

Investing in Our Next Generation: Addressing the Educational Opportunities and Challenges Facing English Language Learners

ESL Acronyms and Program Labels

The field of English as a Second Language/English Language Learning is filled with acronyms. Some refer to programming options, others to the students enrolled in such classes. Here are the most commonly used acronyms.

ESL – English as a second language; generally refers to programs that teach English to students who speak another language in the home.

ELL – English language learner; refers to the student. ELLs are enrolled in ESL programs.

LEP – limited English proficient; a descriptive term, as in an LEP student.

FEP – fluent or fully English proficient; describes an ELL who has achieved fluency in the English language

NEP/NES – non-English proficient; students who are proficient in their native language, but have not yet acquired any English proficiency.

ESOL – English speakers of other languages; refers to students whose first language is something other than English.

TESOL – Teaching English to speakers of other languages; also, Teachers of English to speakers of other languages.

TEFL – Teaching English as a foreign language; generally refers to English language programs in the students' own, non-English-speaking country.

Labels Most Often Assigned to ELL Classes and Programs

Bilingual Instruction / Bilingual Education – programs that provide instruction in two languages, generally the students' native language and English.

Dual Language/Dual Immersion Program – instructional programming in which students are taught literacy and content area subjects in two languages. A portion of the students generally enter speaking one language, and a portion enter speaking the other language. Both groups learn in both languages together.

Language Immersion Program – an instructional program in which students are taught only in the new or second language. In the U.S. most language immersion programs are for the purpose of teaching English, but some schools have been developed to teach other languages such as Native American Indian languages.

Cluster classroom – a regular education classroom in which a number of ELLs are clustered, along with native-English speakers, so that the services of an ESL teacher can be utilized more efficiently. Sometimes a school will have several ESL cluster classrooms.

Self-contained ESL class – a class consisting exclusively of English language learners.

Sheltered Instruction – an instructional approach in which students learn English through content area subject matter with teacher scaffolding in order to make that content comprehensible.

Transitional Bilingual Education – an instructional theory or model in which children are helped to achieve literacy proficiency in their first language before being taught to read in a second language (English in the U.S.). The belief is that skills mastered in the first language can more easily be transferred to the second language later.

Maintenance Bilingual Education (MBE) – a program that uses two languages—both the student’s primary/native language and English—as a means of instruction. In this setting the program typically builds on the students’ primary language skills while developing and expanding their English language skills. The goal is to achieve proficiency in both languages, while continuing the education in the content areas (math, science, social studies, literature etc.); also referred to as late-exit bilingual education.

WIDA Consortium – World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium; a group of over twenty states that collaborate to design and implement common standards for English language learning programs.

Acronyms and labels can be confusing to those not familiar with or who are just learning about the educational options for learning and teaching English. The above definitions are those most commonly used in educational circles to describe programming options for English language learners in the U.S.

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Data

NAEP - The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. Assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, and U.S. history.

Since NAEP assessments are administered uniformly using the same sets of test booklets across the nation, NAEP results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts. The assessment stays essentially the same from year to year, with only carefully documented changes. This permits NAEP to provide a clear picture of student academic progress over time. NAEP provides results on subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment for populations of students (e.g., all fourth-graders) and groups within those populations (e.g., female students, Hispanic students). NAEP does not provide scores for individual students or schools, although state NAEP can report results by selected large urban districts. NAEP results are based on representative [samples](#) of students at grades 4, 8, and 12 for the main assessments, or samples of students at ages 9, 13, or 17 years for the [long-term trend assessments](#). These grades and ages were chosen because they represent critical junctures in academic achievement.

ACS –The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities a fresh look at how they are changing. It is a critical element in the Census Bureau's reengineered decennial census program. The ACS collects and produces population and housing information every year instead of every ten years.

Categories of Foreign Born People in the U.S

- **Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs)** are persons who have been granted permission to live and work permanently in the United States. They are also known as “green card” recipients. LPRs may apply for citizenship after 5 years.
- **Refugees and Asylees** and other "humanitarian" immigrants are persons who sought residence in the United States in order to avoid persecution in their country of origin. Persons granted refugee status applied for admission while outside the United States. Persons granted asylum applied either at a port of entry or at some point after their entry into the United States. Refugees and asylees may apply to adjust their status to LPR after 1 year.

- **Naturalized Citizens** refer to persons aged 18 and over who become citizens of the United States. Most legal permanent residents are eligible to apply for naturalization within five years after obtaining LPR status. Immigrant children generally become citizens automatically when their parents become citizens.
- **Non-immigrant admissions** refer to arrivals of persons who are authorized to stay in the United States for a limited period of time. Most non-immigrants enter the United States as tourists or business travelers, but some come to work, study, or engage in cultural exchange programs.
- **Unauthorized immigrants** (sometimes referred to as undocumented or illegal immigrants) refer to persons who entered the country without permission or who entered through legal channels but then violated the terms of entry by staying past his or her visa expiration date or by engaging in unauthorized work.

Source: *2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. (2007). Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics and Dinan, K.A. (2005) *Children in low-income immigrant families policy brief: Federal policies restrict immigrant children's access to key public benefits*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.