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English Learners in New Mexico

Demographics, Outcomes, and State Accountability Policies

By Julie Sugarman and Courtney Geary

This fact sheet provides an overview of key characteristics of the foreign-born and English Learner (EL) populations in New Mexico. It aims to build understanding of the state demographic context, how ELs are performing in K-12 schools, and the basics of state policies for EL education under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), enacted in December 2015. The transition to ESSA is ongoing, with states slated to update their data reporting systems by December 2018. As a result, the data this fact sheet uses to describe student outcomes primarily reflect systems and accountability policies developed under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, in effect from 2002 through 2015). Many of the changes expected as ESSA is implemented will improve the accuracy and availability of these data.

The first section examines the demographics of New Mexico using U.S. Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) data, and EL students as reported by the New Mexico Public Education Department. A discussion of EL student outcomes as measured by standardized tests follows, and the fact sheet concludes with a brief overview of New Mexico accountability mechanisms that affect ELs under ESSA.

Demographic Overview of Foreign-Born and EL Populations in New Mexico

In 2016, approximately 198,000 foreign-born individuals resided in New Mexico, accounting for 10 percent of the state population—a smaller share compared to immigrants in the United States overall (14 percent), as seen in Table 1. The growth rate of the foreign-born population in New Mexico slowed considerably from 86 percent in the period between 1990 and 2000 to 33 percent between 2000 and 2016, leaving the growth rate lower that of the U.S. immigrant population more generally. Nevertheless, the growth of New Mexico's foreign-born population far outpaces that of the native-born population. Age group trends in New Mexico mirror broader national trends, with disproportionately smaller shares of foreign-born individuals in the birth-to-age-17 brackets compared to the native born.

The share of school-age children with one or more foreign-born parents is slightly smaller in New Mexico (22 percent) than in the United States overall (26 percent), as shown in Table 2. Additionally, about 86 percent of children of immigrants were native born both in New Mexico and nationwide. In New Mexico, 28 percent of children in low-income families had one or more foreign-born parents, which is slightly less than the share of low-income children nationally (32 percent).



Table 1. Foreign- and U.S.-Born Populations of New Mexico and the United States, 2016

	New M	lexico	United States						
	Foreign Born	U.S. Born	Foreign Born	U.S. Born					
Number	198,406	1,882,609	43,739,345	279,388,170					
Share of total population	9.5%	90.5%	13.5%	86.5%					
Population Change over Time									
% change: 2000-16	32.6%	12.8%	40.6%	11.6%					
% change: 1990-2000	85.8%	16.4%	57.4%	9.3%					
	A	Age Group							
Share under age 5	0.4%	6.6%	0.7%	7.0%					
Share ages 5-17	5.9%	18.7%	5.1%	18.5%					
Share ages 18+	93.7%	74.6%	94.2%	74.5%					

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, "State Immigration Data Profiles: Demographics & Social," accessed May 16, 2018, www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/NM/US/.

Number of ELs. ACS data on the Limited English Proficient (LEP) population rely on self-reporting of English proficiency, with LEP individuals counted as those who speak English less than "very well." At the national level, ACS data indicate that 5 percent of U.S. children ages 5 to 17 are LEP, while data the states submitted to the federal government put the EL share of the total K-12 population at 10 percent in Fall 2015.²

At the state level, ACS data indicate that 4 percent of New Mexico children ages 5 to 17 are LEP.³ In contrast, the most recent data from the New Mexico Public Education Department, from school year (SY) 2016–17, indicate ELs represented 14 percent of the state K-12 student population, or 45,669 students.⁴

Table 2. Nativity and Low-Income Status in New Mexico and the United States, 2016

	New M	lexico	United	States
	Number	Share of Population (%)	Number	Share of Population (%)
Children between ages 6 and 17 with	315,143	100.0	47,090,847	100.0
Only native-born parents	244,792	77.7	34,838,528	74.0
One or more foreign-born parents	70,351	22.3	12,252,319	26.0
Child is native born	60,519	19.2	10,501,024	22.3
Child is foreign born	9,832	3.1	1,751,295	3.7
Children in low-income families	253,322	100.0	28,363,805	100.0
Only native-born parents	183,404	72.4	19,216,957	67.8
One or more foreign-born parents	69,918	27.6	9,146,848	32.2

Note: The definition of children in low-income families includes children under age 18 who resided with at least one parent and in families with annual incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

Source: MPI Data Hub, "State Immigration Data Profiles: Demographics & Social."

Table 3. Nativity of New Mexico and U.S. LEP Students, 2012-16

	Share of K-12 LEP Children Born in the United States (%)						
	Grades K-5 Grades 6-12 Total						
New Mexico	84.7	61.0	73.2				
United States	82.3	56.5	70.6				

Note: Analysis based on Limited English Proficient (LEP) children ages 5 and older enrolled in grades K-12. Source: MPI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2012–16 American Community Survey (ACS) data, accessed through Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series," accessed April 25, 2018, https://usa.ipums.org/usa/.

Although ACS data seem to undercount EL children, they can be used to examine (with due caution) the nativity of ELs, a variable school data systems do not capture. Table 3 shows that in New Mexico, almost three-fourths of school-aged children who were reported as LEP in census data were born in the United States, with a larger share among elementary school children than older students. The rate of nativeborn LEP children in the United States overall was slightly lower, at 71 percent.

The most recent data available that show the top languages spoken by ELs in New Mexico come from the Consolidated State Performance

Reports submitted by each state to the federal government. Table 4 shows that in SY 2015–16 Spanish was spoken by 71 percent of New Mexico ELs, with Navajo, Nias, and Zuni the next most commonly spoken languages.

Among New Mexico school districts with enrollment of more than 1,000 ELs, the three districts with the largest number of ELs are Albuquerque, Gadsden, and Gallup. Table 5 also shows that in the districts with the largest number of ELs, these students made up between 10 percent (Farmington) and 34 percent (Gadsden and Deming) of total enrollment.

Table 4. Top Home Languages Spoken by New Mexico ELs, SY 2015–16

	Share of ELs with a Home Lang Number of ELs Other Than English (%)			
Spanish; Castilian	37,385	71.4		
Navajo; Navaho	6,240	11.9		
Nias	1,131	2.2		
Caucasian (Other)	826	1.6		
Zuni	518	1.0		

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Note: Shares were calculated based on 52,376 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students reported by the state in SY 2015–16.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, "SY 2015-2016 Consolidated State Performance Reports Part I—New Mexico," updated October 18, 2017, www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy15-16part1/index.html.



Table 5. Number of ELs and EL Share of Students in New Mexico School Districts with More Than 1,000 ELs, SY 2016–17

	Number of ELs	EL Share of Students in District (%)
Albuquerque	13,500	14.9
Gadsden	4,592	34.2
Gallup	3,139	27.1
Las Cruces	2,874	11.5
Santa Fe	2,814	21.3
Deming	1,866	34.2
Hobbs	1,608	16.4
Farmington	1,142	9.9
Central Consolidated Schools	1,057	17.0

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, "District Report Card—Excel Data Tables—District Report Card," updated February 27, 2018, https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/district-report-cards/.

II. EL Student Outcomes in New Mexico

This section examines outcomes of the EL subgroup on state standardized assessments. It is important to note two things about the participation of ELs on these assessments. First, compared to other student subgroups based on ethnicity, poverty, gender, and special education status, ELs are a much more dynamic population: as students gain proficiency, they exit the EL subgroup and new ELs are identified as they enter the U.S. school system. By definition, students who remain in the EL subgroup are not performing at a level where their achievement on mainstream assessments is comparable to that of their English-proficient peers. Whereas this lag is expected for students in their first several years of learning English, concerns about the significant numbers of long-term ELs—those identified as ELs for six or more years—not scoring proficient in English language arts (ELA) and math have driven policymakers

to strengthen the ways they hold schools accountable for EL outcomes on academic assessments.

Second, under NCLB, states were allowed to exempt newly arrived EL students from taking the ELA test for one year and to exclude the math scores of those newcomers from accountability reports. For that reason, the results below do not include all New Mexico ELs. The rules for including newly arrived ELs in reports on subgroup outcomes will change as ESSA provisions go into effect in 2018 (see "Accountability for EL Academic Achievement" below).

New Mexico administers the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests for accountability purposes. PARCC assessments are given for ELA in grades 3 to 11 and for math in grades 3 to 12. For PARCC tests, there are five achievement levels, and scores at levels 4 and 5 are considered proficient. The state also administers the

Table 6. Share of New Mexico ELs and All Students Scoring Proficient in Reading/Language Arts (%), by Grade, SY 2016–17

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)	Grade 9 (%)	Grade 10 (%)	Grade 11 (%)
Share of ELs scoring proficient	19	14	16	12	10	10	4	8	13
Share of all students scoring proficient	27	26	30	26	27	29	26	32	43

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Note: The source table for these data combines the results from different assessments, including the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) English Language Arts, the New Mexico Alternate Performance Assessment for Reading, and the Standards Based Assessment for Spanish Language Arts.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, "Achievement Data—Proficiencies Webfiles, State, District, School by Grade 2017," accessed June 6, 2018, https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/achievement-data/.

Standards Based Assessment (SBA) in science to students in grades 4, 7, and 11. Those results are reported as four achievement levels, with levels 3 and 4 considered proficient.⁶ Spanish-speaking ELs who have attended U.S. schools for three years or fewer may take SBA reading and science tests and PARCC math tests in Spanish. However, districts can only request waivers for Spanish-speaking ELs to take those Spanish tests for up to two years.⁷

Table 6 shows considerable achievement gaps between the share of ELs and of all students who scored proficient in reading/language arts, with that gap growing larger at older grade levels. The gap was smallest in 3rd grade (8 points) and largest in 11th grade (30 points).

Table 7 shows moderate gaps between New Mexico ELs and all students on state math assessments. The gaps were fairly consistent

Table 7. Share of New Mexico ELs and All Students Scoring Proficient in Math (%), by Grade, SY 2016–17

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)	Grade 9 (%)	Grade 10 (%)	Grade 11 (%)	Grade 12 (%)
Share of ELs scoring proficient	19	14	13	9	5	7	3	4	4	2
Share of all students scoring proficient	30	23	24	20	17	21	17	15	9	3

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Note: The source table for these data combines the results from different assessments, including the PARCC Math and the New Mexico Alternate Performance Assessment for Math.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, "Achievement Data—Proficiencies Webfiles, State, District, School by Grade 2017."



Table 8. Share of New Mexico ELs and All Students Scoring Proficient in Science (%), by Grade, SY 2016–17

	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 11 (%)
Share of ELs scoring proficient	20	17	7
Share of all students scoring proficient	40	45	35

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, "Achievement Data—Proficiencies Webfiles, State, District, School by Grade 2017."

across grades, ranging from 9 to 14 points for students in grades 3 to 10. For those in 11th and 12th grade, gaps were considerably smaller (5 points and 1 point, respectively), though this narrowing may be attributed to the overall lower performance of both ELs and all students and, in grade 12, to the much smaller number of students taking the test.

Science test scores also show steady gaps between ELs and all students of around 20 to 28 points at all three grade levels tested (see Table 8).

Finally, there are modest gaps between ELs and all students in New Mexico in terms of graduation rate. For the class of 2017, the share of ELs to graduate within four years was 67 percent, compared to a four-year graduation rate of 71 percent for all students.⁸ The EL graduation rate is the same as the national rate for ELs in the most recent year available (SY 2015–16), but New Mexico's overall graduation rate was considerably lower than the national rate of 84 percent for all students.⁹

III. Accountability under ESSA

In 2017, all 50 states (plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) submitted plans to the U.S. Department of Education that outline their approach to complying with new accountability regulations under ESSA. Among the new requirements are provisions requiring states to standardize how they

identify students for and exit them from EL status, extending the number of years schools can include former ELs' scores in reporting on the outcomes of the EL subgroup, and allowing states to develop their own English language proficiency indicator (replacing the three required Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives in NCLB). Implementation of the new policies began in SY 2017-18. However, as many states have adopted new or significantly revised English language proficiency assessments over the last few years, some intend to wait to update their English language proficiency benchmarks until they have collected sufficient data from the new assessments.

Learn More about ELs and ESSA

For additional analysis, maps, and statelevel data on English Learner education in the United States, check out the MPI ELL Information Center and its ESSA resources.

A. Identification and Reclassification of ELs

Following federal guidelines, all states require schools to follow a two-step process for identifying students as ELs. First, parents or guardians complete a home-language survey when they enroll their child in a new school district. The survey generally includes one to four questions to identify students whose

first language is not English or who live in households where a language other than English is spoken.

If students in such circumstances do not already have scores from a state-approved English language proficiency test on file, they are given a screening test to gauge their English language ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (as required by ESSA). Students scoring below proficient are categorized as ELs. Schools must inform parents in a timely manner of their child's English language proficiency level and of the types of support the school can provide, including the right to opt out of services (but not the right to decline EL status and subsequent annual testing).¹⁰

In New Mexico, students are screened for initial EL identification using one of the WIDA Consortium's assessments (the WIDA Screener or the Kindergarten W-APT). Students are identified as ELs if they score below a designated level for each test. Once identified, ELs are given the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0¹¹ annually until they score highly enough to be reclassified as English proficient. To be reclassified, students must have a composite score of at least 5.0 out of 6.0 on the ACCESS.¹²

B. Accountability for English Language Proficiency

Whereas parents and teachers are primarily interested in the progress of individual students toward English language proficiency, state accountability systems track whether the ELs in entire schools and districts are progressing to and achieving proficiency within the statedetermined timeline. States include English language proficiency in their accountability systems in two ways. First, they set a long-term goal for increasing the percent of students making progress toward proficiency (with interim goals along the way), and, second, they include an annual indicator of progress toward English language proficiency in the calculation they use to identify schools in need of improvement.¹³

New Mexico students are expected to take a maximum of six years to achieve English language proficiency, with expectations for individual students set based on their initial English proficiency level and grade in which they were identified as an EL. Students will be considered on track if they meet their personalized growth targets from one year to the next; these are set based on the expectation that students will make more annual progress at lower proficiency levels and less at higher levels. About 43 percent of New Mexico ELs made enough progress in 2016 to achieve proficiency within the given timeline. Using this baseline, the state aims to increase the share of ELs making the expected amount of progress by about 2 percent each year, with a goal of reaching 55 percent by 2022. In line with ESSA guidance, New Mexico plans to factor in whether schools are making relatively less progress in moving students toward English proficiency in their criteria for identifying schools in need of comprehensive support and improvement.¹⁴

C. Accountability for EL Academic Achievement

In addition to progress toward English proficiency, ESSA requires states to report and include in their accountability systems data on how well ELs, as a subgroup, are performing on the indicators that apply to all students (including ELA, math, and science tests; graduation rates; and a school-quality or student-success indicator such as attendance). Using this information, ESSA calls for states to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement based on the performance of all students, including subgroups of students, and for targeted support and improvement for schools that have one or more underperforming subgroups such as ELs.

As noted earlier, the EL subgroup is unique in that students exit the subgroup once they reach a level at which their English proficiency is no longer keeping them from general academic achievement similar to that of their English-proficient peers. Because of this, ESSA allows



states to include former ELs within the EL subgroup for up to four years after they have exited EL status. Former EL students' scores in math and reading can thus be used in accountability measures as a way to give schools credit for the progress those students have made. New Mexico will not include former ELs in their calculation of academic achievement and academic progress indicators.¹⁵

Unlike for other subgroups, ESSA also provides two types of exemption states may choose to apply to recently arrived ELs on state standardized tests:

- In their first year in the United States, ELs can be exempt from taking the ELA test. They must be tested in math that year, but their scores will not be included in accountability calculations. Regular test-taking and accountability procedures will apply thereafter.
- 2. ELs take ELA and math tests in their first year, but their scores can be excluded from accountability measures. In the second year,

outcomes on both tests are reported as a growth score from year one to year two. From their third year on, students are assessed and their scores included in accountability measures as is done for all students.

States also have a third option: they may assign option 1 to some recently arrived ELs and option 2 to others based on characteristics such as their initial English language proficiency level. ¹⁶ New Mexico's ESSA plan indicates it will use option 1 for its recently arrived ELs. ¹⁷

As states move forward with ESSA accountability plans, policymakers are taking the opportunity to revise existing regulations on funding, program requirements, teacher training, and other aspects of school administration. Provisions that affect EL students should be scrutinized closely by stakeholders at all levels, whether parents, teachers, or community organizations. Data on EL demographics and performance, such as those provided in this fact sheet, will prove an important tool in this effort.¹⁸

Endnotes

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- For additional information on accessing and understanding state EL demographic and outcome data, see Julie Sugarman, *A Guide to Finding and Understanding English Learner Data* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2018), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/guide-finding-understanding-english-learner-data.



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