The Elephant in the Classroom
Mass Immigration's Impact on Public Education

A SPECIAL REPORT BY
MARC FERRIS AND SPENCER RALEY

What Every Parent and Taxpayer Should Know About Immigration and the Public Education Crisis
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A special report by Marc Ferris and Spencer Raley | September 2016
Overview

Public school districts across the United States are suffering under a massive unfunded mandate imposed by the federal government: the requirement to educate millions of illegal aliens, the school age children of illegal aliens, refugees and legal immigrant students. FAIR estimates that it currently costs public schools $59.8 billion to serve this burgeoning population. The struggle to fund programs for students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), sometimes called English Language Learners (ELL), represents a major drain on school budgets. Yet due to political correctness, it is taboo to raise the issue even though scarce resources are redirected away from American citizens to support programs like English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and English as a Second Language (ESL).

The influx of newcomers to the public schools is helping President Barack Obama fulfill the promise he made five days before his election in 2008 to “fundamentally transform the United States.” Almost one in every ten students enrolled in public schools is designated as LEP. For kindergarteners, the figure is 17.4 percent. In 2013, the Department of Education determined that the United States will require 82,408 new certified or trained LEP teachers by 2018 at a cost of $6.3 billion in salaries and benefits on top of what is spent now—if school districts can find enough qualified candidates. Despite the growing LEP population, only 1 percent of teachers are certified or trained in ESL.1

Factors Straining Public Schools

- A surge of Unaccompanied Alien Minors crossing the border from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador beginning in 2014
- Family units entering the country illegally
- People overstaying their visas
- Higher-than-average birthrates among families with an illegal head-of-household
- Around a million legal immigrants granted permanent resident status every year since 2004

In addition, the spread of “sanctuary” policies across the country—cities, counties and two states (California and Connecticut) that refuse to cooperate with federal immigration agencies—also serves as a magnet for illegal aliens. Almost every school district highlighted in this report operates in an active sanctuary jurisdiction.2
The Scope of the Problem

The federal government provides approximately 8 percent of public school funding. The rest comes from state and local resources split roughly down the middle. Regarding LEP programs, however, Congress contributes just over 1 percent of the cost. With school budgets shrinking across the country since 2008, it will become harder to absorb all the refugees and new immigrants who require LEP services without impacting other students. This year in Chicago, for example, the school system is preparing for “historic” budget cuts exceeding 20 percent that will require laying off teachers, trimming resources and increasing class sizes. In 2016, the average property tax bill in the city mushroomed by 13 percent over the previous year, but some residents of affluent neighborhoods saw their taxes increase as much as 90 percent. “The unfortunate truth is that the pain is not over,” said a local attorney who specializes in real estate taxation. “It is just the beginning.” Chicago and many other municipalities in Illinois tout their status as sanctuary districts, yet by 2018 the state will have to almost triple its current LEP outlay and spend $1.9 billion every year to educate 186,646 English language students. In many municipalities, LEP programs are growing faster than the school district’s ability to run—or fund them effectively.

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Nationwide, public school enrollment is projected to rise 6.3 percent to 53 million students between 2014 and 2024. Schools will require increased funding, but delivering a quality education to every pupil presents a challenge. Between 2008 and 2013, capital spending to upgrade facilities, add space or build new schools dropped 37 percent. And, 297,000 education jobs disappeared from 2008 through 2015 even as enrollment swelled by 804,000. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities determined that at least 31 states “provide less support per student for elementary and secondary schools—in some cases, much less—than before the Great Recession” of 2008. Some states continue to cut even further. Though spending on education is expected to rise 27 percent from 2009 to 2022, when the overall outlay for public education is projected to reach $699 billion per year, the infrastructure is strained. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 31 percent of all public schools have set up temporary trailers and modular spaces to accommodate the student overflow and 53 percent of schools need to “spend money on repairs, renovations and modernizations to put the school’s onsite buildings in good overall condition.”

Adding to the burden, the number of LEP students in public schools jumped from around 3.5 million in 1998 to 4.93 million in 2013. Currently, to educate 4.9 million LEP students nationwide, public school districts spent $21.5 billion in salaries for 346,776 LEP-certified or trained teachers in 2013 and $6.9 billion in benefits, a total of $28.4 billion. Hempstead, New York, for example, spends almost 33 percent of all teacher salaries on the district’s ELL program, not counting benefits, which FAIR calculates to cost just under a third of salaries. In addition to requiring a tremendous amount of money, at the end of the 2011 school year, for example, 1,817,842 teachers (55.6 percent of the total) taught at least one LEP student, even though as many as 1,471,066 teachers lack the certification or training to teach this population.

In many municipalities, LEP programs are growing faster than the school district’s ability to run—or fund them effectively. In Alaska, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Washington, D. C., 10 percent or more of all students are enrolled in LEP programs. The five states with the highest number of LEP students are California, Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois, respectively, which is unsurprising. It is startling, however, that the next five—Colorado, Washington, Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia, in order—are located far from the southern border and enroll at least 100,000 LEP students each (except for Georgia, which comes close at 98,603). The impact on schools is tangible: one out of every five students in Georgia and 40 percent of students in Denver—a sanctuary city—are enrolled in LEP programs. By contrast, New Jersey, a longstanding destination for immigrants, enrolls 68,396 LEP students.

The Cost to Taxpayers

Illustrating the impact of exploding LEP costs, 13 states spent more than $1 billion on LEP programs in 2016, including Colorado, Washington, Virginia, Georgia, Michigan and Maryland. By 2018, four states will need to find at least $1 billion in revenue on top of what they now spend to hire additional LEP teachers, including California ($20 billion), Texas ($2.4 billion), Illinois ($1.9 billion) and Nevada ($1.4 billion). Many other states will need to double, triple or even quadruple their LEP programs’ salary budgets to manage the rising tide of LEP students in their schools.

In all but 14 states, the percentage of LEP students swelled between 2003 and 2013. Almost one in every 10 states serves more than 100,000 LEP students and 22 educate 50,000 or more. In urban areas, 14 percent of students are LEP. Though this demographic is the fastest-growing segment of the public school population in many areas, few districts are adequately dealing with this crisis as language programs eat up a growing share of local school budgets. In Boston, a sanctuary city where thousands of high school students walked out of classes in March 2016 to protest budget cuts, around a third of all students are enrolled in LEP programs. In Lexington, Nebraska, a meat-packing town in the western part of the state, the figure is almost 20 percent.
The situation in Nashville is emblematic of the problem. With the number of ELL students in the city rising from 8,751 in 2011 to 12,329 in 2015, the district plans to boost funding and add 105 new positions to serve this population. In 2015, two new schools opened to accommodate 855 students. Spending on ELL programs represents the second highest percentage increase in the district’s 2016-2017 budget after the rise in the total number of students. To compensate, however, the district is slashing funds for new textbooks and science kits. With city officials eager to accept and accommodate legal and illegal immigrants, local teacher Wendy Wilson wrote about the obvious, insidious “strain” on public education caused by the glut of LEP students, but lamented that raising the issue is forbidden due to fears of being branded a racist or xenophobe.9

In affluent Montgomery County, Maryland—a suburb of Washington, D. C. that champions sanctuary policies and openly welcomes illegal aliens—around 15 percent of all students attend the ESOL program, which has grown 42 percent since 2010. Over the same period, however, ESOL costs increased 53 percent to $462 million, indicating that spending is rising faster than enrollment. In Boston, moreover, LEP expenditures ballooned from $9.1 million in 2014 to $13.6 million despite a drop of 775 students in the program, which suggests that the district cannot properly manage the spiraling costs associated with this needy population. Two headlines, one from 2011, the other from 2015, suggest that Clark County, Nevada schools have been in a “crisis” mode over the LEP issue for years: “we’re all going to sink,” said the president of the state Board of Education in 2015. “This is horrific.” Clark County, which includes Las Vegas, is a sanctuary jurisdiction.10

Though LEP spending is rising in school districts with high numbers of immigrants, overall outlays on education are dropping and the situation is dire. Based in large measure on the 1982 Supreme Court ruling Plyler v. Doe, the Obama administration decreed that school districts must fully accommodate the children of illegal aliens, offering a carrot (supplemental educational support) and a stick (threats of lawsuits). This mandate, along with rising enrollment, creates an acute need for educators who are capable of teaching LEP students and makes it difficult and expensive to keep schools properly staffed.11
The Special Case of Unaccompanied Alien Minors

Driving LEP costs even higher, it takes at least $1.7 billion each year to educate the almost 119,000 UAMs who crossed the border from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. And they are still arriving: UAM numbers are up 78 percent in the first half of FY2016 compared with the first six months of FY2015. There is little indication that this trend will end any time soon. In fact, it appears that in 2016 about the same number of UAMs will arrive in the United States that entered in 2014, a record-shattering year. From January 2014 to June 2016, the federal government placed 118,929 UAMs with sponsors in the United States, typically a relative or acquaintance. This figure does not include UAMs who may have slipped past the Border Patrol. Though teenagers make up the majority of UAMs, the highest increase is with children age 12 and under. Several states balked at receiving UAMs, but the Obama administration squelched all attempts to refuse their resettlement.

The flood of new immigrants continues to devastate historically disadvantaged African-Americans, many of whom lag academically as resources are lavished on the newcomers, including those here illegally. These developments illustrate the dramatic demographic transformation taking place in the Washington, D.C. area that is hitting taxpayers in the wallet. In Baltimore, Maryland (a sanctuary city), the school system announced at least 50 layoffs in 2016, including central office staff and school police officers. In 2015, Baltimore schools eliminated 202 positions to help tackle a $63 million budget shortfall, the first layoffs in a decade. Property taxes in Montgomery County, Maryland, will rise almost 9 percent in 2016, the largest spike in eight years. Also in 2016, Calvert County, Maryland, raised property taxes and income taxes for the first time since 1987 and 2004, respectively. As is the case nationally, the flood of new immigrants continues to devastate historically disadvantaged African-Americans, many of whom lag behind academically as resources are lavished on the newcomers, including those here illegally. After education officials in Prince George's County, Maryland, proposed building a new school and using a portion of another to accommodate the LEP population, the local NAACP chapter threatened to file a lawsuit. In Fairfax County, Virginia, officials bumped up property taxes by 6 percent in 2016, to help close a $68 million school budget gap.12

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### Current and Projected Costs for LEP Teachers

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The Elephant in the Classroom: Mass Immigration’s Impact on Education

A Special Report by the Federation for American Immigration Reform

its 2011 general fund to serve 50,378 students, spent $557 million in 2015 to educate 52,906 pupils, just 2,528 additional students. In other words, the higher than average cost of LEP programs led to a budget increase of 16 percent to accommodate a mere 5 percent rise in the student population. The number of LEP students in Omaha, situated in a sanctuary county, has “steadily increased over the past several years,” rising 397 percent since 2000 to now include more than 17,000 students. Since 2014, Nebraska absorbed 1,027 UAMs at an annual $15 million education price tag.13

Schools in Oklahoma are also experiencing budget shortfalls. Plummeting oil prices play a role, but the expansion of LEP programs contributes to the state’s financial crunch. In May 2016, more than 1,100 Oklahoma City students walked out of their high schools to protest budget cuts of $30 million. One school laid off 20 teachers. “By firing our teachers, it’s making our classes larger and it’s disrupting the learning environment,” said one student. “Sports, teachers . . . the arts program, they’re all being cut here at the school,” said another. How, then, will the state be able to spend $7 million educating 826 UAMs without affecting the rest of the school population? 14

Spending More, Getting Less

LEP students are more expensive to educate and the cost of these programs is rising. In a 2010 study, FAIR calculated that LEP costs nationwide totaled $51.2 billion (compared with $59.8 billion in 2016). Yet the underlying tragedy behind this mad dash to accommodate illegal aliens, refugees and legal immigrants is that despite all the money spent, there is little to show for it. LEP students consistently demonstrate dismal progress in all subject areas and the fallout is affecting other students.

Educators measure four categories of achievement: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), administered by the U. S. Department of Education, indicates that only 7 percent of fourth grade LEP students performed at the Proficient level and just one percent demonstrated the ability to master Advanced work. That leaves 92 percent performing at Basic or Below Basic levels. In comparison, 40 percent of non-LEP fourth graders achieved the two highest levels, Proficient and Advanced, with one-third displaying Basic skills. The rest, 27 percent, scored Below Basic. Thus, even though non-LEP fourth graders perform better than their LEP counterparts, six of every 10 only manage to accomplish Basic or Below Basic work.15

As students progress through the system, achievement levels plunge. In 2015, eighth grade LEP pupils demonstrated a limited ability to grasp their school work: 71 percent are mired at the Below Basic level, one quarter acquired Basic skills and only 4 percent are Proficient. The percentage of students capable of Advanced work rounds out to zero. Results for 12th grade LEP students in reading are abominable: 76 percent demonstrate Below Basic skills—more
than three out of every four test-takers—and just 20 percent are at the Basic level. The failure extends beyond language because math scores are even worse: 79 percent Below Basic, 15 percent Basic. From 1998, when the Department of Education first administered the test, to 2015, the statistics for Advanced work in math and reading for LEP students round to zero.\textsuperscript{16}

LEP student performance is so terrible that educators created a new term. Long Term English Language Learners (LTTEL) are pupils who have been enrolled in school for six or more years but are making scant progress learning English. Three out of every five students in California fall into this category and the National Education Association estimates that nationwide, the term applies to anywhere from one quarter to half of all LEP students.\textsuperscript{17}

Also troubling, the performance of non-LEP students is sinking, according to the latest figures. An older study suggested that the presence of immigrants in schools “diminished the educational attainment of native minorities by meaningful amounts.”

The low academic performance of LEP students also results in appalling graduation rates. Only 39 percent of LEP pupils in New York, 24 percent in Nevada and 20 percent in Arizona graduate on time. Of course, taxpayers continue to shell out for students who stay in high school longer than four years. Other states have higher rates, but just because someone graduates, there is no guarantee that schools are holding students to rigorous standards. Across the country, in fact, educators are lowering graduation requirements and making it harder to fail classes. Lexington, Nebraska, dropped graduation thresholds in part to accommodate its LEP population. In New York state, it is easier than ever to graduate from a public high school, but the results are tragic: the City University of New York, which absorbs a large proportion of New York City public school students, requires almost 80 percent of freshmen to take remedial courses that offer “basic skills that should have been taught in high school.” New York City is, of course, a sanctuary city.\textsuperscript{18}

An article in a Nashville newspaper about public schools "straining at the seams" chronicled an ELL student who maintained a B grade point average but lacked the ability to read or write English. In one LEP class, 35 students spoke 16 languages and displayed skills ranging from illiterate to high functioning, which made it “that much harder to tailor lesson plans.” Several graduates of John Overton High School in Nashville returned to tell the principal that “they went out in to the world, only to find they lacked the English skills they should have gotten” in school. The mayor of Lynn, Massachusetts, admitted that adult illegal aliens are enrolled in city high schools, that illegal immigrant students often repeat grades and that an influx of immigrants is straining the school system and other city services.\textsuperscript{19}
Also troubling, the performance of non-LEP students is sinking, according to the latest figures. An older study suggested that the presence of immigrants in schools “diminished the educational attainment of native minorities by meaningful amounts,” a finding that has come to fruition. An unacceptable proportion of non-LEP eighth graders score Proficient or Advanced on the NAEP: just 18 percent in United States history, 27 percent in geography, 27 percent in writing and 33 percent in math. In 2015, only one out of every four high school seniors scored Proficient or above in math—38 percent scored Below Basic. In reading, 37 percent met the Proficient or Advanced benchmarks, meaning that almost two out of every three students display Basic and Below Basic skills. Nationwide, math and reading results for Proficient and Advanced work dipped a percentage point compared to 2013 results and non-LEP African-Americans and Hispanics consistently score worse than average on assessments.

In Portland, Maine, a sanctuary city more than 2,000 miles from the southern border, 27 percent of public school students are enrolled in LEP programs and 36 percent of students speak a primary language other than English at home. Also troubling, the performance of non-LEP students is sinking, according to the latest figures. An older study suggested that the presence of immigrants in schools “diminished the educational attainment of native minorities by meaningful amounts,” a finding that has come to fruition. An unacceptable proportion of non-LEP eighth graders score Proficient or Advanced on the NAEP: just 18 percent in United States history, 27 percent in geography, 27 percent in writing and 33 percent in math. In 2015, only one out of every four high school seniors scored Proficient or above in math—38 percent scored Below Basic. In reading, 37 percent met the Proficient or Advanced benchmarks, meaning that almost two out of every three students display Basic and Below Basic skills. Nationwide, math and reading results for Proficient and Advanced work dipped a percentage point compared to 2013 results and non-LEP African-Americans and Hispanics consistently score worse than average on assessments.

Expect this downward trajectory to continue. In 2015, one New York City student expressed shock when her public school handed her a diploma that she “didn’t deserve” and pushed her out the door. Schools across the country are adopting lax policies that include accepting late work, allowing students to retake failed tests and doling out inflated grades that reward student effort rather than reflect mastery of the material. As this disconcerting development becomes more prevalent around the country, critics complain that students quickly learn how to game the system to graduate, despite having learned little during their years in school. “Many students have already started to figure out that they don’t have to do very much but they can still pass,” said one teacher in Fairfax County, Virginia.

In addition to padding graduation statistics, school districts have found another way to gloss over the LEP problem: cheating. Educators in Houston, Atlanta, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. changed answers on tests to boost results. Several teachers and administrators went to prison over the Atlanta scandal (three received seven year sentences). Like many districts across the country, including Montgomery County, Maryland, school officials in El Paso, Texas, manipulated standardized test scores by excluding LEP and learning disabled students, whose poor performance pulls down score averages. Due in part to his role in fudging the numbers, El Paso’s former school superintendent received a 42-month federal prison sentence. And in Nashville, state education officials are investigating charges that some high school administrators pulled “struggling students from classes with End-of-Course exams, allegedly so that those students’ scores would not be counted in scores used to judge the schools.” One teacher testified that as far back as 2010, “immigrant students were pulled from English II—which counted against the scores for the school—and put into English IV, which did not count.” As one bold Nashville teacher put it, government officials and their education lackeys want it all: “a welcome mat rolled out for immigrants, who require numerous supports, and high graduation rates and test scores.”
In Nashville, for example, ELL students speak more than 120 languages and LEP students make up 14 percent of the total school population. In Portland, Maine, a sanctuary city more than 2,000 miles from the southern border, 27 percent of public school students are enrolled in LEP programs and 36 percent of students speak a primary language other than English at home. Of the 59 languages spoken, the largest groups are, in order: Somali, Arabic, Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Khmer, Portuguese, Kinyarwanda and Acholi. Like other districts with large LEP programs, student performance is poor, with 30 percent of all high schoolers performing Proficient or above in math and 43 percent performing the same in reading.24

In addition to a growing teacher-student ratio that began during the Great Recession in 2008, along with a decline in annual spending per pupil, adjusted for inflation, another obstacle to delivering a quality education to all students is the high rate of teacher burnout and turnover. Nationwide, 8 percent of all teachers leave the profession each year. In Colorado, “more teachers left the school districts where they work [in 2014] than at any point in the past 15 years.” The state’s turnover rate grew from 13.1 percent in 2009 to 17.1 percent in 2014, but in Denver, the numbers are 14 percent and 22 percent, respectively. A third of all teachers in the Harrison 2 school district of Colorado Springs vacate their jobs every year. Oklahoma teachers also leave at a high rate: 17 percent of first year teachers leave the state and in urban areas, 24 percent of all teachers abandon their schools every year. In Nebraska, moreover, 18 percent of school principals leave their jobs annually. The Georgia Department of Education issued a report in December 2015 titled “Georgia’s Teacher Dropout Crisis: A Look at Why Nearly Half of Georgia Public School Teachers Are Leaving the Profession.”25

Conclusion

Across the country, public schools are grappling with budget shortages and lagging achievement. And, as UAMs and families continue to stream across the southern border, the Obama administration is exacerbating the situation by flying in UAMs from Central America to reunite with family members and shepherding refugees to our shores.26 By any measure, taxpayers are paying more for LEP programs and getting less from their investment. As one student protesting the Oklahoma City school budget cuts put it, “our generation is the future . . . and if children [aren’t] learning to read and write because their classes are overcrowded and there’s not enough teachers, our generation from here on out will become nothing but illiterate and ignorant.”27

As standards drop and student achievement declines across the country, LEP programs are draining resources for all students. Yet educators and politicians, who use political correctness and name-calling to avoid debating the issue’s merits, display a shameful lack of accountability. Only by changing course can the nation avoid a bleak future, but the time to act is now.
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A Special Report by the Federation for American Immigration Reform

incentives like free lunch programs and taxpayer-funded English language classes entice families to immigrate illegally. States that offer drivers’ licenses, like Maryland and California, for example, see a disproportionate number of illegal aliens settle in their state.30

End “Sanctuary” Policies

One of the largest incentives for illegal immigrants to resettle their families in the United States is the existence of more than 300 unconstitutional “sanctuary” cities, which prohibit local and state law enforcement from cooperating with federal authorities regarding an individual’s immigration status. States like California, with broad sanctuary policies in effect statewide, are also the ones where the cost of educating LEP students are highest and place a disproportionately larger tax burden on law-abiding citizens. Eliminating consequences for breaking our immigration laws encourages illegal immigration.31

Limit Overall Immigration

In addition to ending incentives for illegal immigrants, FAIR recommends that legal immigration be capped at 300,000 annually, as opposed to the million or so admitted each year since 2005. Immigration policy should also abolish family chain migration and limit it to spouses and unmarried minor children as opposed to extended family members, which would alleviate the burden placed on schools.

Secure the Borders

With families and UAMs able to cross the border almost at will, schools have to absorb tens of thousands of new illegal aliens every year. Secure borders will also increase the effectiveness of deportations, since the current situation nullifies immigrant enforcement mechanisms. Once the border is secure, we can robustly and uniformly enforce our immigration laws knowing that once someone is deported, he or she cannot simply come back at will.

Recommendations

Overturn Plyler v. Doe

The Supreme Court’s Plyler decision is currently interpreted to require that states educate illegal aliens and the children of illegal aliens. Since federal money only covers approximately 1 percent of education costs for LEP students, this decision created one of the largest unfunded mandates ever enacted by the U.S. government. Free education is attractive to illegal aliens. Families with an illegal head of household already average a tax deficit of more than $14,000, so the entire cost of this mandate is shouldered by United States taxpayers. One way to challenge the ruling would be for legislatures to pass a law requiring that school districts gather immigration information on their students and attempt to demonstrate that the cost of educating illegal aliens represents a financial burden, one of the requirements mentioned in the majority opinion.28

Amend the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act

Originally designed to protect victims of human trafficking from possibly falling back into the hands of cartel members and smugglers, the 2008 Wilberforce Trafficking Act has since been hijacked as an avenue to resettle UAMs in the United States. This act must be reformed in a manner that allows the United States to process UAMs and reunite them with their families and homes outside the U.S. in an expedited manner while simultaneously protecting victims of human trafficking. FAIR recommends the passage of the Protection of Children Act of 2015, or a bill with similar content, that closes the loopholes in the original act preventing the removal of UAMs.29

Remove Incentives that Attract Families into the U.S. Illegally

As long as the rewards for illegal immigration outweigh the risk, families will continue flooding across the border unlawfully. The ability to find work is the primary draw for illegal immigration, so mandating the use of E-Verify will help stop employers from hiring illegal aliens. Other benefits for illegal aliens also have an impact. Providing
Background Statistics

There are **50.1 million** students enrolled in U.S. public schools.\(^{32}\)

- **4.9 million** of public school students receive Limited English Proficiency education.
- **3.6 million** of the LEP students are illegal aliens or the children of illegal aliens (119,000 Unauthorized Alien Minors).

**17.4 percent** of kindergartners are enrolled in LEP programs. LEP students tend to perform poorly in core subjects. In 2015, **76 percent** of LEP students scored Below Basic on a national reading test.

The U.S. has **3.1 million** full-time equivalent public school teachers.\(^{33}\)

**346,776** are LEP certified. In the 2013-2014 school year, the national cost for LEP teachers was **$28.4 billion**.

By 2018, an additional **82,408** LEP teachers will be needed nationwide to serve the student population. This will increase total LEP teacher costs to **$34.7 billion**.

It costs **$59.8 billion** to educate LEP students (**$12,128** per student).

LEP student education costs are **$1,365** higher than the national average per student. The Federal government pays **$637 million** towards these costs, leaving the lion’s share of **$59.2 billion** to be borne by states and municipalities.

**$44.8 billion** in taxes are used to educate illegal aliens and the children of illegal aliens.

The average illegal immigrant household receives **$24,721** in tax benefits.

\[\text{Avg. taxes: } $10,334 \quad \text{Avg. benefits: } $24,721 \quad \text{Avg. deficit: } $-14,387\]

\[\text{Illegal Immigrant}\]

\[\text{Avg. taxes: } $30,879 \quad \text{Avg. benefits: } $35,223 \quad \text{Avg. deficit: } $-4,344\]

\[\text{Lawful Immigrant}\]

\[\text{Avg. taxes: } $30,916 \quad \text{Avg. benefits: } $31,226 \quad \text{Avg. deficit: } $-310\]

\[\text{Native}\]

*Based on 2010 Census*
Methodology

To determine the approximate number of refugees, legal immigrants and illegal aliens in the public school system, the Pew Research Center’s ratio of students with illegal alien parents during the 2012-2013 school year is applied in contrast to the national number of K-12 students overall, as documented by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This number has changed less than 0.4 percent nationwide since Pew Research released its last ratio of illegal to legal students at the beginning of the 2012 school year. Since 2006, this ratio has fluctuated less than 0.6 overall and there is a lack of data suggesting a change in this ratio except for a surge of UAMs beginning in 2014, which is included in the estimate of 3.6 million illegal alien students.38 The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) estimates that just over 4.9 million students are enrolled in LEP programs. Excluding a miniscule number of Native Americans, this population consists entirely of immigrants, legal and illegal, and their children.39

Roughly 10 percent of all children born in the United States are the children of illegal aliens.40 The federal government recognizes these children as United States citizens and excludes them in the overall data they release specifically concerning illegal immigrants. This makes it harder to track the overall impact that illegal immigration places on the shoulders of Americans and their exclusion misrepresents the facts, since they would have been born outside the United States had their parents not come here illegally. The vast majority of these minors who are still in school are enrolled in LEP programs. Due to high birthrates, the children of illegal immigrants make up twice the population share of newborns than do their parents. Excluding the four in five children of illegal immigrants born in the United States, therefore, makes the overall negative impact illegal immigration is having on schools appear less severe.41

To calculate the national and state-by-state costs of LEP education, the average cost per LEP pupil must be factored in for each state. The NCES reports the average cost-per pupil at $10,763.42 Data drawn from NCELA, Pew Research, FAIR, NCES and an extensive analysis of district budgets across the U.S. place the national average cost to educate an LEP pupil at about 20 percent above the national average cost to educate all students. The brunt of these costs consist of providing salaries and benefits to hundreds of thousands of LEP teachers, followed by additional requirements for tutoring, bilingual textbooks and material, additional administrative tasks and facility enlargement/enhancement needed to incorporate the increased number of students. This percentage is then adjusted proportionally to align with the more or less expensive pupil costs in each state. The additional cost to educate an LEP student is then added to the base average cost and multiplied by the number of LEP students in the state, providing the total figure. The amount of federal aid provided is then subtracted and the remaining figure is the total cost borne by individual states and municipalities.

To determine the total salaries and projected salaries of LEP teachers, both nationally and on a state-by-state basis, FAIR multiplied the NCELA figures for current and projected teachers for each state by the NCES average teacher salary for each state. Based on a close analysis of multiple state and district budgets across the U.S., an estimate of 32 percent is added to each state salary total for teacher benefits.

Endnotes

2 Title III State Profiles, NCELA, http://www.ncela.us/titleiii/;
Salary Calculations based on data retrieved from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCLEA) and the NCES, 2012-2013 school year, http://www.ncela.us/titleiii/.


2 Number and Percentage of Public School Students Participating in Programs for English Language Learners By Selected Years, 2003-04 Through 2013-14, Table 204.20, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_204.20.asp;

“English Language Learners in Public Schools,” http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp;


Boston Public Schools FY15 Weighted Student Funding Budget Template, http://bostonpublicschools.org/budget;


All achievement figures from the Nation’s Report Card, http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/;

Ibid;


Graduation figures from www.ncela.us;


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33 Fast Facts, Enrollment for Fall, 2015, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372

34 Ibid


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37 Ibid


40 FAIR estimate based on Pew Research and Border Patrol statistics from 2014 to June 2016; Jeffrey
FAIR is dedicated to promoting public understanding and critical thinking about immigration’s impact on every aspect of life in America.

United with and supported by more than 500,000 concerned citizens who are willing to take action to secure our nation’s future, we fight battles across the country against those who would exploit the national immigration policy to enhance their private interests or political power.

We believe our nation can and must have immigration policies that are nondiscriminatory and designed to serve the societal, environmental, and economic needs of our country. Recent polls show that the American public feels the same way.
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