

Keeping up with Missouri's Growing LEP Population

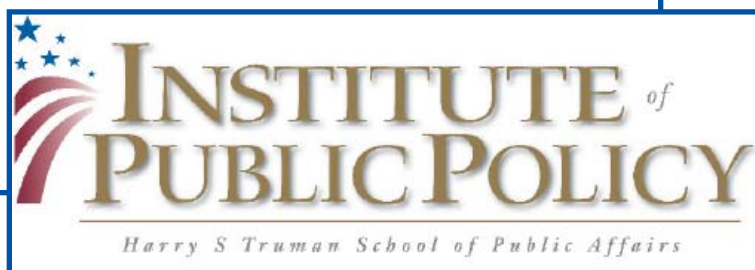
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Sita Sengsavanh

Immigration is growing in areas that have not previously experienced immigrant populations. This trend, coupled with requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), introduces new challenges to school districts across the country to comply with legislation to serve the growing population of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. As stated in policy note (31-2005), the LEP student growth rate in Missouri has been steady over the past twenty years, with high growth in the past five years. The 2004-05 Missouri LEP Census counted 97 languages of LEP students, which include the top ten languages of: Spanish, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Vietnamese, Arabic, Somali, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Farsi, French and African Tribal. The diversity of languages represents the diversity of students in the classroom, which creates a challenge for instructors to teach students with different language backgrounds.

Of the teachers that taught Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in 1999-2000 in Missouri, only 3% had 8 or more hours of training on teaching LEP students in the last 3 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). In the 2005 school year, the count of teachers with certification to teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Missouri was 372 across the state. Only 89 districts have ESOL teachers, but over 100 districts have reported having LEP students. If this number of ESOL teachers is compared to the 2004-05 LEP Census count of 18,745 students, this statewide average indicates there is only one ESOL teacher for every fifty students. This teacher-student ratio is very high as compared to the Missouri K-12 maximum standard class size ranging from 25-33 students and desired standard class size of 20-28 students. Research on the shortage of bilingual and ESOL teachers suggests teacher-student ratios of 1:20-25 students (Boe, 1990). These preferred ratios are considerably lower than the current ESOL teacher and LEP student ratio in the state of Missouri.

NCLB Title III – Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Migrant Students

Under No Child Left Behind Title III (NCLB), Local Educational Authorities (or school districts) are required

to provide language instruction programs for their LEP student populations (**Please see policy note 31-2005**). Prior to NCLB, funds were available to states through competitive grants from the Department of Education. Missouri qualified for \$100,000 in these grants in 2001, which were used to assist districts with low incidence or low numbers of LEP students, rather than districts with large LEP student populations and established language programs. Since the passage of NCLB, Title III funds were approximately \$3.1 million in 2004 for 14,855 LEP students, and it is estimated that Missouri will receive over \$4.7 million in the 2005-06 school year for 18,745 LEP students.

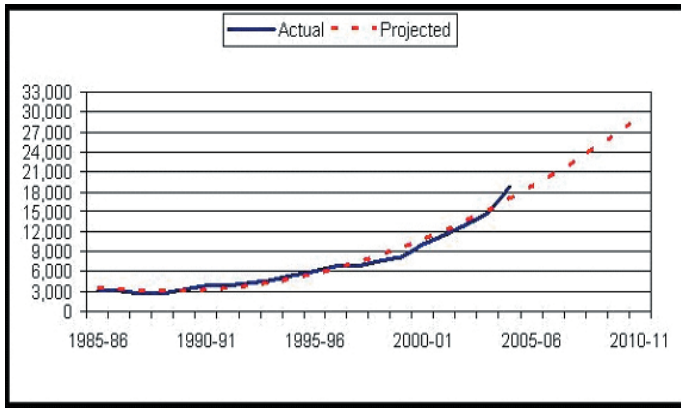
Shortage of Qualified Teachers

As the population of LEP students continues to grow, so does the need for qualified teachers in the classroom. It has been predicted that with the growth of LEP students, half of all teachers should expect to teach an LEP student sometime during their career (Menken and Antunez, 2001). This would mean that of the 67,097 teachers in Missouri in 2003-04, 33,548 teachers should expect to have an LEP student in their classroom at some point. Only 372 teachers were ESOL certified in the 2005 school year, which accounts for 0.6% of all teachers in Missouri.

With the current growth trend of LEP students over the past five years, a projection would predict almost 30,000 LEP students in Missouri's schools by 2010 (see figure 1). In order to maintain the current ESOL-endorsed teacher-student ratio in Missouri of 1:50, Missouri will need to have 600 teachers, which means an additional 228 teachers in the next five years. If Missouri is to achieve a more standard ratio of 1:25, it would need a total of 1200 ESOL teachers, which means the state needs to hire or train 828 additional ESOL teachers beyond the normal replacement rate. The demand for ESOL teachers is likely to be high across the country due to similar trends in other states, so hiring such a large number of certified teachers or paying the costs of training current teachers presents a tremendous challenge for Missouri.



Figure 1: Number of Missouri LEP Students Projected for 2010



ESOL Endorsement in Missouri

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsements for teachers and hiring new ESOL qualified teachers can be very costly. In addition to possessing a permanent or professional certificate to teach in Missouri and a minimum of two semester hours in professional requirements, certification for ESOL endorsement requires a minimum of 21 semester hours. Courses for endorsement are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Professional Requirements for ESOL Endorsement:

- Linguistics and English Linguistics (Language systems and English language structure)
- Language and Culture or Sociolinguistics (Focus on cultural sensitivity)
- Second Language Acquisition (Theories of language acquisition)
- Methods of Teaching Second Language Students (Principles and background of methodologies)
- Material for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and the Assessment of Speakers of Other Languages (Overview of instructional materials)
- ESOL Practicum (Coursework application, which may be applied in teacher's regular classroom)
- Elective Course work (Additional courses in areas including advanced second language methods, early childhood education, or bilingual education based on teacher's individual need.)

Source: Southeast Missouri State, <http://www6.semo.edu/southeasttesol/deseRequirements.asp>

Endorsement is additional coursework a teacher may take in addition to their existing teaching degree. In addition to content specialization, endorsement helps teacher identify

and address the special needs of LEP students. One option in Missouri that helps teachers get endorsed is a contract with Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Southeast Missouri State University that provides ESL workshops for teachers that count for one credit hour toward endorsement. These workshops are \$189.90 per graduate credit hour and \$141.80 per undergraduate credit hour. A teacher is looking at \$4000 to be endorsed at the graduate level and \$3000 at the undergraduate level for all 21 credit hours if obtained through these workshops.

Another option is an online class. The University of Missouri – Kansas City offered an online course on *Teaching English Language Learners: Intro for Mainstream Teachers and Administrators* in Winter 2005. This course was available for \$150 per credit hour or \$450 for the class. If all courses were taken via internet through UMKC, endorsement would cost \$3150 for 21 credit hours.

Endorsement is very costly for a teacher, and a district may not have enough money to pay for class fees or pay extra for new certification. Although Missouri has received considerable Title III funding, once the money has trickled down to the district level, there may not be enough to support endorsement or new hires certified to teach LEP students. An example of how a district has addressed LEP student growth follows with the Sedalia school district.

Case Study: Sedalia School District #200

In order to get a picture of how a school district is addressing the growth, the Sedalia School District is profiled. Sedalia represents a situation of large growth of LEP students in the past few years in a rural area of Missouri. This is a typical representation for school districts experiencing growth.

Figure 3. Sedalia School District

Elementary Schools: Heber Hunt, Parkview, Horace Mann, Skyline, Washington	(2088 students)
Sedalia Middle School	(1003 students)
Smith-Cotton High School	(1285 students)
Total Students in 2003-04	4,376
Classroom teachers 2003-04	286
Languages of LEP students spoken at home (LEP Census 2004)	Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

Source: Missouri DESE, dese.mo.gov/directory/080125.html



Sedalia had a total of 98 LEP students in school year 2000-01 and by 2004-05 that number almost doubled to 192. Although the number of languages has fluctuated between four and six languages over the past five years, Spanish has remained the predominant language of Sedalia's LEP population. Today there are 6 English for Speakers of Other Language (or ESOL) endorsed teachers in the Sedalia District. There is one teacher for every school, with the exception of one who divides time between two of the elementary schools.

Table 1. Sedalia Title III Federal Funding Applications

	2003	2004	2005
Students to be served	70 LEP 45 Immigrant	175 LEP 80 Immigrant	203 LEP 74 Immigrant
Actual number of students reported in LEP Census	151	180	192
Activities/ Items Budgeted	Delivery programs: Before/After school tutoring program run by ESOL teachers receiving stipend	Delivery Programs: In-Class and Pull-out FTE: 1 translator	Delivery Programs: In-Class, Pull-out, Supplemental Summer School FTE: 1.5 translators
Funding Received	\$14,272	\$21,517	\$43,597

Source: Missouri DESE, accessed through <https://k12apps.dese.mo.gov/webapps/menulist.asp>

Changes in the needs of the district due to the rapid growth of the LEP population can be reflected in its funding applications. Funding applications are how districts report usage of Title III funds to DESE. In their first application, Sedalia anticipated serving only 70 students, but that year the district reported twice that many students. The program changed delivery programs in the next year and hired one translator. Even with the growth in their LEP population and program services, the district did not increase the number of teachers. The increase of services and funding received show the change needed to serve the growing LEP population, but the personnel to administer the programs remained the same.

Discussion

Sedalia is only one example of how a district is utilizing Title III funds. Similar to many districts across the state, Sedalia is using most of its funds towards purchasing materials and supplies in addition to hiring translators. Sedalia does far

better than the state ratio of ESOL teachers to LEP students, with about one teacher to 30 LEP students in the district, when compared to the state ratio of one ESOL instructor to fifty LEP students. Although the ratio in Sedalia is closer to the ideal teacher-student ratio than many other districts in the state of Missouri, it is still fairly high in comparison to a more desirable ratio of 1:20-25 students. With the rapid growth of LEP students comes the increased need to hire new teachers trained to teach LEP students. Attracting qualified teachers is a challenge that many districts face. Finding ESOL endorsed teachers is an even greater challenge for rural districts. Even though Title III funds have given the state resources for LEP students that it had not received before, it may not be enough to address the needs of the rapidly growing LEP population.

Conclusion

In order to keep up with the growing LEP population, the state needs more ESOL endorsed teachers. With only 372 teachers qualified to teach the 18,745 LEP students now, growth within the next five years will place a demand on the school system. There are several ways to address this shortage, such as helping current teachers to gain endorsement in the short term and have current teacher education programs include ESOL endorsement courses in the general curriculum to respond to anticipated long term needs.

It would be more costly for a district to hire a new teacher who is ESOL-endorsed for LEP students than to get current teachers endorsed, but both are needed to keep up with current growth trends. The short-term, less costly, option is to get current teachers endorsed because it would run anywhere from \$3000-4000 for a 21-hour endorsement depending on the program. Contracting with more institutions of higher education would more provide opportunities for teachers to become endorsed because current options for universities are limited. Tuition assistance, online courses, and more programs that provide ESOL endorsement courses would make endorsement accessible to teachers across the state.

A long term solution would be to include ESOL coursework into education curriculums. By doing so, the state will be meeting endorsement requirements and will also be supplying its teaching pool with teachers prepared to meet the educational needs of LEP students. The more teachers that are ESOL endorsed, the better LEP student needs will be met in the future.



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Author Biography

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