DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 393 321 FL 023 684

TITLE	Digest of Educational Statistics for Limited English Proficient Students. Pocket Digest.
INSTITUTION	Development Associates, Inc., Arlington, Va.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jun 95
CONTRACT	T292001001
NOTE	23p.
PUB TYPE	Statistical Data (110)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); Enrollment Rate; Enrollment Trends; *Federal Programs; Instructional Program Divisions; Intensive Language Courses; Languages; *Limited English Speaking; National Surveys; *Student Characteristics; Teacher Education; Trend Analysis

ABSTRACT

The reference publication contains national statistics on the limited-English-proficient (LEP) student population in the United States and the educational programs that serve them. Information is drawn from national databases of federally-funded educational programs in 1992-93. Summary data, with narrative, are offered on: the number of LEP students by state; trends in enrollment from 1991-92 to 1992-93; student language background; enrollment numbers and percentages by grade level; federal programs that serve this population; the number and percentage of LEP students served by each program type; the kinds of instructional services available to LEP students, with percentages; and federally-authorized teacher training programs designed to build teacher capacity to serve this population. (MSE).

Pocket Digest

Digest of Education Statistics for Limited English Proficient Students

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs
June 1995

U.S. Department of Education
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Secretary

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Director

This document was prepared by the Special Issues Analysis Center (SIAC), a technical support center established to provide assistance to the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. T292001001. The SIAC is operated by Development Associates, Inc., of Arlington, VA. This digest was prepared by Wendy A. Townsend, with graphics assistance from Cynthia Hamill and Kathryn Dickerson. The digest was prepared under the direction of Annette M. Zehler, SIAC Director, and Paul J. Hopstock, Deputy Director.

Foreword

Welcome to the first edition of the *Digest of Education Statistics for Limited English Proficient Students*. The purpose of this publication is to provide a reference containing national statistics on the limited English proficient (LEP) student population and on the educational programs that serve them, using the most current available data.

The information provided in this digest is drawn from databases of Title VII state and local grant programs funded in 1992-93 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA). These databases were developed by the Special Issues Analysis Center, a technical support center to OBEMLA. Also included are data from the *Descriptive Study of Services for LEP Students* (Fleischman and Hopstock, 1993), a national study of limited English proficient students in public schools grades K-12, conducted in 1991-92.

This publication includes information on the numbers of LEP students, characteristics of LEP students, Federal, State, and local programs serving LEP students, and the types of instructional services provided to LEP students.

I. Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a large and growing number of students in the United States who speak a language other than English and who bring different cultural heritages to their classrooms. Many of these students enter school with little or no English proficiency. There is an important need to better understand this population in order to determine appropriate and effective methods for including these students within challenging instructional environments. A first step is to have a basic understanding of the numbers of such students and their backgrounds, and of the programs that serve them. This digest provides summary data for that purpose.

II. How are limited English proficient students identified?

Children from language backgrounds other than English bring to their schools not only linguistic, but also cultural resources. However, these students need assistance if they do not yet have the full proficiency in English needed for success in school.

There is no federally mandated definition of limited English proficiency. Therefore, different definitions of limited English proficient students are frequently used by individual states or local education agencies.

The process for determining if a student is limited English proficient can be district- or school-based. For the 1991-92 academic school year, district-defined criteria were used in 70 percent of districts while school-defined criteria were used in 18 percent of districts. Combinations of the district- and school-defined criteria were used in 12 percent of districts.[1]

Typically, schools and districts use more than one type of data to determine whether a student is limited English proficient. Districts and schools in the 1991-92 Descriptive Study of Services for LEP Students reported that the most commonly used criteria were oral proficiency tests in English (83 percent of districts), home language surveys (77 percent of districts), teacher judgment (69 percent of districts), and achievement tests in English (52 percent of districts).

III. How many limited English proficient students are there?

Limited English proficient students are a large and growing population in the United States. The following sections describe the numbers and the trends of enrollment for limited English proficient students.

Number of Limited English Proficient Students

States reported a total enrollment of **2,558,487** limited English proficient students for the 1992-93 academic school year.[2] In addition, the U.S. territories reported a total LEP student enrollment of **177,465**, for a total of approximately 2.7 million LEP students identified in 1992-93 within U.S. states and territories (See Table 1). These are actually underestimates of the number of limited English proficient students enrolled, since data were not reported for three states (Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia) and one territory (Guam). Table 2 presents data on the number of LEP students by state. As shown in the table, California had the largest number of limited English proficient students. There were 1,152,000 LEP students in California, which is approximately 42 percent of all limited English proficient students in the United States and its territories. Texas (345,000 LEP students) and New York (195,000 LEP students) had the next largest numbers of limited English proficient students reported. The distribution of limited English proficient students across the states and territories is shown in Figure 1. As shown in the figure, the greatest numbers of limited English proficient students are in the West and Southwest.

TABLE 1

Number of LEP Students in the United States and Territories*

(Source: 1992-93 State Educational Agency Database)

States	2,558,487
Territories	177,465
Total	**2,735,952**

* Data were not reported for Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Guam.

TABLE 2

Number of LEP Students by State
(Source: 1992-93 State Educational Agency Database)

State	Number of LEP Students	State	Number of LEP Students
Alabama	2,332	New Hampshire	1,004
Alaska	13,489	New Jersey	49,627
Arizona	83,643	New Mexico	83,771
Arkansas	3,423	New York	194,593
California	1,151,819	North Carolina	8,900
Colorado	24,876	North Dakota	8,652
Connecticut	17,637	Ohio	11,125
Delaware	1,847	Oklahoma	19,714
District of Columbia	5,132	Oregon[a]	16,359
Florida	130,131	Pennsylvania	[b]
Georgia	10,043	Rhode Island	8,350
Hawaii	11,251	South Carolina	1,594
Idaho	4,616	South Dakota	8,197
Illinois	94,471	Tennessee	2,770
Indiana	5,017	Texas	344,915
Iowa	4,556	Utah	24,447
Kansas	6,900	Vermont	723
Kentucky	1,738	Virginia	[b]
Louisiana	5,890	Washington	32,858
Maine	1,820	West Virginia	[b]
Maryland	12,719	Wisconsin	14,788
Massachusetts	45,405	Wyoming	2,027
Michigan	37,272	American Samoa	13,972
Minnesota	17,979	Guam	[b]
Mississippi	3,222	Northern Marianas	9,564
Missouri	4,365	Palau	2,823
Montana	7,817	Puerto Rico[c]	149,824
Nebraska	2,623	Virgin Islands	1,282
Nevada	12,040	**Total**	**2,735,952**

[a] The LEP count in Oregon is for LEP students served and is therefore most likely an undercount of the actual number of LEP students in the state.

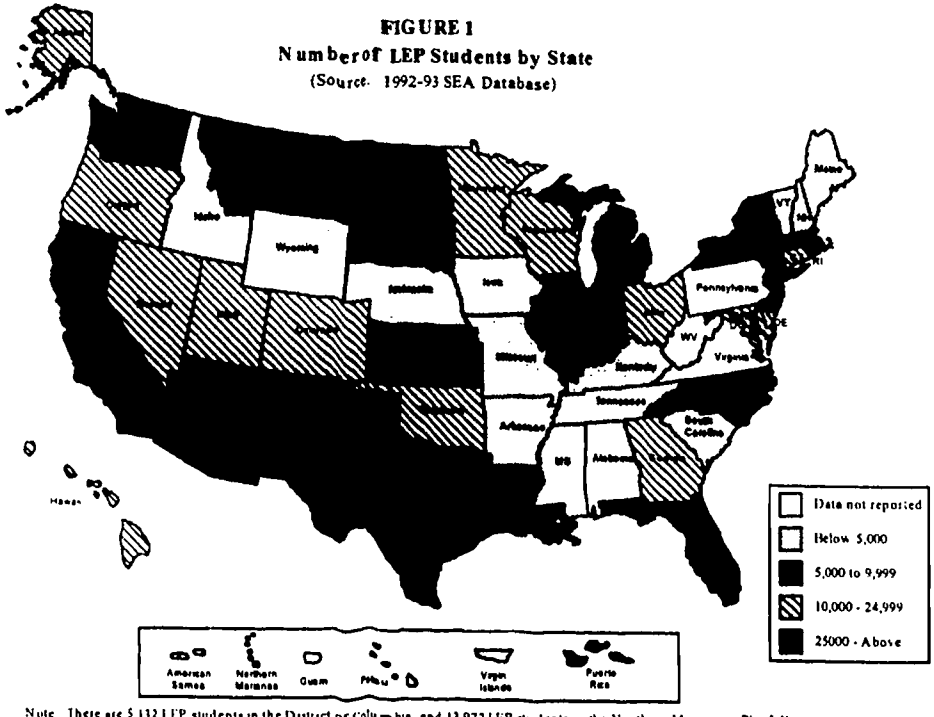
[b] Data were not reported.

[c] Puerto Rico reports the number of limited Spanish proficient students.

FIGURE 1

Number of LEP Students by State

(Source: 1992-93 SEA Database)

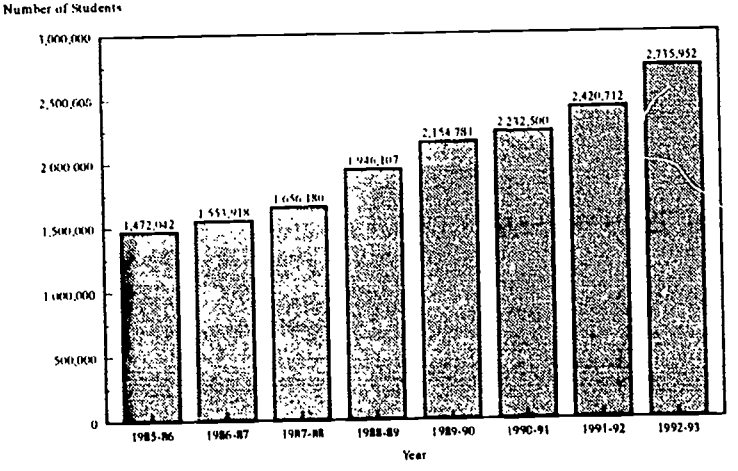


Note: There are 5,132 LEP students in the District of Columbia, and 13,972 LEP students in the Northern Marianas. The following states/ territories did not report data on the number of LEP students: Guam, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. The LEP count in Oregon is for LEP students served and is therefore an undercount of the actual number of LEP students in the state. Puerto Rico responded with numbers of limited Spanish proficient students.

Trends in Enrollment

The 2,735,952 limited English proficient students reported in the 1992-93 school year for U.S. states and territories represents an increase of over 300,000 students (13 percent) compared to the number reported for the 1991-92 school year. This increase continues the upward trend in the number of limited English proficient students that has been observed over the past several years. This trend is illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
Trends in Enrollment of LEP Students:
1985-86 to 1992-93*
(Source: 1992-93 State Educational Agency Database)



* This figure was originally presented in the *Summary of the Bilingual Education State Educational Agency Program Survey of States' Limited English Proficient Persons and Available Educational Services 1992-93*. Special Issues Analysis Center, Arlington, Virginia: Development Associates Inc. The original data sources were: 1985-86, 1986-87, ARC (1991); 1988-89, 1989-90, OBEMLA (1991); 1990-91 to 1992-93, SIAC.

School Enrollment

Nationally, it is estimated that approximately 28,000 public schools enroll at least one limited English proficient student.[3] Limited English proficient students are predominately enrolled in public schools. Of the total 2,558,487 limited English proficient students identified in the 1992-93 academic school year, 98 percent (2,507,776) were enrolled in public schools.[4]

IV. Who are the limited English proficient students?

Limited English proficient students in the U.S. bring a wide variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds to their schools. The following sections describe the language backgrounds and grade levels of LEP students.

Language Background

As Table 3 shows, the large majority (72.9%) of limited English proficient students are Spanish-speaking students. Vietnamese is the second most common language group, representing approximately four percent of the limited English proficient student population. There are many language groups being served. For example, students served by Title VII programs represent 198 different language groups.[5]

TABLE 3

Number of LEP Students in the Twelve Most Common Language Groups*
(Source: LEPs Descriptive Study District Mail Survey)

Language Groups	Number of LEP Students	Percentage of LEP Students
Spanish	1,682,560	72.9
Vietnamese	90,922	3.9
Hmong	42,305	1.8
Cantonese	38,693	1.7
Cambodian	37,742	1.6
Korean	36,568	1.6
Laotian	29,838	1.3
Navajo	28,913	1.3
Tagalog	24,516	1.1
Russian	21,903	0.9
French Creole	21,850	0.9
Arabic	20,318	0.9
Other	237,951	10.3
Total	**2,307,992**	**100.0**

* The number of respondents to the item was 733; this was 98.4% of those who responded to the survey. The results are weighted to be nationally representative.

Grade Level Information

Limited English proficient students are primarily found within the elementary grades. As Table 4 indicates, over 60 percent of all limited English proficient students are in kindergarten through grade 5. The number of limited English proficient students decreases from lower to higher grades. For example, 3.3 percent of all limited English proficient students are enrolled in grade 12 as opposed to 12.1 percent enrolled in kindergarten.

TABLE 4

Number and Percentage of LEP Students by Grade Level[a]
(Source: LEPs Descriptive Study District Mail Survey)

Grade Level	Number of LEP Students	Percentage of All LEP Students	Total Students in the U.S.[b]	LEP Students as a Percentage of Total Students
Kindergarten	277,914	12.1	3,305,619	8.4
1st Grade	279,257	12.1	3,554,274	7.9
2nd Grade	246,979	10.7	3,359,193	7.4
3rd Grade	221,936	9.6	3,333,285	6.7
4th Grade	197,211	8.6	3,312,443	6.0
5th Grade	177,412	7.7	3,268,381	5.4
6th Grade	150,421	6.5	3,238,095	4.6
7th Grade	134,907	5.9	3,180,120	4.2
8th Grade	125,849	5.5	3,019,826	4.2
9th Grade	159,208	6.9	3,310,290	4.8
10th Grade	137,101	5.9	2,913,951	4.7
11th Grade	103,337	4.5	2,642,554	3.9
12th Grade	75,423	3.3	2,390,329	3.2
Ungraded	16,469	0.7	—	—
Total	2,303,425	100.0	42,000,343	5.5

[a] The number of respondents to the item was 735, this was 98.7% of those who responded to the survey. The results are weighted to be nationally representative

[b] These data are from the National Center for Education Statistics. *Public Elementary and Secondary Aggregate Data, by State for School Years 1991-92 and 1990-91.* NCES 93-327.

V. What programs serve limited English proficient students?

Limited English proficient students may receive services from one or more of federal, state, or local educational progr ·ns. State and local programs serve the largest number of limited English proficient students.

Among federal programs, there are programs specifically designed to support effective instruction of limited English proficient students, and programs directed toward educationally and/or economically disadvantaged students, many of whom are limited English proficient. These federal programs, and the numbers of limited English proficient students they serve, are described in the sections below. The data that are reported are based on the 1992-93 school year, the most recent year for which data are available on numbers of students served. Several of the federal programs either have been recently reauthorized or will be reauthorized in 1995. Thus, the data reported in this digest represent the program categories authorized in 1992-93 and do not reflect the newly reauthorized programs.

Federal Programs Directed Toward LEP Students: Title VII

Limited English proficient students receive federal support from various programs. Of these, Title VII, or the Bilingual Education Act, is designed to build the capacity of schools and districts to meet the educational needs of limited English proficient students so that these students can meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children. Title VII was reauthorized in 1994 as part of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA).[6] Programs operating in 1992-93, the most recent year for which data on students are available, were funded through the prior legislation, that is, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Under ESEA, Title VII Part A grants provide assistance to local educational agencies and other organizations to support direct educational services to students within six program categories.

The six program categories which are authorized under the prior Title VII (ESEA) legislation are the following:

The Transitional Bilingual Education Program is designed to help limited English proficient students learn English, using the student's native language as needed. This program is also intended to foster multi-cultural learning. Classes may consist of up to 40 percent native English speakers.

The Developmental Bilingual Education Program promotes the development of fluency in both English and a student's native language. Classes should be composed of half limited English proficient students and half native English speakers.

The Special Alternative Instructional Program emphasizes primarily (if not all) instruction in English, with the English instruction structured to be at a level appropriate for the limited English proficient student's level of understanding.

The Special Populations Program provides instruction to preschool, special education, or talented and gifted limited English proficient students.

The Academic Excellence Program facilitates the dissemination of successful instructional methods for limited English proficient students. Academic Excellence programs can be Transitional Bilingual Education, Special Alternative Instructional, or Developmental Bilingual Education programs.

The Family English Literacy Program assists limited English proficient adults and out-of-school youths to achieve competence in English.

There are three special funding priorities that have been associated with the Transitional Bilingual Education, Developmental Bilingual Education, and Special Alternative Instructional programs. These are Magnet Middle Schools, Math/Science, and Recent Arrivals priorities.

In FY93, a total of 1,065 projects were funded through Title VII within these six categories. These programs were located in 3,231 schools and served a total of 306,821 students.

Other Federal Programs

In addition to Title VII programs, limited English proficient students may be served under several other federally funded programs, most of which are designed to meet the needs of educationally and/or economically disadvantaged students. These programs are described below.

Chapter 1 (reauthorized as Title I) provides educationally disadvantaged students with instructional and support services in school districts with high concentrations of low-income children.

The Migrant Education Program provides instructional and support services to meet the special needs of children of migratory agricultural workers or fishers. This program gives financial assistance to state educational agencies.

Even Start supports family-centered educational programs that aid parents in becoming fully involved in the education of their children, and in helping the children reach their full potential as learners.

The Emergency Immigrant Education Act Program provides supplementary education services through state and local agencies and helps defray costs for immigrant children enrolled in public and nonpublic schools.

Special Education programs give formula grants to state educational agencies to assist in providing special education and related services to children with disabilities.

Vocational Education programs provide financial assistance in improving vocational programs and in expanding the scope of vocational programs to include traditionally underserved populations.

Table 5 presents the number and percentage of limited English proficient students served by program type.

TABLE 5

Number and Percentage of LEP Students Served by Program Type[a]
(Source: 1992-93 State Educational Agency and FY93 Title VII Databases)

Program	Number of LEP Students	Percentage of All LEP Students[b]
Title VII Part A Programs[c]		
Transitional Bilingual Education		
Regular	145,074	5.30
Math/Science Priority	54,327	1.99
Recent Arrivals Priority	12,521	0.46
Developmental Bilingual Education		
Regular	5,869	0.21
Magnet Schools Priority	184	0.01
Special Alternative Instructional		
Regular	64,424	2.35
Magnet Schools Priority	167	0.01
Math/Science Priority	8,077	0.30
Recent Arrivals Priority	8,841	0.32
Special Populations	7,337	0.27
Overall	306,821	11.21
Other Federal Programs		
Chapter 1	715,349	26.15
Migrant Education	226,653	8.28
Even Start	8,570	0.31
Emergency Immigrant Education	705,825	25.80
Special Education	165,187	6.04
Vocational Education	72,341	2.64
State and Local Programs	2,081,077	76.06

[a] The data on Title VII Part A Programs are from the FY93 Title VII Application Database. The remaining data in this table are from the 1992-93 State Educational Agency Database.

[b] The overall percent LEP is greater than 100 percent because LEP students may be served by more than one program.

[c] The Academic Excellence and Family English Literacy programs were not included in this table because they do not directly serve students.

VI. What types of instructional services do limited English proficient students receive?

There are no Federal requirements or mandates regarding the specific methodologies to be used in providing instruction to limited English proficient students. The Federal role has been to support the building of local capacity. In fact, Federal funds that support the development of instructional programs for limited English proficient students serve only a small proportion (about 10 percent) of the total population of limited English proficient students. Thus, decisions about the most appropriate instructional approaches are made by individual States and/or local educational agencies.

State policies and legislation regarding requirements for special instructional services for limited English proficient students vary greatly across the country. Some states have no regulations; others require the use of special instruction in English language arts or instruction in content areas using the students' native language. Although some states require or at least encourage particular types of services, how these requirements are implemented at the local level varies substantially. The final decisions about the instructional services to be provided are often shaped by a number of factors, such as the number of limited English proficient students enrolled in the school or district, the language backgrounds of the students, and the resources available locally for serving those language groups.

For these reasons, schools employ a variety of approaches and models inproviding instruction to their limited English proficient students. Table 6 presents the percentage of limited English proficient students by type of service as defined in the Descriptive Study of Services for Limited English Proficient Students (Fleischman and Hopstock, 1993). As shown in the table, the largest percentage (33.7 percent) of limited English proficient students receive intensive services with significant native language use. Many of these students are elementary grade level students, who are about twice as likely as high school students to receive this type of service. The second largest percentage (17.4 percent) of limited English proficient students receive some special services with instruction all in English.

TABLE 6

Services Received by LEP Students

(Source: LEPs Descriptive Study School Mail Survey)

Type of Service	Percentage of LEP Students
No special services	1.9
Services not specific to LEP students (e.g., Chapter 1 services)	1.3
Some special services[a], instruction all in English[c]	17.4
Some special services[a], some native language use[d]	6.4
Some special services[a], significant native language use[e]	2.8
Intensive services[b], instruction all in English[c]	13.3
Intensive services[b], some native language use[d]	14.4
Intensive services[b], significant native language use[e]	33.7
Unknown	9.0

[a] Some special services = bilingual aide, Chapter 1 bilingual resource teacher, or ESL services (less than 10 hours)
[b] Intensive services = multiple period ESL or specially designed content instruction
[c] All English = less than 2 percent native language use
[d] Some native language use = less than 50 percent in any one major content area, and less than 25 percent overall in math, science, and social studies
[e] Significant native language use = more than 50 percent in any one major content area, at least 25 percent overall in math, science, and social studies

VII. Who provides instruction to limited English proficient students?

There are large numbers of public school teachers in the United States who teach at least one limited English proficient student in grades K-12. Most of these teachers are not specialists; they teach classes containing mostly English proficient students along with some limited English proficient students. In 1991-92, an estimated 364,485 teachers had at least one limited English proficient student in their class(es).[7]

The purpose of Federal Title VII funding has been to build the capacity of teachers and other school staff to serve limited English proficient students. The prior Title VII Part C (ESEA) authorized grants within four training assistance programs, three of which directly prepare educational personnel who are currently working with or will work with limited English proficient students. In FY93, a total of 162 projects were funded within these categories.

The four categories of training programs authorized by the prior Title VII (ESEA) legislation are:[8]

The Educational Personnel Training Program provides financial assistance to meet the need for additional or better trained educational personnel preparing to work with limited English proficient students.

The Short-Term Training Program improves the skills of educational personnel and parents participating in programs for limited English proficient students.

The Bilingual Education Fellowship Program awards fellowships to full-time students for advanced study of bilingual education.

The Training, Development, and Improvement Program promotes reform, innovation, and improvement in graduate education curricula, the structure of the academic profession, and the recruitment and retention of higher education and graduate school faculties in bilingual education.

As shown in Table 7, the largest numbers of participants are served within the Educational Personnel Training (Regular) Program (9,758 participants). Short-Term Training programs served the second largest number of participants (4,784 participants)

TABLE 7

Number of Participants Served by Title VII Part C Programs*

(Source: FY93 Title VII Application Database and OBEMLA Program Records)

Program Type	Number of Participants
Educational Personnel Training	
Regular	9,758
Math/Science Priority	1,670
Bilingual Education Fellowship	394
Short-Term Training	4,784
Total	**16,606**

* The data for the Bilingual Education Fellowship program are from OBEMLA program records. The remaining data are from the FY93 Title VII Application Database. Data on participants are not provided in applications for the Training, Development, and Improvement Program.

Endnotes

[1] Data are from Fleischman, H.L. and Hopstock, P.J. (1993). *Descriptive Study of Services to Limited English Proficient Students.* Washington, DC: Development Associates, Inc.

[2] Data are from Henderson, A., Donly, B., and Strang, W. (1994). *Summary of the Bilingual Education State Educational Agency Program Survey of States' Limited English Proficient Persons and Available Educational Services 1992-93.* Special Issues Analysis Center. Arlington, VA: Development Associates, Inc.

[3] Data are from Fleischman, H.L. and Hopstock, P.J. (1993). *Descriptive Study of Services to Limited English Proficient Students.* Washington, DC: Development Associates, Inc.

[4] Data are from Henderson, A., Donly, B., and Strang, W. (1994). *Summary of the Bilingual Education State Educational Agency Program Survey of States' Limited English Proficient Persons and Available Educational Services 1992-93.* Special Issues Analysis Center. Arlington, VA: Development Associates, Inc.

[5] Data are from the FY93 Title VII Application Database. Special Issues Analysis Center. Arlington, VA: Development Associates, Inc.

[6] Under the reauthorized Title VII (IASA) legislation, program categories supporting services for students at the district and school level are: Program Development and Implementation Grants, Program Enhancement Projects, Comprehensive School Grants, and Systemwide Improvement Grants.

[7] Data are from Fleischman, H.L. and Hopstock, P.J. (1993). *Descriptive Study of Services to Limited English Proficient Students.* Washington, DC: Development Associates, Inc.

[8] Under the reauthorized Title VII (IASA) legislation, program categories supporting professional development are: Training for All Teachers Program, Bilingual Education Teachers and Personnel Grants, Bilingual Education Career Ladder Program, and Graduate Fellowships in Bilingual Education Program.

For additional information and statistics please contact:

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