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Fact Sheet

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Facts about English Learners and the NCLB/ESSA Transition in Georgia

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EL Population Facts

This fact sheet provides a sketch of key characteristics of the foreign-born and English Learner (EL) populations in Georgia. It is intended to equip community organizations with an understanding of the state demographic context and some of the basics of EL policies under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, in effect from 2002 through December 2015) and its successor, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), enacted in December 2015.

The first section looks at the demographics of Georgia, including the entire state population using U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) data and EL students as reported by the Georgia Department of Education. A discussion of EL student outcomes as measured by standardized tests follows, and the fact sheet concludes with a brief overview of Georgia accountability mechanisms that affected ELs under NCLB and relevant provisions of ESSA.

I. Demographic Overview of Foreign-Born and EL Populations in Georgia

In 2014, approximately 994,651 foreign-born individuals resided in Georgia, accounting for 10 percent of the state population—lower than the share of immigrants in the United States (13 percent), as seen in Table 1. The growth rate of the foreign-born population in Georgia slowed from 233 percent in the period between 1990 and 2000 to 72 percent between 2000 and 2014.

Table 1. Foreign- and U.S.-Born Populations of Georgia and United States, 2014

	Georgia		United States	
	Foreign Born	U.S. Born	Foreign Born	U.S. Born
Number	994,651	9,102,692	42,391,794	276,465,262
Share of total population	9.9%	90.1%	13.3%	86.7%
Population Change over Time				
% change: 2000-14	72.3%	19.6%	36.3%	10.4%
% change: 1990-2000	233.4%	20.7%	57.4%	9.3%
Age Group				
Share of under age 5	0.6%	7.1%	0.6%	7.1%
Share of ages 5-17	5.8%	19.5%	5.3%	18.6%
Share of ages 18+	93.6%	73.3%	94.0%	74.3%

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, "State Immigration Data Profiles: Demographics & Social," accessed September 8, 2016, www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/GA/US/.

Table 2. Children (ages 17 and younger) in Georgia and the United States, 2014

	Georgia		United States	
	Number	Share of Population (%)	Number	Share of Population (%)
Children between ages 6 and 17 with	**1,597,539**	**100**	**46,968,394**	**100**
Only native parent(s)	1,263,209	79.1	35,171,703	74.9
One or more foreign-born parents	334,330	20.9	11,796,691	25.1
Child is native born	288,009	18.0	10,011,547	21.3
Child is foreign born	46,321	2.9	1,785,144	3.8
Children in low-income families	**1,149,190**	**100**	**30,272,597**	**100**
Only native parents	858,807	74.7	20,793,941	68.7
One or more foreign-born parents	290,383	25.3	9,478,656	31.3

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."

The growth rate of the immigrant population in Georgia was about twice the rate of the U.S. foreign born more generally and also outpaced the growth rate of the native-born population. Age group trends in Georgia mirror broader national trends, with disproportionately fewer 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 lower in Georgia (21 percent) than nationwide (25 percent), as shown in Table 2. Additionally, about 86 percent of children of immigrants in Georgia were native born. In Georgia, 25 percent of children in low-income families had foreign-born parents, compared to 31 percent of low-income children nationally.

Georgia has a diverse immigrant population, with sizeable shares coming from Asia and Latin America, which correspond to the top two regions of birth for the foreign-born population nationwide (see Table 3). Georgia's share of African-born individuals (9 percent) is nearly twice the national share (5 percent), and the state has a share of European-born

Table 3. Regions of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population in Georgia and the United States, 2014

	Georgia		United States	
Region of Birth	Number	Share of Population (%)	Number	Share of Population (%)
Africa	90,002	9.0	1,931,203	4.6
Asia	279,292	28.1	12,750,422	30.1
Europe	89,068	9.0	4,764,822	11.2
Latin America	511,557	51.4	21,890,416	51.6
Northern America	20,269	2.0	812,642	1.9
Oceania	4,463	0.4	241,200	0.6

Notes: Latin America includes South America, Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean; Northern America includes Canada, Bermuda, Greenland, and St. Pierre and Miquelon. The region of birth data exclude those born at sea.
Source: MPI Data Hub, "State Immigration Data Profiles: Demographics & Social."

Table 4. Nativity of Georgia and U.S. LEP Students, 2014

	Share of K-12 LEP Children Born in the United States (%)		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-12	Total
Georgia	82	50	68
United States	83	56	71

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 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) data, accessed through Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series," accessed September 8, 2016, https://usa.ipums.org/usa/.

individuals (9 percent) that is comparable to the national share (11 percent).

Number of ELs. ACS Census 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,[1] while data submitted to the federal government by the states put the share of ELs amongst the total K-12 population at 10 percent in school year (SY) 2013-14.[2]

At the state level, ACS data indicate that 3 percent of Georgia children ages 5 to 17 are LEP.[3] In contrast, the most recent data from the Georgia Department of Education, from SY 2015-16, indicate EL enrollment represents 8 percent of the total K-12 student population, or 148,985 students.[4]

Although ACS data seem to vastly undercount EL children, they can be used to examine (with due caution) the nativity of ELs, which is not a variable captured by school data systems. Table 4 shows that in Georgia and in the United States more generally, more than two-thirds 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 most recent data available that show the top languages spoken by ELs in Georgia come from the Consolidated State Performance Reports submitted by each state to the federal government. Table 5 shows data from SY 2013-14 which indicate that Spanish was spoken by more than three-quarters of Georgia ELs, with Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean having the next largest groups of speakers among commonly spoken languages.

Table 5. Top Five Home Languages Spoken by Georgia ELs, SY 2013-14

	Number of ELs	Share of ELs (%)
Spanish	77,501	78.6
Other	5,862	5.9
Vietnamese	2,472	2.5
Chinese	1,622	1.6
Korean	1,418	1.4

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.
Notes: Share calculated based on 98,603 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students reported by the state in 2013-14. The "other" category represents languages other than the most commonly spoken languages listed in the state's database.
Source: U.S. Department of Education, "SY 2013-2014 Consolidated State Performance Reports Part I. Georgia," updated October 30, 2015, www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy13-14part1/index.html.

Table 6. Number and Share of PreK-12 ELs in Georgia School Districts with More Than 1,500 ELs, SY 2015-16

	Number of ELs	Share of ELs in District (%)
Gwinnett County	32,784	17.1
DeKalb County	18,081	15.8
Cobb County	14,780	12.1
Fulton County	8,832	8.6
Clayton County	7,000	11.0
Hall County	6,839	23.5
Cherokee County	3,318	7.7
Forsyth County	3,242	7.0
Gainesville City	2,906	33.9
Whitfield County	2,576	18.2
Atlanta Public Schools	2,573	4.4
Douglas County	2,099	7.2
Marietta City	1,946	19.1
Clarke County	1,867	13.5
Dalton City	1,807	22.0
Colquitt County	1,682	16.9

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.
Source: Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Downloadable Data. Attendance, 2015-16," accessed January 10, 2017, https://gosa.georgia.gov/downloadable-data.

Among Georgia school districts with enrollment of more than 1,500 ELs, the five districts with the largest number of ELs for SY 2015-16 were in the metro Atlanta area (see Table 6). The districts with the largest numbers of ELs have shares between 4 percent (Atlanta Public Schools) and 34 percent (Gainesville City).

II. EL Student Outcomes in Georgia

This section looks at 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.

Second, under NCLB, states were allowed to exempt EL students from taking the English language arts (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 Georgia ELs.

SY 2014-15 was the first year for Georgia Milestones, a new assessment system that tests students in end-of-grade and end-of-course subject matter. Milestones assessments are given in ELA, math, science, and social studies in grades 3 through 8. Additionally, there are ten end-of-course tests administered to high school students in each of the four content areas. Student achievement is reported in four achievement levels: beginning, developing, proficient, and distinguished.[5]

Table 7. Share of Georgia ELs and All Students Who Scored Proficient or Distinguished in English Language Arts (ELA), by Grade (%), SY 2015-16

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or distinguished	20.0	17.7	17.4	11.0	6.4	6.3
Share of all students who scored proficient or distinguished	35.1	35.3	40.8	39.3	38.5	44.0

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.
Source: Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Downloadable Data, Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade (EOG) Assessments (by grade), 2015-16," accessed January 10, 2017, https://gosa.georgia.gov/downloadable-data.

Table 8. Share of Georgia ELs and All Students Who Scored Proficient or Distinguished in Math, by Grade (%), SY 2015-16

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or distinguished	29.5	26.7	21.7	15.1	12.5	13.6
Share of all students who scored proficient or distinguished	40.1	40.4	38.2	38.3	42.0	33.5

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.
Source: Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Downloadable Data, Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade (EOG)."

Table 7 shows considerable achievement gaps between the share of ELs and the share of all students who were at or above grade level in ELA (proficient or distinguished, respectively). This gap also grows larger at successively older grade levels. The gap was lowest in 3rd grade (15 points) and highest in 8th grade (38 points).

As with ELA, there are generally increasing gaps between ELs and all students on the end-of-grade math tests (see Table 8). The gap was smallest at 3rd grade (11 points) and largest in 7th grade (20 points).

Science test scores show the same pattern as math, with the gap between ELs and all students rising from 15 to 30 points between 3rd and 7th grade, before falling to 21 points in 8th grade (see Table 9).

Social studies results show the same pattern as ELA, with achievement gaps growing from 13

Table 9. Share of Georgia ELs and All Students Who Scored Proficient or Distinguished in Science, by Grade (%), SY 2015-16

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or distinguished	20.5	17.5	17.3	13.2	9.9	6.3
Share of all students who scored proficient or distinguished	35.3	33.1	39.2	38.5	39.3	27.3

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.
Source: Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Downloadable Data, Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade (EOG)."

Table 10. Share of Georgia ELs and All Students Who Scored Proficient or Distinguished in Social Studies, by Grade (%), SY 2015-16

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or distinguished	17.6	18.6	12.0	12.0	10.8	7.3
Share of all students who scored proficient or distinguished	30.4	34.5	30.5	33.4	38.9	37.8

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.
Source: Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Downloadable Data, Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade (EOG)."

points to 31 points between 3rd and 8th grade (see Table 10).

As Table 11 shows, achievement gaps between ELs and all students in high school are highest for the two literature and composition classes (34 points), and range from 20 to 30 points for all other content areas.

Finally, there are wide gaps in graduation rates in Georgia between ELs and all students. For the class of 2015, the four-year high school graduation rate for ELs was 56 percent compared to a rate of 79 percent for all students.[6] The national rates for that year were 65 percent for ELs and 83 percent for all students.[7]

III. Accountability under NCLB and ESSA

Although many mechanisms within Georgia's accountability system are in the process of changing, it is important to have a sense of the tests, benchmarks, and accommodations for ELs that have been implemented for the last 15 years in preparation for ESSA accountability planning.

A. Identification and Reclassification of ELs

As in most states, the EL identification process in Georgia begins with the admin-

Table 11. Share of Georgia ELs and All Students Who Scored Proficient or Distinguished in High School End-of-Course Tests (%), SY 2015-16

	9th Grade Lit. (%)	Amer. Lit. (%)	Alg. 1 (%)	Coord. Alg. (%)	Geom. (%)	Anlt. Geom. (%)	Bio. (%)	Phys. Sci. (%)	U.S. Hist. (%)	Econ. (%)
Share of ELs who scored proficient or distinguished	6.7	7.4	11.9	10.1	17.5	15.6	12.7	10.5	16.3	15.9
Share of all students who scored proficient or distinguished	40.4	41.5	35.9	29.6	44.3	36.6	42.6	33.2	44.0	45.4

EL = English Learner; SY = School Year.
Note: Tests are given to high school students in four domains: English (9th Grade Literature and Composition, American Literature and Composition), math (Algebra I, Coordinate Algebra, Geometry, Analytic Geometry), science (Biology, Physical Science), and social studies (U.S. History, Economics/Business/Free Enterprise).
Source: Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Downloadable Data, Georgia Milestones End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments, 2015-16," accessed January 10, 2017, https://gosa.georgia.gov/downloadable-data.

istration of a home-language survey, which is distributed to all parents when their child enters a Georgia school. Many districts include questions about home language on their enrollment paperwork, and the state suggests that the district ask about the language most frequently used by the child and other household members as well as the languages that the child understands or speaks.

If students are identified as potential ELs, they are administered one of the English language proficiency screeners developed by the WIDA Consortium.[8] The state provides cut-off scores for determining eligibility for EL services. ELs are given the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs annually until they meet reclassification requirements. As per NCLB guidelines, ACCESS tests proficiency levels in the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To exit classification as EL, kindergarten students must attain at least a composite score of 5.0 out of 6.0 on the WIDA ACCESS with no domain score less than 5.0. In grades 1 to 12, students must attain at least 5.0 composite and 4.8 in literacy; alternately, if they attain a 5.0 composite with less than 4.8 in literacy, they may be referred for a Language Assessment Conference, in which a committee will consult other performance information to determine whether the student should be exited.[9]

B. Accountability for EL Performance

Under Title III of NCLB, EL performance was monitored at the district and state level through Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). Although these are no longer part of Title III of ESSA, states will include a measure of English proficiency and include EL subgroup scores on state grade-level assessments in their new accountability plans.

Under NCLB, states set ever-increasing targets for the number of students achieving benchmarks for the three AMAOs:

1) Progress (improving English proficiency from year to year)

2) Proficiency (exiting EL status)

3) Adequate yearly progress (AYP) in academic achievement for the EL subgroup (indicators included state standardized tests in reading and math, participation in assessments, and graduation rate).[10]

Originally, NCLB called for parental notification if districts missed AMAO targets, and the development of a school improvement plan (involving program and/or staffing changes) for schools that missed AYP targets for any subgroup (including ELs) over multiple years. The AYP benchmarks and rules for developing school improvement plans were significantly changed in many states with the NCLB waiver program instituted in 2012, and will be revised again as states create accountability plans under ESSA.

C. Changes under ESSA

The following are some of the changes in federal law under ESSA, enacted in 2015, which affect EL students:[11]

- ***EL accountability moved from Title III to Title I.*** EL subgroup accountability for measures such as reading, math, and high school graduation rates continues to be included in district accountability under Title I, and a measure of progress in English language proficiency moved from Title III to Title I, thus giving it more weight.

- ***Additional option for including recently arrived ELs in assessment.*** Under NCLB, states could exempt ELs enrolled in U.S. schools for less than 12 months from taking ELA tests and exclude results of their ELA (if taken) and math tests from accountability calculations for that first year. States can continue with this option, or they can assess ELs in ELA and math in

the first year but exclude their scores from accountability calculations, use a measure of growth in reading and math in the second year, and then report proficiency levels as for other students in the third year and thereafter.

- ***Inclusion of former ELs in subgroup.*** Under NCLB, students were included in the EL subgroup for up to two years after they had been reclassified; ESSA extends this period to up to four years.

- ***Disaggregation.*** States must now report the number of EL students with disabilities who are making progress toward English proficiency and in academic achievement, and report the number of ELs who have not attained English proficiency within five years of identification.

- ***Standardization of entrance and exit procedures.*** States must develop standardized procedures for identifying and reclassifying EL students.

The U.S. Department of Education issued regulations regarding accountability on November 28, 2016.[12] These regulations also address English learners. The regulations require that states consider at least one unique student characteristic, including students' initial English language proficiency level, in determining ambitious but achievable targets for English learners' progress toward English language proficiency, within a state-determined maximum number of years. These targets are then used to set state-level, long-term goals and measurements of interim progress, and may also be used in the state's indicator of progress in achieving English language proficiency, which can include all English learners in grades K-12.

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 the 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.

Endnotes

1 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, "State Immigration Data Profiles: Language & Education," accessed September 8, 2016, www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/language/GA/US/.

2 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Table 204.27: English Language Learner (ELL) Students Enrolled in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by Grade and Home Language: Selected Years, 2008-09 through 2013-14," accessed January 17, 2017, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/xls/tabn204.27.xls.

3 MPI Data Hub, "State Immigration Data Profiles: Language & Education."

4 Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Downloadable Data. Attendance, 2015-16," accessed January 10, 2017, https://gosa.georgia.gov/downloadable-data.

5 Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Georgia Milestones Assessment System," accessed January 10, 2017, http://gosa.georgia.gov/sites/gosa.georgia.gov/files/OBIEE-Help/Georgia_Milestones.htm.

6 Governor's Office of School Achievement, "Downloadable Data, Graduation Rate (4-Year Cohort), 2014-15," accessed January 10, 2017, https://gosa.georgia.gov/downloadable-data.

7 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), "Common Core of Data (CCD)," updated September 15, 2016, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2014-15.asp.

8 Although "WIDA" was previously used as an acronym with different definitions, it now stands alone as the name of the consortium. See WIDA, "Mission & the WIDA Story," accessed February 2, 2017, www.wida.us/aboutus/mission.aspx.

9 Georgia Department of Education, "ESOL/Title III Resource Guide" (guidelines, July 18, 2016), www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/ESOL/Not-highlighted%20%202016-2017%20ESOL%20Title%20III%20Resource%20Guide%20web.pdf.

10 Andrea Boyle, James Taylor, Steven Hurlburt, and Kay Soga, *Title III Accountability: Behind the Numbers. ESEA Evaluation Brief: The English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2010), www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-iii/behind-numbers.pdf.

11 Delia Pompa, "New Education Legislation Includes Important Policies for English Learners, Potential Pitfalls for their Advocates" (commentary, MPI, December 2015, www.migrationpolicy.org/news/new-education-legislation-includes-important-policies-english-learners-potential-pitfalls-their; Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), *Major Provisions of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Related to the Education of English Learners* (Washington, DC: CCSSO, 2016), www.ccsso.org/Documents/2016/ESSA/CCSSOResourceonESSAELLs02.23.2016.pdf.

12 U.S. Department of Education, "Title I—Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged— Academic Assessments," *Federal Register* 81, no. 236 (December 8, 2016): 88886, www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-12-08/pdf/2016-29128.pdf.

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For more information on the impact of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* on EL and immigrant students, see www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/nciip-english-learners-and-every-student-succeeds-act.

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