals for a beginning level student. The coordinator suggested that the challenge demonstrates the need for TESOL standards and alignment of these with regular standards. There is an ongoing process to address alignment, and the coordinator noted that the principal and guidance counselor in the school are very involved in working to address these alignment needs.

Also in terms of needs for alignment, the LEP services coordinator referred to the needs of teachers for information on how to work with LEP students in their classes. The county is now working with a local college to hold workshops to address this need.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

A SpEd-LEP student would be identified in a process that begins with a teacher's recommendation. The teacher informally discusses issues with the ESL tutor, and as needed the district LEP services coordinator is involved. The process would then follow the same procedures that are used to identify any special education student. A school team meeting would occur that include the ESL teacher, the special education and the regular education teachers, the building team members, and any person with the knowledge of or information about the student. Informal tests would be given and shared before formal testing would begin.

The special education teacher reported that the native language of the child might prove to be a challenge in evaluating whether a disability exists.

*Instructional Services for SpEd-LEP Services*

There are no current SpEd-LEP students. However, services would be provided in the regular classroom through inclusion services, plus other pull-out services as needed.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

The principal indicated that the teachers always try to work together. The teachers meet as a team that include special education and regular classroom teachers. However, they don't have enough specialist teacher time so that whenever the teachers do meet together, it is for a specific issue. Otherwise, there is no regular coordination between ESL and regular classroom teachers or between special education and regular teachers. Their coordination is therefore somewhat erratic.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

The county follows State guidelines by testing students to determine which students are rated as non-speaking on at least two sections of the test. LEP students to be included in State tests are determined by the district LEP services coordinator in conjunction with the school staff and based on IPT test results.

Any SpEd-LEP students would be subject to and follow the same policies that apply to special education students. All special education students participate in the State-testing program. Only two students were exempt from taking the State test where an alternative special education test was administered instead.

Decisions about the use of accommodations for LEP students are made by the school team comprised of the principal, testing coordinator for the school, classroom teacher(s), and the ESL tutor. These decisions are based on an initial list of approved accommodations presented to the school team by the district coordinator. Many accommodations may be used during the test provided that there are used in the classroom/instructional program.

The State standards test and CTBS test results are provided the following year and create "emotional trauma" for the faculty. Teachers itemize the results and teachers receive item analyses for each of their students. Perceptions are that language is a barrier for the LEP students on the tests.

The whole faculty reviews the test results at a meeting. They review the indicators from the State standards test and try to determine what they can do to increase achievement. The principal remarked that it is all guesswork, since the variables change so much such as different teachers, different materials, and different students. However, she continues to review and analyze the results with her faculty (she has done this for 12 years). Of note is the fact that before becoming a principal she was a testing specialist, and so she carries this concern for assessment into her work as principal.

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

The LEP coordinator indicated that a strength of the program is that the school is very alert in recognizing when a student may need LEP services. The program is very personalized in approach, and the staff is very encouraging and supportive of the students. The school engages the student immediately, and encourages the family to come in for a conference. There is a translator available for Spanish, although not yet for other languages needed, but sometimes the family will bring in someone to translate. The principal referred to the dedication of the ESL tutor and the students' teachers as strong points of the school's program for LEP students.

The special education coordinator expressed pride in relating positive aspects of the special education program. These aspects include the teachers willingness to accommodate

students in regular classrooms, the inclusion of special education students in extra-curricular activities, the positive working relationship of the IEP teams, and the matching of students with teachers for better psychological and educational benefits.

*Weaknesses*

According to the LEP services coordinator, the weakness in the program is in the need for new, young teachers to become as familiar as possible with strategies for adapting instruction to LEP students. The coordinator feels that the new teachers should be encouraged to participate in as much in-service as they can on this topic.

The principal noted that the students need time and additional assistance to truly acquire the language sufficiently to take an assessment such as the State standards test. She does not believe that it is right to give the students tests because two years is not enough time. Teachers are given time to have input in the scheduling of classes. An example of this occurred at the end of last school year when representatives from each grade level met for one week and made an "individualized" schedule for any child that may need attention. Conversations were also held with the feeder schools for easier transitioning of students.

The special education coordinator expressed a desire to serve special education students in regular classrooms before they are placed in a pull-out program. Additionally, it was hoped that more materials, aids, and ideas would be made available for the regular classroom teacher for better service to special needs students in the least restrictive environment.

# 5. FINDINGS FROM SELECTED MIDDLE SCHOOLS

In this chapter, findings from the interviews conducted in four middle schools are presented. The name of the district in which the school is located is incorporated within the school's name. Thus, American Elm Elementary is located within Elm School District.

# AMERICAN ELM MIDDLE SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 6-8 |
| Total students: | 828 |
| LEP students: | 325 |
| LEP Special Education students: | Not Available |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Elm School District |

The population includes: Hispanic, Southeast Asian (Hmong), Caucasian, Black, and a small group of Arabic-speaking students. Although there is a high mobility rate, most of the students have attended at least three years of school.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

According to the school LEP services coordinator, all LEP students are receiving some LEP instruction because even if parents opt out of the LEP program, the State law requires that all LEP students must attend the English language development class. Type 3 services (some LEP services, all English) are the most frequent type of service received by LEP students in this school. The language groups that receive this type of instruction are Spanish, Hmong, Mien, and Lao. Typically, the language proficiency levels of these students are intermediate fluency through advanced (based on the ELD test). The second most frequent type of service offered in the school is Type 4 services (some LEP services, some native language use). The language groups receiving this service type are Spanish, Hmong, Mien, and Lao. The English language proficiency levels of these LEP students are typically beginning and early intermediate. The school also provides Service Type 7 (extensive LEP services, some native language use) and Service Type 8 (extensive LEP services, significant native language use). LEP students are exited from the LEP program or re-designated based on their scores on the ELD test and the SAT 9 (State test).

*Alignment of Instruction*

The school LEP services coordinator reported that new English language development (ELD) standards had been developed which are aligned with the English language arts standards. A grade 6, 7, and 8 ELD program is being piloted during 2002-2003 and will be adopted at the end of 2003 following which all teachers will be trained. The greatest challenge in aligning instruction with State standards, according to the LEP services

coordinator, is to focus on aligning ELD standards. Also, ensuring that teachers have the knowledge of the standards is a challenge and a priority for the school.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

Based on test scores and classroom performance respectively, the school LEP services coordinator and the classroom teacher identify LEP students in need of special education services. The process of identification is undertaken by a student study team consisting of a school psychologist, school counselor, assistant principal, special education teacher, regular education teacher and the referring teacher (who can be either the school LEP services coordinator or the classroom teacher) and parent and student. All staff members on the student study team are certified in second language acquisition/development.

*Instructional Services*

During the school year, four eighth grade students were identified as in need of special education services. The students had been in a sheltered bilingual class and their need for special education services was noted when they were being considered for transition to a mainstream program. The school indicated that special education needs could usually be determined by grade 8. The school has no test to measure language and teachers may not have enough training for effective early identification. A native language teacher is used in the "sheltered" class and primary language support is given to students as long as needed. The special education program has several features, including pull-out speech services, small group instruction, a special day class (the most restrictive), and stratified age groupings. Periods of thirty minutes per day are designated for LEP and SpEd-LEP students. Based on the level of the language, most LEP and SpEd-LEP students are mainstreamed into English language development programs. The LEP and SpEd-LEP students receive specialized services, including paraprofessional support. Coordination among teachers is encouraged.

*Alignment of Instruction*

According to the principal, all teachers receive the same materials and training on alignment of instruction with State standards. The new computer laboratory, new software, and special supplemental books and materials are used to assist teachers in alignment needs. In addition, many workshop sessions have been held to assist teachers. The District too has been involved in sharing information on standards. Although standards are a priority, they are new for the school. The challenge for the school is to have credentialed teachers and help them become knowledgeable about these standards.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services in the School*

Lack of time to plan for providing services to students often makes coordination between different staff members in the school difficult. Time for planning is needed to make changes to accommodate the individual needs of students. The principal reported that internal preparation was purchased by hiring "roving reading clinicians" to come to classrooms. These clinicians are used also for pull-out, monitoring, and for pairing of veteran teachers with new teachers.

There are grade-level meetings and core teachers/departmental meetings to help provide opportunities for coordination. The principal hires substitutes to allow teachers to meet during the school day. Also, a period of 45 minutes is designated for planning meetings before and after school. However, these meetings are informal with little control over those who attend.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

According to the school LEP services coordinator, everyone is included in Statewide testing. State law mandates that all pupils in grades 2 through 11 be tested with the Stanford 9, regardless of the time they have been enrolled in the State school system or their fluency in the English language. This includes English learners (LEP students). LEP students do not receive any accommodations on the State test – the Stanford 9. The school takes pride in reviewing test data, trends and identifying the needed skills of LEP students.

There is a general list of accommodations for SpEd-LEP students. These accommodations, which are specified in the IEP, include: out-of-level tests, large print tests, Braille tests, timing/scheduling modifications, reading or signing of directions, use of aids, read aloud, translation of directions, and use of a bilingual dictionary.

Tests are used as indicators for the review of standards, and teachers are under pressure to avoid sanctions. Thus, the use of data, skills development, and the review of standards are priorities for all teachers. General preparations include: the use of roving reading clinicians, monitoring of new teachers, pairing of veteran teachers and the hiring of substitutes by the principal and the creation, purchase, and use of planning time.

Test scores of LEP students are used to assist in guiding instruction and are shared with parents as well as with teachers. Test scores on the State tests (Stanford 9 and ELD test) are used for placement and the exit or re-designation. Teachers can access test scores from a website. It was reported that the teachers do not like the test due to the fact that there are sanctions for poor performance; the school has been classified as under-performing for the past few years.

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

According to the school LEP services coordinator, the school is the only middle school in the district with a daily, designated ELD program that is "leveled", i.e., students are grouped according to English language proficiency level, thereby allowing teachers to differentiate instruction. The coordinator also pointed out that this school had scored the highest in the district on the ELD test. Environment is very important and there is pride of ownership and lots of rewards are given to student for success. Many staff activities, high expectations, and positive attitudes prevail.

*Weaknesses*

Overall, the school LEP services coordinator said that the area that needed the most improvement were teachers. She said: "We still have a minority of teachers who still want to teach in the same way – the sage on the stage – and not meet the needs of the kids."

The coordinator noted that coordination and collaboration are the areas that need improvement; also, she noted that overcoming the belief that students can't learn is important. Since all students don't learn in the same way, excuses are unacceptable.

# QUEEN PALM MIDDLE SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 6-8 |
| Total students: | 1,924 |
| LEP students: | 276 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 1 |
| Primary language group: | Haitian Creole |
| School District: | Palm School District |

Approximately 85 percent of the students who attend this middle school are Haitian. The majority of these students were not born in the United States. The other 15 percent of the student population is from 50 different nations, even though these students are primarily Latino. The assistant principal observed that the mobility rate is fairly high in this population. Out of the toal of approximately 1,900 students in the school, 300 have been identified as lacking English literacy skills. The average class size is approximately 26 students and approximately 80 percent of the students are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

At this middle school, LEP students take ESL reading, ESL language arts, math, science, and social sciences. The only difference in the schedule of ESL students from non-ESL students is that non-ESL students are not pulled out for ESL classes. Students often enter the school with relatively strong English verbal skills, but very limited English literacy skills.

It is not uncommon for the school to be unaware of the amount of education newcomers have received in their native countries. Because all teachers are required to have training in the teaching of content using ESL strategies, mainstream instruction at this school consists of regular courses taught using ESL techniques. In addition, some use of the native language is common at all levels of instruction because of the high number of teachers who are bilingual. The ESL coordinator estimated that Service Type 7 and 8 were the most commonly provided services in the school.

Occasionally, parents of Haitian-Creole students request that their children be taught exclusively in English. In these cases, students do not take ESL classes. Teachers have not observed this with Spanish-speaking parents.

When students leave the ESL or ESL/special education program, their progress is monitored for two years. If the student is having difficulty, tutoring is strongly recommended. If it appears that the student was not truly ready to exit special services, he/she will return to services. This, however, is very rare.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The district has provided numerous workshops for teachers, along with standards-related materials and software. The assistant principal commented that within the last three years, ESL teachers have become very comfortable with teaching that is aligned to the State standards.

The training and materials provided by the district have been effective in the assistant principal's estimation. In particular, she commented on the effectiveness of professional development activities pertaining to reading. A recent example was a five-day paid teacher training workshop in an instructional model that allows teachers to select from a variety of strategies to suit the needs of particular situations and students.

Teachers' instruction is monitored by the principal and assistant principal. In this way, the principal can ensure that instruction is aligned with State standards. Each administrator (principal and assistant principals) has to complete five classroom observations per week. The observations entail completing checklists of important instructional features.

According to the middle school LEP services coordinator, the training and materials received from the school district that pertain to the alignment of instruction for ESL students have been outstanding. Because teachers follow the competency-based curriculum, instruction is "automatically" in alignment with the State standards.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

When teachers think a student may have a learning disability, they convene a LEP committee meeting, which includes the LEP services coordinator, teachers, the school counselor, and parents. Typically, it takes several months before a decision is made to place a student in special education. Parents are often reluctant to consent because they want to avoid any stigma that might be associated with having a child in special education.

When new students arrive, the school ESL staff completes a checklist to document the student's proficiency in his or her home language. When students transfer in from other schools, they usually bring the necessary paperwork with them. Students who arrive with no paperwork and are struggling with language issues may need to be assessed. A bilingual assessor will check the student's hearing and vision. Then there might be a child study team. It typically takes several months for this whole process, although the district prefers to keep the process limited to 30 to 40 working days.

According to the special education coordinator, the team (guidance counselor, bilingual assessor, school psychologist, social worker, assistant principal, teachers, and parents) makes the decision to place a LEP student in special education. She believes that they have the necessary resources to make the best decisions possible. She mentioned that there is a book published by the State on strategies used by students that help create independence. This book is written for any student in need of learning strategies. It lists over 100 strategies, allowing teachers to select those strategies that are most appropriate for the content area and the student. This is particularly useful when the team is trying to figure out whether different types of interventions and strategies might help the child.

*Instructional Services*

According to the special education coordinator, the school only has one SpEd-LEP student this year, a Columbian student who arrived midway through the fall term. She is considered to be an ESL level one student. Typically, the school has fewer than five SpEd-LEP students each year and they are usually ESL levels two and three.

The special education coordinator explained that if students are from Puerto Rico, they often bring IEP documentation from Puerto Rico. This is much less common, however, with students from other countries. The special education coordinator explained that the special education staff anticipates that they will have to "go the extra mile" for all special education students and give them extra attention. The program, in her opinion, is designed to add on students' individual needs and provide them with small classes and individual attention.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The special education coordinator explained that the State standards correspond to curriculum-based competencies. These include a set of competencies specifically for special education students. Thus, she noted, the standards are extended down for special education students. When the staff develops objectives for SpEd-LEP students, they base them on the State standards.

According to the special education coordinator, it involves a lot of preparation for teachers to follow the standards with SpEd-LEP students. Nevertheless, she does not perceive the alignment of instruction for these students to be any more difficult than the alignment of instruction for either ESL or special education students.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

The team structure used in this middle school ensures coordination between LEP services teachers and regular teachers. Within the school there are a number of teams of teachers, each composed of a language arts teacher, a math teacher, a science teacher, a social studies teacher, and an ESL teacher. Since each team teaches the same group of students, they are able to meet to discuss the students' progress. The assistant principal has allotted three mornings per week for team meetings. One of the three weekly meetings is designated specifically to discuss curricula, so that each team member knows exactly what the other is doing.

According to the special education coordinator, teachers typically collaborate to address behavioral issues of SpEd-LEP students. For example, a particular student has been sleeping in class this year. The teachers discussed it both at team meetings and at special education meetings because they were concerned about the health of the student. They thought perhaps there was something happening at home that caused the child to lose sleep at night. Through communication with the family, they discovered that the student often left home without eating breakfast, so they got the necessary paperwork filled out to qualify her for the free breakfast program.

The special education coordinator shared her belief that the team meetings are very important. She believes that the meetings enhance instruction because each teacher knows what the others are doing. In addition, communication is facilitated by the fact that most special education teachers have classrooms located near one another; the ESL teachers' classrooms are generally near each other as well.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

All eighth graders in the school take the State test, except for those ESL students who have been in the country less than two years. Teachers use LEP students' test scores to guide their instruction. The LEP services coordinator noted that although LEP students are provided with dictionaries during testing, she wasn't aware that other accommodations (e.g., additional time, bilingual proctors) are granted.

The IEP team, including ESL teachers, makes decisions regarding whether a student will be tested. The IEP team always includes a region representative to assure that the child receives services that meet his/her needs. Accommodations for SpEd-LEP students are extra time to take the test, and having the directions read aloud in the child's native language; these are built into the IEP. The special education coordinator expressed her opinion that the teachers are generally fairly skilled at choosing accommodations from both the ESL list and the special education list.

The school helps prepare all students, including LEP and SpEd-LEP students, for the test by teaching them content and skills (e.g., identification of synonyms and antonyms, parts of sentences) that are similar to those assessed by the test. LEP and SpEd-LEP education students who perform poorly on the State test are referred to tutors. The assistant principal emphasized the fact that although she did not have a problem with administering the assessment to these populations of students, she believed it is important to prepare these students psychologically to take the test and it is important to assess the students' skill with other measures, rather than with the State test alone.

# IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

The principal commented that LEP students are not "outsiders" at this school. They become involved with all sorts of activities from the beginning. LEP students are provided with much additional support, such as after-school and Saturday tutoring. In addition, it helps that so many teachers are bilingual.

The special education coordinator identified a variety of strengths of their program for SpEd-LEP students. She believes that the school has made progress in making accommodations for students not just in assessment, but also in instruction and in general school life. The Parent Contact speaks the native language of the parents and goes to the home to make sure the parents are informed about meetings they need to attend. The school considers the overall development of the child: academic, physical, and social development. There are clubs after school that the SpEd-LEP students can join, which make them feel part of a team. The coordinator explained that SpEd-LEP students are involved in everything and they aren't isolated.

The special education coordinator also noted that tutoring is provided as an extra opportunity in which students can get immediate assistance. The school offers free after-school tutoring in language arts and math. Once parents give their approval, the student can participate in the program all year. There's a 1-to-10 ratio in these tutoring sessions instead of the 1-to-30 ratio in regular classes. In addition, she commented on the strong turnout for parent meetings. They use the radio for making announcements about these meetings in Haitian Creole and Spanish, and also put the information on display outside the school. They work closely with the city to ensure security for parking. Furthermore, the school is a community school where parents can come for ESL and other types of adult education classes.

*Weaknesses*

The principal shared her belief that the school could benefit from increased use of technology to teach LEP students. Also, the LEP services coordinator has observed that some of the children have such limited English skills that they would benefit from even more ESL and native language instruction.

The special education coordinators identified limited classroom space as the biggest challenge faced by the school; with more space, it would be possible to reduce class size. She observed that the families' limited resources are another challenge. Children at the school wear uniforms, for example, but some families can't afford them. For some, it is difficult to even purchase school supplies. Furthermore, parents' long work hours and limited literacy skills often reduce the extent to which they are able to partner in their children's education.

# LIBERTY OAK MIDDLE SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 6-8 |
| Total students: | 1,043 |
| LEP students: | 105 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 27 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Oak School District |

This middle school, serves a predominantly Hispanic area (from Mexican, Puerto Rican, and other backgrounds). The school is 94 percent Hispanic, with small populations of African American and Polish students.

SpEd-LEP students who attend this middle school are generally in their third year of special education programming. According to the staff, some entering SpEd-LEP students are in SpEd-LEP status because their prior school did not conduct the testing needed to reevaluate their need for special education services. For those LEP students who are appropriately placed in middle school special education services, their native language is typically the only language used at home. These students may have some English literacy skills, but receive little or no support at home for their school experiences.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

The primary service type offered in this school is Type 8 (extensive LEP services, significant native language use). This approach is offered to Spanish-speaking students in the school. Most or all content area teachers for LEP students use the native language for instruction, with the percentage of native language use decreasing slightly across grades.

Teachers of LEP students meet 1-2 times a week to discuss the progress of individual students and methods of instruction. They also often have lunch together or meet before or after school to address these issues. They also attend pod meetings at each grade level once a week, where they discuss coordination of LEP services with other instruction within the grade. The LEP services coordinator reported that these approaches are very effective.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The principal attends a one-day workshop each year on standards. Teachers of LEP students receive materials from the district on State standards as well as material on district ESL standards. Some teachers receive training each year from the district. The principle noted that the materials are only effective if the teacher already has a strong knowledge base. The LEP services coordinator rated the materials and training as very helpful to teachers, but reported that even more materials and training would have been useful.

Each teacher submits an instructional plan that covers two weeks to the principal who reviews it and provides feedback. The principal also does classroom visits, especially in the classrooms of new teachers. There is a regional liaison that also makes occasional classroom visits.

According to the LEP services coordinator, a major challenge for the middle school in working with standards is motivating students to care about the standards. To address this issue, teachers use a number of real-life examples, and stress that the standards are achievable by all students. The principal noted that materials for standards come out of the school budget, which makes it a competing priority with other urgent school needs.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

The school uses a pre-referral group of five teachers to identify students in need of special education services. The pre-referral group, an intervention assistance team (IAT), meets with the main teachers of a student (including bilingual teachers for LEP students) to discuss student needs.

In the evaluation process, the LEP student is referred for an educational assessment by the classroom teacher and then the process is continued by a case manager who completes an educational background form. The IAT uses this information to then develop and implement multiple pre-referral interventions over a set period of time. Each case is studied to determine whether a full evaluation is warranted or whether additional interventions within the general education classroom are adequate to meet the student's educational needs.

Questions of test validity arise when students are tested in their native language so that it is unknown as to whether students' abilities are accurately measured. However, measuring LEP students' actual abilities with assessment instruments designed in English and which may have cultural bias may be inappropriate as well.

An additional challenge is determining the difference between a learning problem and learning a new language when a students need to speak English outside of their

homes while speaking Spanish at home. Complicating the situation is the possibility that a student may learn in a monolingual instruction program while other students may be learning in a bilingual situation. It is, therefore, necessary for a case manager to understand language learning within each student's unique context, which can be difficult when one case manager has many differing cases.

*Instructional Services*

Students in this middle school are organized by grade levels into "pods" or groupings where all of the students in one pod attend all classes together as a group. Bilingual education teachers and bilingual special education teachers are assigned to each pod. Special education services are provided by including students in general education classes, by pulling special education students out of general education classes to a resource special education classroom for instruction, or in self-contained special education classroom where students attend classes with special education students only.

*Alignment of Instruction*

Special education teachers have booklets that contain State learning goals and district frameworks to use in planning lessons. These goals and frameworks serve as State and district content standards that are mandated without choice in terms of implementation.

The middle school teacher indicated that it was important to maintain high learning expectations for LEP students with disabilities, but that it is still important to remain realistic about how much and how fast some students can learn. Instruction that is aligned with State standards does not always allow for individual students' learning pace. Some bilingual special educators find that the mandated goals and frameworks contain cultural bias making them difficult to use for developing IEPs or lesson plans for LEP students with disabilities.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

The middle school teacher interviewed for this case study was not aware of any specific efforts to coordinate LEP and special education services, even though points of coordination did emerge in his interview. When describing the grade level pod organization, he did describe weekly pod meetings where grade level teachers discuss instructional issues and plan coordinated instruction. Bilingual and special education teachers attend these meetings where they make suggestions for modifying instruction for LEP students with disabilities. However, he was uncertain of the extent to which these services were coordinated.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

All LEP students in the school except those who are newly enrolled during the school year, take the special State tests for LEP students that have been aligned with

State standards. The Spanish students also take the Logramos Riverside achievement test. There are no special policies or exemptions on these tests.

All students in special education in this middle school are expected to take the criterion-referenced standards-based Statewide test and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). There are no exemptions or accommodations provided for any student on State tests.

The IEP teams determine which accommodations are most appropriate for specific SpEd-LEP students. The most frequently used accommodations in this school are extended test time, read aloud directions, small group test administration, and special education teacher as proctor. Starting four weeks before the test(s), teachers in classrooms and in the after-school program review test-taking skills and discuss the content of the test(s)

Teachers are given scores on all tests for individual LEP students. The principal said that she "would hope" that they are being used for instruction, though she could not definitely state that they were. The principal stated that teachers viewed the State test as "another test."

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

According to the LEP services coordinator, the strengths of the school's program for LEP students include: (1) the classroom materials (including textbooks) that are used; (2) the after-school program, which is attended by 50-60 percent of LEP students; and the teachers of LEP students, who were described as flexible and working well together.

According to the principal, the strengths of the program are the teachers, whom she rated as good, hard-working, motivated, experienced, and fighting for the students. She also thought that she could be considered as a strength, in that she was supportive and ensured that any needed resources were provided. The LEP special education program was described as having compassionate special education teachers with strong teaching abilities and an interest in leading after-school activities. Special education teachers who are also certified as bilingual educators enhance the programming for these students.

*Weaknesses*

The LEP services coordinator indicated that the school needed at least one more ESL teacher to meet the language needs of LEP students. The principal was concerned about the speed with which students were exited from the program, and thought more bilingual materials could be available on State goals and standards.

The middle school special education teacher identified obtaining sufficient personnel to adequately meet all students' educational needs as the most pressing issue in this

school. Even with additional personnel, however, the school needs more administrative coordination within the school as well as district-wide that address curricular issues. Administrators' time tends to be absorbed by disciplinary problems and administrative responsibilities, which leaves little time for solving curricular problems. Finally, teachers need more time during their school day to coordinate services between departments.

# LEBANON CEDAR MIDDLE SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 6-8 |
| Total students: | 761 |
| LEP students: | 42 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 4 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Cedar School District |

This large middle school, which is located in a suburban school district in the west, has a small program for LEP students. Twenty-six of the LEP students in the school speak Spanish, while the others represent several other language groups, including Russian, Vietnamese, German, Cambodian, and Chinese. Fifteen percent of the student population overall is Hispanic. The minority student population (including Black, Asian and Hispanic) is approximately 20 percent.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

Extensive ESL instruction with content designed for LEP students (Service Type 7) is the dominant mode of instruction for LEP students at this school. As students become more proficient in English, some LEP services supplement the regular instructional program (Service Type 4). The half-time ELL teacher provides three periods of instruction: one for beginners and two for advanced ELLs. The literacy skills of students in the beginning class vary considerably. The advanced classes focus on writing because these students have not passed the State benchmarks. A half-time ELL instructional assistant helps students in core classes.

In order to better prepare students for the transition to regular classes, ELL aides have been added to some classrooms in the afternoon. Although they do not provide formal instruction, their presence appears to have been successful for both the current and former LEP students.

Time is allotted for ELL teachers to coordinate with other teachers who serve the same students. The principal encourages classroom teachers to seek out the ELL teachers as issues arise. This principal demonstrates his support for coordination every Wednesday when he meets with a school counselor and the ELL teacher. In

addition to meeting with classroom teachers, the ELL teacher explained that she communicates with them by e-mail as well. Recently, the teams were reorganized to link ELL teachers with the grade-level teams. By clustering ELL students at a grade level with one homeroom teacher, coordination is facilitated since there are fewer teachers to coordinate. The ELL teacher hopes to arrange an ELL study skills class. The teacher will pull the LEP students from physical education twice per week. Next year, this middle school hopes to have a regularly scheduled ESL class.

*Alignment of Instruction*

Extensive work has been done through the district and with the support of some grant funds. Teams of middle school teachers are examining the State benchmarks very carefully. The district's curriculum and instruction department is doing extensive work aligning the curriculum with State standards in fine arts, physical education, mathematics and English as a second language. The principal thinks that this has been a good first step, but he explained that "we have to keep the momentum up." The next step is to revisit the standards and move forward with ongoing training. The English language arts department has a well-articulated curriculum that is age-appropriate and progressive.

The implementation of standards is assured through the teacher evaluation process. In addition, this middle school holds a yearly curriculum-planning meeting and team meetings occur throughout the year. The principal continues to be involved with the faculty as they focus on standards implementation.

It has been a challenge to align standards with the ELL curriculum. According to the LEP services coordinator director, it would be helpful if the ELL teacher could devote full-time to LEP students and their instruction, rather than the current half-time. Since other teachers do not always know what LEP students need, the ELL teacher is often an advocate for the students.

## II. INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

In this middle school, either the ELL teacher or the classroom teacher may make a referral, but the ELL teacher is always consulted. The referral management team meets on Thursdays. The ELL teacher only attends these meetings if she made the referral. The ELL teacher explained that the outcome of one referral management team with which she was involved was the decision to implement a math strategies course rather than special education services.

The special education coordinator was no longer at the middle school so a young special education teacher was allocated to act as department representative for this interview. She said the process of identifying LEP students in need of special education services had recently been revised. Prereferral, the procedure of gathering as much information as possible about the student, is now part of the process. During

the prereferral process the child study team collects information from all of the teachers working with the student. A review of the student records is conducted and attendance records are reviewed. The team sets goals for the student and meets again in approximately six weeks to see if the goals have been met. If the goals have been met then the process ends. However, if the goals are not met and it is decided that the student needs further testing then the referral management team meets. This consists of the school psychologist, speech therapist, counselor, principal and special education teacher. The special education teacher coordinates with parents and teachers. A different team is created for each student depending who works with that student.

According to the ELL teacher the greatest challenge is to decipher the exact source of a student's difficulties. Often, due to insufficient documentation, the focus has to be on work samples. The process could benefit from more coordination. According to the ELL teacher, it is difficult to get through all the "special education hoops."

The special education teacher is concerned that the process of identifying LEP students for special education services is subjective. Data is gathered about the students and then the student is tested. The decision is made as a team but there are deadlines to meet and sometimes she feels that the discussion is purely subjective. The special education teacher says that she is 'savvy enough' to be sure that she is not the only one making the decision since input from many sources of expertise is needed when considering LEP students. The identification process that is now used in the district is fairly new and incorporates the review of samples in addition to the formal testing procedures previously used. However, she felt that a wider look at LEP students was necessary to try to include all relevant variables. The older system was less subjective since it used numbers but the tests were not appropriate. The newer system avoids that but is open to the problem of being highly subjective and often impacted by people with no real training or empathy with LEP students.

*Instructional Services*

The special education teacher said that all four of the Spanish-speaking students are categorized as having specific learning disabilities. They receive services within a separate special education setting for less than 20 percent of the week. However, they also receive special education services for 1-3 hours a week in a general education classroom. One of the students receives ELL instruction in addition to special education services. There are several factors that affect these students' ability to do well academically: learning the English language, overcoming learning disabilities, attending school inconsistently, and compounding education difficulties with family mobility issues.

Students are exited from special education services when they have met their IEP goals and if the IEP team deems exiting from services in the best interest of the student.

*Alignment of Instruction*

ELL teachers are included with all other teachers in training. However, the ELL teacher explained that: "during training, the group breaks up to discuss content specific issues with others who teach the same subject area, but since I'm the only ELL teacher, I have no one to talk to. I usually join the reading group." ELL teachers do not receive much specific training on alignment of instruction with standards.

The special education teacher said that all special education students, including SpEd-LEP students have their instruction aligned to the regular education curriculum. Since the regular education curriculum is aligned to State standards, special education students do have instruction aligned to State standards. However, instruction and content are modified because of the student's special education needs.

According to the special education teacher, the greatest challenge is in setting standards when dealing with students who have learning disabilities compounded by language learning issues. If the student has a disability and second language learning issues, it is difficult to meet benchmarks. However, the students might meet benchmarks at a different grade level. After-school classes are provided to tutor students towards meeting benchmarks. Students in this situation also have extra after-school remedial classes. The students' IEPs take State assessments into consideration and the after-school classes give students even more opportunities to learn the skills they need.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

The special education teacher felt that coordination of services can be difficult. Although the ELL teachers coordinate fairly well with the special education staff, the coordinator commented that other teachers were more difficult to coordinate with. For example, teachers might not attend after school meeting; they do not want to stay after school, but they do not want to give up their planning time to come to meetings either. The special education teacher felt that she had to work hard to maintain good relationships with all the teachers that she has to coordinate with. She felt that it was critical to her student's success that she had planning time with teachers but said that there simply was not enough planning time. In the middle school environment, she felt that teachers did not discuss their students as much as they should and that issues concerning SpEd-LEP students were often considered far too difficult to address.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

All students are tested, but they can be exempted for up to one year if they have just arrived in the district. However, there are no exemptions at this middle school. All the students take either the standard test or the side by side (English/Spanish) test.

There are three test levels: A, B, and C. Sometimes ELL students take a lower level test because the language is easier. Test scores of LEP students are broken down by subject area so that the ELL teacher can identify areas of strength and concern. The focus is to use the data in a non–pressured way, so that the teacher does not feel evaluated based on student scores. The ELL teacher will share testing results with classroom teachers so that they can provide appropriate interventions. The ELL teacher explained that she needs more time to meet with the class teachers to review testing results. There are workshops on differentiated instruction using fewer resources with specialists in the school.

The IEP team makes decisions about exemptions from testing. However, since the district uses an inclusion approach to services, every special education student is tested. The special education students, however, can take a test at a lower level. For example, a student with mental retardation might be tested at the third grade level rather than at a middle school level.

Accommodations can be made for any student in the school district provided that the accommodations do not change the content or performance standards of what is being tested. Testing with accommodations is considered to be a standard administration of the test. The district provides a table which lists the 30 or more accommodations that may be used. For SpEd-LEP students, the most frequently used accommodations are extended time and small group administration of the test. Overall, the use of accommodations is considered appropriate, but some staff view the process as subjective and have some concern regarding possible overuse of accommodations.

Prior to test administration, the ELL teacher reviews testing skills with LEP students using old samples of the test. Advanced-level ELLs who are close to meeting benchmarks can take an after-school test preparation course. However, to date, only two ELL students have taken advantage of this. Special education serves students well in preparing students for taking tests. Since each special education student has an individualized education program (IEP), the skills that they need for test taking are included in the goals of their IEP. The test scores of SpEd-LEP students are at each IEP meeting as part of a student progress review. The test scores help the IEP team plan new goals.

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

According to the principal, the school has skilled teachers who are strong advocates for students in this school. All students are treated with kindness, and as a consequence, have good experiences in middle school. The principal stated that school-wide systems are in place to create a positive school environment. Also, there is a focus on development of effective teaching practice.

The principal believes the program for LEP students has improved over the past two years. A few examples of program improvements include: ELL classes that are formed based on levels of language proficiency; ELLs have a room that is uniquely theirs, giving them a place to go and a group in which to participate; and the addition of a community night in Spanish for parents.

As for SpEd-LEP students, they are included in regular education classes, and are exposed to more interesting levels of instruction rather than always being in small groups. Special education teachers also have the materials that are needed to teach SpEd-LEP students. The school administration is supportive of special educators and works with them to improve planning time.

*Weaknesses*

The principal feels that it is important to improve the monitoring of LEP student performance so that drops in performance are identified immediately. He explained that this would assure that the LEP students "do not stay behind the curve in achievement." The school needs more differentiated instruction to do this.

The ELL teacher feels that it is important for the community/parents to be "checking in" with the classroom teachers to find out how students are progressing. Parents often do this for beginners, but it also needs to occur for more advanced ELLs who might be under-performing and need the extra parental support.

A critical area needing improvement for SpEd-LEP students in the school is greater communication between teachers to ensure that the student's needs are understood and met. The special education teacher emphasized the need for more common time during the school day for teachers to meet. She stated that such meeting time should not be added to the end of the school day when teachers are often tired. The teacher expressed her view that it was important for common planning time to be built into the school day, and all teachers to participate in IEP meetings when requested as part of their professional responsibility. The teacher noted that when one of a student's teachers fails to attend an IEP meeting, it can cause a breakdown in critical communication on issues important for students, and this can be difficult for special education teachers to resolve.

# ENGLISH WALNUT MIDDLE SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 6-8 |
| Total students: | 340 |
| LEP students: | 23 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 2 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Walnut School District |

The school principal is also the district LEP services coordinator and these comments are taken from both interviews. The principal stated that the school population is about 62 percent Caucasian, 17 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Asian and 20 percent other. The majority of the middle school LEP students speak Spanish but a few other languages are also represented. There are 26 students in each classroom. The school struggles with subjective, differing opinions and criteria about LEP students. The principal stated that, as of the time of the interview, there were 12 LEP students in the school, but that when the new State test is used to reclassify LEP students, she expects that the number will go down to four. The principal said that no two teachers or even two schools agree about LEP proficiency and that new standards are urgently needed. At the present time LEP policies are extremely confusing. As new students register in school, they fill out a home language survey. The home language asks about the language spoken at home and which language the student first learned to speak.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

The principal stated that the strengths of the LEP program were the strong curriculum, the high expectations of the staff, and the high level of staff dedication. Teachers will do whatever it takes to help their LEP students become successful in school. They give lunchtime tutoring help, before and after-school tutoring and even occasionally tutor on weekends. The school provides Type 3 services, giving less than 10 hours a week of ESL services. Teachers coordinate well at this school mainly due to staff development days and staff meetings. Teachers can always ask to be the 'other' on a staff meeting agenda and often that is how issues with LEP students come up from the LEP teacher. Teachers also communicate informally and generally get along well together which helps smooth communication about student needs.

There are LEP students in the school who do not receive services, although the ESL teacher monitors their progress. They do not appear to need LEP support. Parents have never refused services at this school. Teachers from the high school come every year to test these students in preparation to their entering high school. They test to see if the students will need LEP support services when they enter high school.

Previously, the former State test to exit students from LEP status was the Language Assessment Scales Oral (LAS). This year a new State test is being used.

*Alignment of Instruction*

According to the principal, staff development days are critical to the school's efforts to align instruction for LEP students with State standards. The school has several short days throughout the school year. On these days, the students leave school at 12:30; the staff has half an hour for lunch and spends the rest of the day on staff development. Money is also provided for conferences such as the State conference for bilingual education. However, this year the LEP teacher was pregnant and unable to attend the conference. Money is also provided for instructional materials. The principal commented that training gives teachers confidence and encourages them to stay on the right track. LEP teachers also have release time to work with teachers from other schools.

In her capacity as school LEP services coordinator (the coordinator was on maternity leave), the principal said that she felt that the greatest challenge to aligning instruction for LEP students with State standards is understanding what is expected by the State and nation. Once the policy is understood, the process can be reworked. Then criteria, instruction, and assessment can be put into place.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

The principal described the process for identifying LEP students in need of special education as a careful one. First, the student study team meets to discuss problems, to identify goals and ways to meet those goals for the student concerned. At the end of the designated period the team meets again to see if the goals have been met and how to proceed. It is at this point that the student may be referred for further testing for learning disabilities. The difficulty is in knowing if a true disability exists or if it is a language problem. No one wants to diagnose a child wrongly as learning disabled.

The district special education coordinator is also the school special education coordinator. The coordinator stated that there are no SpEd-LEP students at the middle school and that there have never been any SpEd-LEP students at any time during his years at the school. (Note: This contrasts with what was reported for the school by another respondent, but is consistent with the earlier statement regarding difficulties within the school in identification of LEP students). The coordinator

noted that even if special education students were designated LEP at the elementary school they are no longer designated LEP when they enter middle school. He believes that this is an example of the excellent work done by the teachers in the elementary schools. There are students at the middle school who speak another language in the home but are not designated LEP. He stated that there are no particular issues identifying SpEd-LEP students. He noted that non-verbal tests are used as part of special education evaluation and that translators have also been used in the past for testing.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

The special education coordinator said that he encouraged the ESL and special education teachers to be in close communication. If a student were LEP then the ESL teacher would come to IEP meetings. Frequently if the ESL teacher is concerned about her student not testing well then she will talk to the special education resource teacher and get ideas from her.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

The policy is that all LEP students participate in Statewide testing unless the parents request an exemption. However, this has never happened at this school. LEP students are not provided with any accommodations for testing. For SpEd-LEP students, accommodations would be written into their IEP's. These accommodations generally are based on grouping, flexible timing, or testing out of level.

LEP students are prepared for taking Statewide tests in their mainstream classrooms along with the regular education students. Special education students would have particular skills written into their IEP's and these would include some skills necessary for taking tests.

Test scores are made available to the teachers and are used to improve instruction. The teachers realize that the tests may be difficult for LEP students as they are for special education students, but that they do provide a reference for where students are falling in the instructional scope. Sometimes a LEP student scores well in math but does badly on the reading test so teachers try to decide if it is a vocabulary or comprehension difficulty.

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

The strengths of the school program for LEP students are the teachers and their expertise. They provide outstanding instruction. They are flexible, and they want the students to succeed. Almost every teacher in the school is available before and after school as well as during lunchtimes and even on the weekend to provide additional

help for students. There are only 340 students in the school so no student is lost sight of by the staff. There is a bilingual Spanish teacher and a French speaker on staff who can assist in working with students and helping them feel more comfortable.

*Weaknesses*

The greatest challenge identified was the need to revise the criteria for reclassification and to find sequential materials so teachers do not always have to invent things. Unfortunately, in the middle school just one schedule change can alter assignments such that a teacher who is particularly skilled in working with LEP students might be required to teach another class and not be available.

# 6. FINDINGS FROM SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS

In this chapter, findings are presented from the interviews conducted in three high schools. The name of the district in which the school is located is incorporated within the school's name. Thus, Royal Palm High School is located within Palm School District.

# ROYAL PALM HIGH SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 9-12 |
| Total students: | 3,164 |
| LEP students: | 771 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 18 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Palm School District |

Approximately 90 percent of the students in this inner-city high school are Latino and were not born in the United States. Almost all (99.6%) of the LEP students are Spanish-speaking, and the majority of the students are Central American. The school special education coordinator commented that many of the students have gaps in their education in their home countries. She explained that although they may not be fully literate in their native languages, they are expected to learn a second language when they arrive in the United States. She has observed that many of these students do fairly well in mathematics, but English language arts can be a struggle.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

Students with limited English skills take ESL classes and bilingual content classes (e.g., geometry, biology, history). According to the LEP services coordinator, Service Type 8 (exclusive LEP services, significant use of the native language) is the most common service for LEP students (extensive LEP services, significant use of the native language. Because there are many bilingual teachers in this school, much of the instruction provided in lower level ESL classes is in Spanish. When LEP students reach the second ESL level, they begin taking English language arts taught by teachers using ESL strategies. In addition, they continue to take ESL and bilingual content classes.

By the time a LEP student reaches the third ESL level, he or she continues to take ESL classes and English language arts taught through ESL strategies, but bilingual content classes are no longer part of the schedule. At this point, the amount of instruction provided in Spanish is generally about 25 percent. Third and fourth level ESL students' typical course loads include classes in math, science, physical education, and preparation for the State assessment. The largest way in which LEP students' schedules differ from the schedules of mainstream students is that LEP students take an ESL class while mainstream students take an elective, which is usually a foreign language. The LEP services coordinator

explained that the distinction between LEP and non-LEP programs of study is not as clear in this district as it might be in others because the majority of both teachers and students are Spanish-speakers and all teachers have been trained in the use of ESL instructional strategies,

When students leave the ESL program, their progress is monitored for two years. If the student is having difficulty, tutoring is strongly recommended. If it appears that the student was not truly ready to exit ESL services, he or she will return to the ESL program, although this is very rare.

In order to receive a regular high school diploma, students must pass the State assessment. However, if a student is in a vocational program or working toward a Certificate of Completion, they are not required to pass the State test. The LEP services coordinator explained that this high school has a relatively high number of LEP students who repeat ninth grade. Students may attend high school until they are 21.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The principal noted that the school district has provided training and materials for staff to help them align instruction for LEP students with the State standards. According to him, the training, professional development activities, and materials have been very effective. He observed that the training and professional development activities also have been helpful in that they have provided an opportunity for teachers to talk with their peers about instruction for LEP students. He noted that teachers of LEP students receive the same materials and training pertaining to standards as other teachers.

The principal explained that he assesses the extent to which instruction is aligned with State standards by reviewing the results of the State assessments. In addition, he has attended teacher training activities and he monitors teachers' performance through classroom observations. He evaluates teachers' performance with an observation guide that incorporates the standards.

The LEP services coordinator agreed that the training, assistance, and materials on alignment provided by the district LEP office are excellent. Furthermore, she explained that because all teachers follow a competency-based curriculum that is parallel to the State standards, instruction is very closely aligned with the State standards. She observed that the greatest challenge is that some ESL students have extremely limited English skills, along with minimal education in their home languages, yet they are held to very high standards.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

When a student registers at the high school whose home language is not English, the student is given an entry-level ESL test. Occasionally, a student is only identified as LEP at first, although it has grown more common for students from other countries to come in with documentation indicating a disability. The special education coordinator at this school

explained that she has seen students arrive with two sides of a sheet of onionskin paper covered with notes from a psychologist because that was the only piece of paper available in the home country. The LEP services coordinator explained that if a student has spent over two years in the ESL program, teachers view this as a "warning sign." If the student is performing poorly, a LEP committee consisting of administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents will meet. The process of making the decision to place a student in special education can be lengthy.

If a student doesn't arrive having already been identified as having a disability, the student is placed in an ESL classroom and, very often, the ESL teachers will "pick up on" the disability. According to the special education coordinator, the ESL teachers are very accurate and they know when a student has something that indicates they might have a disability. The general education teachers, however, tend to be much less accurate and confuse language learning problems with disability.

When a teacher recommends a student for special education services, the first thing the special education coordinator does is convene a "child study team" to discuss different teaching strategies they might try with the student prior to making a placement decision. The coordinator explained that this plan goes on for about six weeks. The team then meets again to review the student's progress. An evaluation and placement in special education would occur relatively quickly if none of the alternate teaching strategies worked. The process of placing a child in special education services typically takes two to three months.

A challenge noted by the special education coordinator was that her department often receives referrals from general education teachers when students only have second language learning issues. She provided an example in which she received a referral from a general education teacher for a Chinese LEP student who was new to the country. The teacher had tried speaking to the student in both English and Spanish and the student didn't understand. The issue was only that the student spoke only Chinese. By contrast, ESL teachers are much more accurate when they refer a student for special education.

The special education coordinator shared her belief that allowing time for new students to acclimate before referring them for special services them is critical. She believes that this is especially important if the student has had interrupted schooling and hasn't been in school for many years.

*Instructional Services*

The high school offers a Special Diploma program for students in specific disability categories if they have another health condition along with the disability. Thus, parents in these cases often choose to have the students receive a Special Diploma and return later to earn a GED when they are in better health. Most special education students will receive a Special Diploma in lieu of the regular diploma. The special education students who are working toward earning regular diplomas typically are in the ESL program (rather than ESL/special education), so they have higher English skills and don't need special services. Special Diploma students are often in a self-contained setting for at least part of the day with

special education teachers, many of whom are bilingual and provide instruction in a mix of English and Spanish.

The special education staff in the junior high school makes recommendations for diploma options for students when they transition from ninth to tenth grade and enter the senior high school. The high school special education coordinator goes to the ninth grade spring IEP meetings when transition plans are discussed with parents. Parents have considerable input into their children's education. According to the special education coordinator, parents will sometimes choose to have a student in the Special Diploma program due to health problems. These parents would prefer that students go back and obtain their GED later if the students' health improves. The school staff does not have a problem with such decisions. According to the special education coordinator, her staff tries to follow the recommendations but the recommendations are not "set in stone." Sometimes they "try" a student in the Special Diploma program and later switch them over to the regular diploma program.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The special education coordinator explained that special education services are aligned with State standards because special education students are required to meet the same standards as other students. The special education teachers use all of the materials that the general education teachers use, down to the same textbooks. The Special Diploma students might have separate standards for vocational courses, but they must meet the same standards in the content courses. Special education teachers are encouraged to attend department meetings for the content courses they teach so that they know what the general education teachers are doing. For example, the five special education math teachers meet with the math department and together they work on alignment of the special education math curriculum.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

According to the LEP services coordinator, LEP and special education teachers meet informally every day. They meet on a formal basis approximately four or five times per year. The special education coordinator agreed that the coordination between teachers is effective. She has an office next to the ESL teachers and because she works with ESL students, the proximity of her office facilitates informal communication. The ESL teachers come to her for advice on SpEd-LEP students, but the general education teachers tend to go to other special education teachers.

If there is an issue pertaining to an individual education plan (IEP) for a LEP student, special education teachers might ask ESL teachers to join them in meetings. They also have a new e-mail system for sending messages out within the school. Recently, the special education coordinator found out that there were problems with general education teachers not releasing special education students for speech services. She sent out a message by e-mail to all teachers indicating that they needed to release the students at a certain time, which solved the problem.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

ESL students may be exempt from testing if they have been in the United States for less than two years. However, if a student is exempt from the State assessment, another test must be administered in its place and this may be a Spanish test. During the administration of the State test, LEP students may use dictionaries and they are provided with extra time and monitored by proctors who speak Spanish. The proctors may translate instructions, but not test items.

The school special education coordinator meets informally almost daily with the assessment chair to discuss what should be done for specific students regarding test participation. The accommodations that the State allows for special education students include the provision of extra time, the use of a bilingual proctor to read instructions aloud, and the use of a bilingual Spanish-English dictionary. According to the special education coordinator, the special education students do make use of the accommodations they are offered.

The school offers entire courses to help all students prepare for the State test. Also, if LEP students need additional help, they may receive tutoring outside of the regular school day.

All tenth graders take the State assessment, but students who have been in the country less than two years are not included in the State reporting that results in the school's "grade." The principal explained that the district breaks down the results of the State assessment by battery and teachers use this information to tailor their instruction to students' needs.

Like the LEP students who have been in the country less than two years, the scores of special education students are not included in State reporting that results in the school's "grade."

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

This principal observed that students feel "at home" because Latinos are in the majority. He explained that there also is a very large percentage of bilingual teachers.

The teachers at this high school, in the opinion of the LEP services coordinator, are excellent. Students receive the instruction they need. The support for teachers from the district administrators is excellent. In addition to teacher workshops and a reading academy, this school was provided with a reading specialist (last year) who was outstanding.

The special education coordinator explained that because not all of the special education teachers are bilingual, the students are encouraged to learn English, which is a positive thing. The smaller class size is another strength for SpEd-LEP students, as is the fact that Special Diploma students participate in vocational classes with their non-disabled peers, enabling them to interact with and get support from those students.

*Weaknesses*

The principal shared his belief that the school cannot "do everything" for LEP students; what happens at home is critical. He believes that the high school needs to encourage parent involvement. Recently, they sponsored a "Family Fest" in which they invited parents to the school. They provided detailed Spanish descriptions of the State testing process and student progress reports.

According to the high school LEP services coordinator, the biggest problem in this school for LEP students is class size. Some teachers have up to 35 students, which is simply too many. The second area for improvement, according to the coordinator, is the use of technology. She would like to see a greater use of technology in the instruction for LEP students.

The special education coordinator explained that they have to exit students from ESL services within four years because that is the county's rule. With students in certain disability categories, she explained, this procedure can be very difficult. She explained that although there isn't a concrete penalty if a student isn't exited in four years, the county will try to determine why the child isn't advancing. If students in the regular ESL program aren't exited in four years from ESL services, they are referred to special education. The coordinator commented that she knows of students who have been placed in the special education program because of second language learning issues rather than disabilities.

# ENGELMANN SPRUCE HIGH SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 9-12 |
| Total students: | 1,672 |
| LEP students: | 148 |
| LEP Special Education students: | Not Available |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Spruce School District |

According to the principal at the high school, the school is comprised of 30% minority students: 11% African-American, 11% Asian, and 5% Latino students. The largest group is Spanish-speaking, but Southeast Asian, Somali and Russian students also are represented.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Alignment of Instruction*

The district curriculum coordinator has worked with the school curriculum coordinators to help teachers align instruction for LEP students with State standards. The coordinators help teachers understand the content and rigor of the standards.

The principal at this high school made the observation that the State does not have a strong model or system for ensuring that ESL programs get aligned. Therefore, this is something that the district staff has to work on independently. The principal went on to explain that from the State's 24 standards, the district selected 17 on which they wanted to focus. Staff looked at what they were already doing (the instructional program) and selected those standards that were best matched.

Teachers of LEP students have received the same materials and training as other teachers on the alignment of instruction with the standards. The principal explained, however, that they have really just begun to focus on alignment issues for LEP students. At this high school, the main way in which staff ensures that instruction is aligned with standards is the review of assessment packages.

# II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

The process for identification of SpEd-LEP students is similar at all school levels. First, the ESL teacher or mainstream teacher completes a pre-referral form on students for whom they believe further evaluation would be appropriate. On that form, the teacher needs to list the interventions tried along with the results of those interventions. Second, an interpreter talks to the parents or guardians and completes a questionnaire that asks about native language and English language use in the home. Third, there is a questionnaire that asks the parents for their perspectives on the student's abilities. For example, if a student is shown evidence of information processing difficulties in school the parents would be asked if they see evidence of it at home in the native language.

Finally, if the pre-referral process indicates that further assessment needs to be carried out, the special education coordinator completes several steps in preparation for a meeting. She calls the district cultural liaison for the student's cultural group and if there isn't one, she attempts to find a social service agency with a person from that culture on staff. For example, recently she had to assess a student from Somalia and there was no district cultural liaison for this group. The special education coordinator then found a Somali social service organization in a neighboring community and consulted one of the staff members as to whether any important cultural components had been missed or misinterpreted in the pre-referral process. If a member of the student's cultural background confirms the findings in the pre-referral stage and agrees that further evaluation is appropriate, the special education coordinator calls the parents to set up a meeting. An interpreter would be present at the meeting along with the teacher filling out the pre-referral form. At the time of that meeting, an IEP team would be chosen.

One challenge expressed by the school special education coordinator is that she feels unprepared when she needs to assess a LEP student for disabilities. There is a district manual specifically on this topic with many resources inside. She has looked at it but states that there isn't enough time in her day to learn the material well. In other years there was a district-level assessment team specializing in LEP students. That team was effective because there was consistency in the evaluations. The special education coordinator doesn't know whether she is administering the assessments appropriately. She is concerned because the process has to be relearned for each student from a different background, since the relevant information and resources are different in each case. Learning the material requires much time.

Another challenge in assessing students is that there often aren't native language assessments or resources for languages other than the major language, such as Spanish. Recently, the school needed to assess an Ethiopian student who was a native speaker of Amharic, but there was no available criterion-referenced achievement test in Amharic. The school had to improvise and have an interpreter give the student the reading and writing activity on an English assessment in the native language. The interpreter then gave the information back to the special education staff. This whole process took a great deal of time and was an overwhelming demand for the lead special education teacher. There also is

no district cultural liaison for Ethiopian students so the lead special education teacher had to call an Ethiopian social service agency to ask if the results of the special education evaluation indicated to other members of the Ethiopian community that the student had a disability. The contact at the social service agency said yes, but cautioned her that the student might have reported his or her age as younger than it actually was, and thus it may be difficult to interpret assessment results for this reason as well.

In the case of another student from Somali who was being assessed for a disability, the lead special education teacher sought out assistance from a member of a Somali social service agency in evaluating the results of assessments. The student in question was a female and had not been achieving well in her math courses. She was withdrawn during lessons and didn't give any indication that she was able to understand her teachers. The person from the Somali social service organization was able point out that the student's math teachers were male and there was a culturally related gender dynamic contributing to this female student's low achievement, since in Somali culture, women teachers most often work with female students. The Somali representative recommended that the special education staff switch the female student to a math class taught by a female. After this change, the student's achievement improved noticeably. The school staff hadn't had enough information on Somali culture prior to that point to know that the gender of the math teachers was a factor.

The special education coordinator said that by the time the LEP students are placed in special education, they typically can speak English fairly well. The educators struggle with low levels of parent involvement for LEP students with disabilities. There might be a single mother with 10 children in the house who is working two jobs and has two students in special education. For that mother it can be very difficult to be involved in her children's education. Also, scheduling of IEP team meetings is a challenge when many different types of people are needed, including translators, and cultural liaisons.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The special education coordinator felt that this was one of the biggest issues in her field. There were meetings early on in which special educators were told the process would be easy; they should just talk to the mainstream educators regarding an individual student with a disability and tell the teacher what types of instructional accommodations the student would need. However, when each special education staff member has 20 or more students on his or her caseload and they don't know the standards well, it is very difficult to make recommendations regarding instructional accommodations. The special education staff try to do this but there just isn't enough time.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*

The principal observed that teachers of LEP and special education students meet informally. They are likely to meet most frequently at the beginning of the school year. Teachers also meet informally to ease the transition of ESL students to the mainstream. However, the principal noted that because LEP students are in some mainstream classes even when they are beginning ESL students (e.g., computer graphics, art, physical education), the transition

to the mainstream is not that abrupt. As LEP students progress through the ESL program, they take more mainstream classes.

The special education coordinator observed that the coordination among teachers who work with special education students was "pretty good". The school doesn't have a large number of SpEd-LEP students, and the students are often seen by both the ESL and Special Education departments. However, the coordinator noted that sometimes trying to fit time within a school day for the student to participate in both types of services is challenging. For example, one very needy SpEd-LEP student required two periods of special education each day in a small setting. However, after much discussion, it was found that there were only two particular times in the school day when the student could receive those special education services and still be able to be placed into the ESL class at the student's appropriate level. It was difficult to make the overall schedule work for the student, but in the end the staff was able to structure one that met the student's needs.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

LEP students are exempt from testing for one year after they enter the country. IEP teams make the decisions about test participation for SpEd-LEP students. All students, including ESL students, participate in test preparation activities.

Test instructions may be read to LEP students in their native languages. SpEd-LEP students can have extra time, can have the tests read aloud to them, and/or they are able to take tests in a small group. Another possible accommodation is to have the math test read aloud on a cassette tape, but this has been problematic as students need the reading done at different paces. The special education coordinator expects that the tapes won't be used much longer due to this issue.

Teachers use students' test scores to guide instruction. According to the principal, test scores in the aggregate may be reported in the local paper. The principal explained, however, that teachers' responses to testing are not consistently positive. A common concern of teachers is that the standards measure too many different things. There also is some debate about the relative importance of the different standards. The principal expressed concern that LEP students in particular are "over-tested."

## IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

According to the principal, the greatest strength of the program is that there is a formal ESL program in which LEP students receive direct, intense instruction. He also believes that the racial diversity at the school is a strength, as is the talented staff.

In the opinion of the school special education coordinator, the school has a lot to offer. Students with learning disabilities can take a strategies class to get extra support. There are

also mainstream classes with the same standards-based curriculum but with the speed of the course adjusted to students' skill levels. In addition to these options there are also many electives to meet the transition needs of LEP students with disabilities. For example, there are Food and Consumer Science courses that emphasize multicultural foods and that tie in the backgrounds of the LEP students.

*Weaknesses*

The area most in need of improvement, in the opinion of the principal, is the need for greater training in ESL strategies for mainstream teachers. A teacher could have a class composed of 50% LEP students, he explained, yet have not had training in ESL teaching strategies.

The school special education coordinator listed three challenges that the high school is currently facing related to SpEd-LEP students. First, it is difficult for school staff to get a thorough understanding of what new LEP students, regardless of a disability, can do with reading in both their native language and English. Often it takes quite awhile for staff to get the complete picture of a student's abilities. They are looking into ways to better diagnose what the students' abilities are as soon as they enroll. The second challenge is making parents feel a part of the team and involved. There are interpreters available for school conferences and parents are turning out more with this support. Third, the lack of teachers and administrators from the language groups of the LEP students is also a challenge.

# SILVER MAPLE HIGH SCHOOL

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|---|---|
| Grade Range: | 8-12 |
| Total students: | 961 |
| LEP students: | 97 |
| LEP Special Education students: | 0 |
| Primary language group: | Spanish |
| School District: | Maple School District |

According to the principal the school's population is 70% African American, 20% Haitian, and the remaining 10% of the student body are Hispanic and Caucasian. The LEP student population consists of many students from Peru, Bolivia, and Columbia as well as students from Haiti, Poland, Russia, and from African Countries.

## I. INSTRUCTION FOR LEP STUDENTS

*Instructional Services*

The LEP services coordinator, who is also the district's ESL supervisor, said that she would classify the high school program as strictly Service Type 6, it is an extensive LEP services program where the content instruction is designed for LEP students. During the first year that a student is in the school, there is a double period of ESL, a sheltered social studies class taught by an ESL teacher who is also certified in social studies and a sheltered science class taught by science teachers with modified materials. In the second year of the program, students are in mainstream classes for social studies and science and receive a double period of ESL. Students are transitioned from a double ESL period to a single ESL period and general English class. Students are kept in the program until they are ready to exit. There is only one high school diploma in this State. LEP students must meet all the criteria in order to obtain a State diploma.

*Alignment of Instruction*

The principal said that the district aligns all curricula with State standards. Curriculum frameworks are provided to teachers and there are workshops on standards and assessments for teachers. She also said that there is a district mandate for lesson plans to be aligned with standards. The principal noted that the teachers have been trained and are aware of the need to address standards within their instruction. She also noted that the teachers have some autonomy and make adaptations in how they present the instruction. She commented

that the training provided to the teachers had enabled them to be aware of the standards, and to address required skills, while being flexible within the curriculum.

The principal indicated that the teachers of LEP students had received the same materials and training as other teachers on alignment of instruction with State standards. The principal monitors instruction to ensure that it is aligned to the curriculum and to standards. She reported that she monitors by reviewing instructional plans, to ensure that objectives reflect the standards. During teacher observations she checks on the match between the instruction and the plans submitted by the teacher to ensure that alignment is reflected in the classroom.

According to the LEP services coordinator, teachers of LEP students receive ongoing training and support on aligning their instruction to State standards. However, in her view, the mainstream teachers have had limited training, and that the training is not effective for alignment of instruction for LEP students. She explained that although the mainstream classroom instruction is aligned to the State's content standards, the mainstream teachers lack knowledge of LEP instructional strategies and this limits their effectiveness in aligning instruction for LEP students. On the other hand, she believes that the training for ESL instruction is effective, particularly given the fact that the training incorporates TESOL standards and the State's language arts standards.

## II. INSTRUCTION FOR SPED-LEP STUDENTS

*Identification of SpEd-LEP Students*

The LEP services coordinator indicated that when a student is experiencing difficulties, the teacher is able to refer him/her to a school assistance team for review and assistance. The teacher joins as a member of this team, and procedures are put in place based on input from the parent, teachers, and the information from the team. The special education Child Study Team assists in the identification process and sets timelines, referral procedures and testing protocol.

The LEP services coordinator reported that the key challenge in this process is determining if the student has a language difference or disability. In order to address this issue, the coordinator stated that more training is needed for the school assistance team, and that a formal policy for informal assessment and intervention aligned to student needs is needed.

*Instructional Services*

The school has no current SpEd-LEP students; however, according to the coordinator, once identified, a SpEd-LEP student would receive partially mainstreamed services and resource services. In addition, mainstreamed classes are open to all students, since the principle of least restrictive environment is honored and adhered to as much as possible. If special education students are mainstreamed, they participate in a study skills program taught by the coordinator.

*Alignment of Instruction*
The special education coordinator explained that while the State standards assume certain levels and forms of knowledge on the part of students, not all have this knowledge. When there are gaps in knowledge, the school seeks to narrow that gap; however, the coordinator noted that special education students vary in how well they are able to achieve standards set.

*Coordination of LEP and Special Education Services*
The principal reported that the teacher who is the supervisor of World Language and ESL classes also coordinates instruction across ESL and mainstream teachers of LEP students. In addition, teachers informally coordinate with each other as needed.

The LEP services coordinator said that there is not a common planning time for teachers; rather, coordination occurs through departmental meetings (ESL departmental meetings) and through informal discussions. She said that although this is better than nothing, coordination would be more effective with a common planning time.

## III. STATEWIDE TESTING

First year LEP students in grades 8 through 10 are exempt from testing. Exemptions from testing are permitted for two years for LEP students, and on this basis, first-year LEP students in grades 8-10 are exempt from testing. However, district policy requires that all students be tested in Grade 11. In some few cases, a student may be exempted in the second year of the program, based on teacher and supervisor recommendations, but these exemptions usually are provided in cases of students who have low-literacy in their first language. The LEP services coordinator reported that LEP students are permitted accommodations on Statewide assessments. Accommodations include: additional time, bilingual dictionaries, small group and native language instruction. These accommodations apply to all LEP students in the program.

All SpEd-LEP students are involved in the Statewide testing program. A SpEd-LEP student typically takes the tests with accommodations. The special education Child Study Team makes decisions regarding the testing accommodations that are to be used. Accommodations used for testing are accommodations that are also documented for use in daily instruction for a student

The LEP services coordinator stated that ESL teachers receive the same training as mainstream teachers in test preparation and that test preparation is infused into the students' curriculum. The same preparation is used for special education students as for other students. The principal explained that teachers receive reports on individual student test scores. If students fall below the State benchmarks, then the teachers must use the scores to plan instruction that will address the students' needs.

# IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

*Strengths*

The principal commented that the strong point of the school for LEP students was that the students were accepting of differences. The LEP services coordinator explained that a strength of the school's program is that it is trying to meet the needs of LEP students. She said the school's staff is very strong. For example, the mainstream teachers who now provide instruction in the "sheltered" program (science and math teachers content teachers providing instruction using modified materials and instructional strategies designed to meet students' needs) are teachers who volunteered to work with the LEP students.

The special education coordinator reported that a special strength of the school was the attempt to meet the needs of each student and the coordinated effort of the staff involved in the students' instruction.

*Weaknesses*

The principal stated that the school lacks sufficient staff to provide additional sheltered classes, and that there needed to be more coordination across programs within various departments. The LEP services coordinator noted as a weakness the fact that the school doesn't have any means of specifically the needs of students with a low-literacy level in their native language.