

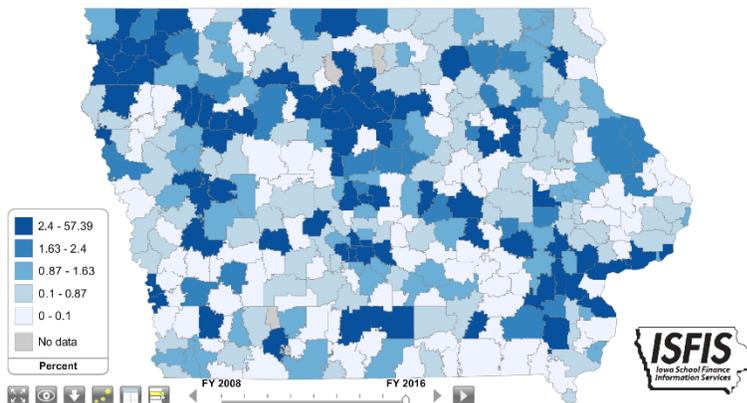
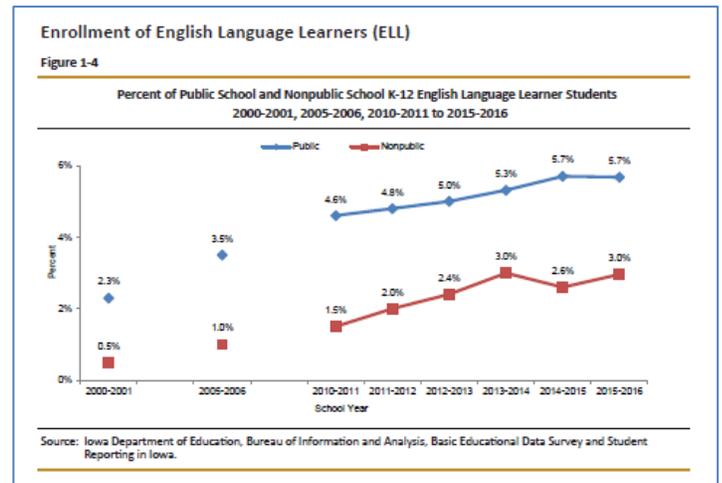
English Language Learner Supports

UEN Issue Brief

Services for ELL Students: UEN supports additional funding no lower than the national average (0.39) for ELL programming and state/regional capacity to assist districts with ELL students to improve instruction and evaluate programs for best practice. Students should be eligible for service for up to seven years based on their mastery of academic language at grade level. UEN supports flexibility for districts to best use funds to meet the needs of students and recognition of factors such as low-income in meeting the learning needs of non-English speaking students.

Historical Context

The number of students who are English language learners (ELL) continues to increase. In the 2015-16 school year, 5.7% of students were reported as ELL, up from 2.3% in 2000-01 as reported in the 2016 DE's Annual Condition of Education Report (Feb. 2017). Of the 39 Iowa school districts in FY 2016 with more than 6% of their enrollment eligible for ELL programing, 10 are urban districts and 29 are more rural in nature.



This map shows the distribution is geographically diverse, with the darker blue districts having ELL concentrations above the state average in FY 2016. (Although this shows districts with greater than 2.4% ELL, there are nine UEN districts above 4%, with Marshalltown at 37% ELL in FY 2016.

Funding History: The [ELL Task Force Report](#), Nov. 2013, tells the history of the formula support for ELL services: "Prior to the 2013 legislative session, students served in an ELL program counted for an additional 0.22 weighting, including state contribution in the formula, for programming for up to four years. During the 2013 legislative session, SF 452, Standing Appropriations, Division V, extended the 0.22 weighting and state contribution to ELL funding to a fifth year, first available to schools in the 2014-15 school year budget. The bill maintained the ability of the School Budget Review Committee (SBRC) to grant additional modified allowable growth, or spending authority, for ELL program costs beyond the fifth year. If granted, the funding to reimburse the school general fund for the ELL expenses is funded by the district's cash reserve levy or existing cash balance. It is important to highlight the relationship between

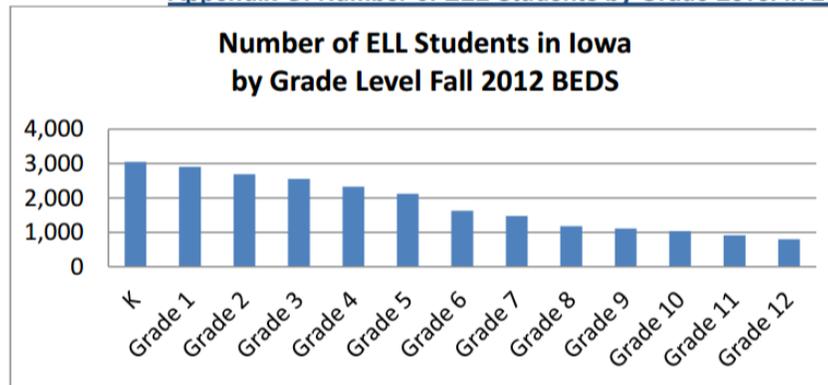
per-pupil property valuation, which is inversely related to the local property tax rate (lower value results in higher taxes) when attempting to understand the challenges related to the SBRC process.” The Task force report’s Appendix F shows that property tax pressures are significant in most school districts with high concentrations of ELL students.

Educational Requirements: The Task Force Report also states: Iowa has educational requirements for ELL students as described in Iowa Code, Chapter 280.4, Uniform School Requirement: When a student is limited English proficient, both public and nonpublic schools shall provide special instruction, which shall include, but need not be limited to, either instruction in English as a second language or transitional bilingual instruction. Such instruction will continue until the student is fully English proficient or demonstrates a functional ability to speak, read, write, and understand the English language.

Funding Recommendations: The Task Force recommended and the UEN supports LEP weighted funding closer to the national average by increasing from .22 to .39 through a phase-in formula over a three-year period. The .39 national average weighting was shown in the Nevada study, Study of a New Method of Funding for Public Schools in Nevada, American Institutes for Research, 2012. The Task Force also recommended extending eligibility for ELL state weighting from five to seven years reflecting the research-based timeline sufficient to move LEP students to proficiency: They state, “The extension of years is critical to provide enough time for all students to reach academic language proficiency through ELL educational programming to ensure they don’t fall into a subsequent designation of special education requiring an Individualized Education Program.”

Success: this chart shows that ELL students served early in elementary years tend to exit the program, as the numbers by grade level decrease dramatically.

Appendix G: Number of ELL Students by Grade Level in 2012



Source: Chart created by Iowa School Finance Information Services using data from Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Information and Analysis, Basic Education Data Survey and EASIER

How long does it take for ELLs to reach proficiency? The National Literacy Panel, as reported in [A review conducted for the Center for Public Education](#) by researchers at Edvantia, concluded that “considerable future research is needed to develop valid and reliable measures” of academic language proficiency (August & Shanahan, 2006). However, studies conducted to date indicate that it takes 4 to 7 years for ELLs to become proficient in academic English.” They cite several empirical studies that confirm the statement.

Legislative Analyst, UEN, Margaret Buckton, 1201 63rd Street, Des Moines, IA 50311
margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com 515.201.3755