

FY21 Federal Budget: Title III Support for English Learners

Access to high quality public education is not only a core American value, but also a means to educational equity. Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was established to ensure that federal funds support the education of English learners (ELs) to meet state academic standards.¹

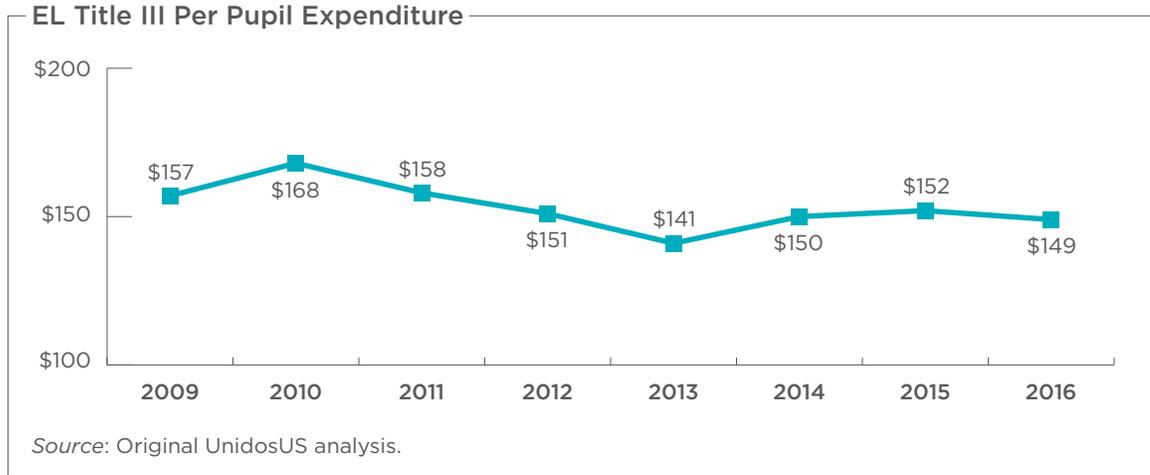
Yet research shows that ELs often lack access to qualified teachers, quality learning materials, and schools with adequate levels of financial resources²—factors that contribute to the opportunity gaps (e.g., low college attendance rates, low enrollment in advanced placement classes, etc.) experienced by the EL population.³

English Learners Compared to Native English Speakers

- In 2014, EL students demonstrated fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math proficiency levels that were 40 percentage points below their native English-speaking peers.⁴
- Though the EL student population continues to increase rapidly, there is still a dearth of qualified teachers that are prepared to teach English as a second language. A survey from the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 41% of public school teachers taught ELs, but less than a third had even a moderate amount of training to support students with limited English proficiency.⁵
- Only 67% of ELs graduate from high school, compared with the overall national rate of 84%.⁶
- Of those who graduate, only 1.4% of ELs take college entrance exams e.g., SAT, ACT.⁷
- In 2013, a study found that within eight years of high school graduation, just one in eight of ELs in the sample (12%) had attained a bachelor's degree.⁸
- That same study found that 51% of ELs never earned any postsecondary education credits of any kind.⁹

The Impact of Increased Costs and Decreased Funding

Between 2009 and 2016, the EL population grew by 11.35%.¹⁰ Currently, there are more than 4.9 million ELs enrolled in United States K-12 public schools.¹¹ However, FY20 Title III funding has not kept up with this growth. And when adjusting for inflation, Title III funding has actually decreased by 9.4% since 2009.¹²



The COVID-19 crisis has shed a light on how Title III, the only federal funding stream dedicated to the teaching of EL students, is sorely underfunded and therefore inadequate to meet the needs of ELs. Schools and districts normally need funding for language instruction education programs for ELs, but with the current crisis, more funding is needed for the acquisition of educational technology, high-quality software for remote learning, and professional development for teachers to gain mastery of novel remote learning methods. Though we do not yet know the true cost of covering all of the needs brought about by the pandemic, we know that the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate the gaps that already exist in EL education.

According to a recent Learning Policy Institute analysis, a conservative 5% decrease in state funding for education in FY20 and a 20% decrease in FY21 (totaling \$188.5 billion) combined with the effects of a select group of increased costs (totaling \$41.2 billion), would result in a need of at least \$230 billion needed to stabilize state education budgets, pointing to a much greater need for federal funding.

	2019-20	2020-21	Total
Devices and Connectivity (15% of students at \$500 per student)	\$1,878,454,800	\$1,878,454,800	\$3,756,909,600
Extra Meals at 20 days/year	\$1,448,963,558	\$0	\$1,448,963,558
Expanded Learning Time at 20 days/year for 50% of students	\$0	\$35,954,199,222	\$35,954,199,222
Total Increased Costs	\$3,327,418,358	\$37,832,654,022	\$41,160,072,380
Decreased Education Revenue	\$37,694,542,795	\$150,778,171,180	\$188,472,713,975
TOTAL	\$41,021,961,153	\$188,610,825,202	\$229,632,786,355

Source: Learning Policy Institute, "The Impact of Increased Costs and Decreased Funding," https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/what-will-it-take-stabilize-schools-time-covid-19?utm_source=LPI+Master+List&utm_campaign=ef7bd94e8f-LPIMC_COVIDblog_Griffith-Dede_20200507&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7e6Odfald8-ef7bd94e8f-74113013 (accessed May 19, 2020).¹³

The EL population is rapidly growing and in need of equitable federal investment. If Title III funding continues to fail to keep up with the rate of EL growth, millions of students, of which almost four million are Latino, will be denied a high-quality education and inhibited from contributing to the United States economy. In order to raise the academic performance of EL students and overall achievement of all students, UnidosUS supports \$1 billion in additional funding for Title III in COVID-19 relief and recovery needed during the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. For FY21, we ask that Congress appropriate \$985 million for Title III.

Endnotes

- 1 National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, "Title III Grant FAQs," <https://ncela.ed.gov/title-iii-grant-faqs> (accessed April 10, 2020).
- 2 The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Children in Title I schools by race and ethnicity in the United States," <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8418-children-in-title-i-schools-by-race-and-ethnicity#detailed/1/any/false/1603,1539,1381,1246,1124,1021,909,857,105/167,168,133,3,185,107/17042> (accessed May 17, 2020).
- 3 Quintero, Diana & Hansen, Michael, "English learners and the growing need for qualified teachers," *Brookings Institute*, June 2, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/06/02/english-learners-and-the-growing-need-for-qualified-teachers/> (accessed April 10, 2020).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 U.S. Department of Education, "Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999-2000: Overview of the Data for Public, Private, Private Charter, and Bureau of Indian Affairs Elementary and Secondary Schools," <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002313.pdf> (accessed May 18, 2020).
- 6 U.S. Department of Education, "Academic Performance and Outcomes for English Learners," <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-outcomes/index.html> (accessed April 12, 2020).
- 7 Sanchez, Claudio, "English Language Learners: How Your State Is Doing," *NPR*, February 23, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/02/23/512451228/5-million-english-language-learners-a-vast-pool-of-talent-at-risk> (accessed April 10, 2020).
- 8 Núñez, A.M. et al. (2016). English Learners and Their Transition to Postsecondary Education. In M.B. Paulsen (Ed.). *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (pp. 41-90). Springer International Publishing Switzerland. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-26829-3_2
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics," https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_204.20.asp (accessed April 10, 2020), Table 204.20.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 UnidosUS Analysis
- 13 Griffith, Michael, "What Will It Take to Stabilize Schools in the Time of COVID-19?," https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/what-will-it-take-stabilize-schools-time-covid-19?utm_source=LPI+Master+List&utm_campaign=ef7bd94e8f-LPIMC_COVIDblog_Griffith-Dede_20200507&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7e60dfa1d8-ef7bd94e8f-74113013 (accessed May 19, 2020).