



# Acknowledgements

## Illinois Immigrant Policy Project (IIPP)

The Illinois Immigrant Policy Project (IIPP) began in 1995 to catalyze thinking about *immigrant* policy in the State of Illinois. Members are drawn from immigrant and refugee serving organizations, state and local government and national policy institutes. Its purpose is to conduct research and analysis around issues concerning immigrants and to develop forward looking policies and programs that will further the full integration of immigrants into the fabric of Illinois society.

In October 2000, the IIPP Steering Committee established several working groups which cover the following arenas: health and human services, education, employment, economic development, and immigration law. Each working group met to consider critical questions and commission appropriate research and policy analysis.

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The initial two segments of this report were prepared by Christina Kappaz of Millennia Consulting, LLC. They are a compilation of the key issues and recommendations that emerged from a hearing-style consultation held in June 2001. The hearing brought together 70 policymakers, administrators, academicians and community representatives to discuss the broad issues put forth by the Education Committee of the Illinois Immigrant Policy Project, and to identify policy and practice recommendations that promise to strengthen immigrant education in Illinois. As a starting point for those discussions, the Education Committee commissioned and reviewed the three background papers that framed the key issues on a national scale: (1) *Challenges and Promising Practices in Early Childhood and Family Literacy Education for Language Minority Students*, prepared by the National Association for Bilingual Education; (2) *Challenges Facing High Immigrant-Serving Secondary Schools in the Context of Standards Based School Reform*, prepared by Michael Fix and Jorge Ruiz Velasco of The Urban Institute; and (3) *Keys to the Golden Door? Adult ESOL, Literacy and Employment Preparation*, prepared by Heide Spruck Wrigley of Aguirre International.

**STRENGTHENING ILLINOIS'  
IMMIGRANT POLICY:  
Improving Education for  
Immigrants and Refugees in Illinois**

**A Project of the Education Committee of the  
Illinois Immigrant Policy Project**

**Final Report**

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Based on:  
A Public Hearing held in June 2001,  
Input from IIPP Education Committee Members,  
and Background Papers Prepared by  
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Michael Fix and Jorge Ruiz Velasco of The Urban Institute,  
and Heide Spruck Wrigley of Aguirre International

Illinois Immigrant Policy Project, 2002

## **GLOSSARY**

<b>APC</b>	Area Planning Council
<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organization
<b>ELL</b>	English Language Learner
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>Head Start</b>	Federally funded preschool program for low-income residents
<b>IACEA</b>	Illinois Adult and Continuing Education Association
<b>ISBE</b>	Illinois State Board of Education
<b>Type 29 Certification</b>	Teacher certificate in Transitional Bilingual Education
<b>Type 04 Certification</b>	Teacher certificate in Early Childhood Education.
<b>TBE</b>	Transitional Bilingual Education
<b>TPI</b>	Transitional Program of Instruction
<b>VESL</b>	Vocational English as a Second Language

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

Almost 15% of Illinois residents – 1.75 million people – are foreign-born, with approximately 40,000 new arrivals each year. Immigrants and refugees<sup>1</sup> are a vital part of our community, not only bringing rich cultural diversity but also helping to maintain our state's labor force and tax base. Education is a critical tool for immigrants as they strive to meet their own potential and become dynamic members of Illinois society. The importance as well as the challenge of providing education to immigrants is heightened by the language barriers faced by many immigrants. There are 2.4 million people in Illinois, nearly 1 in 5 residents, who speak a language other than English at home.

Educational systems throughout the state must work to develop programs that meet the needs of the growing immigrant population. A unique set of challenges presents itself in each of three arenas of education: early childhood education and family literacy; intermediate, middle, and secondary education; and adult education.

An extensive body of research indicates that early childhood education is central to students' development of contextual knowledge as well as to their development of language, social, and cognitive abilities. For English language learners (ELLs), preschools can provide highly effective bilingual programs that build on children's existing language strengths and cultural ties. Nevertheless, for most ELL families the promise of such early intervention remains unfulfilled. Research has also demonstrated the positive influences that family literacy can have on subsequent literacy achievement in school. This fact is of great importance to parents who are ELLs, many of whom face considerable linguistic and educational challenges – especially in taking part in their own children's day-to-day education.

Intermediate, middle, and secondary education face several unique challenges in regard to the immigrant population. Most importantly, schools must develop appropriate means of addressing the needs of immigrants in the context of the standards-based accountability systems being instituted throughout the state and the country. As schools implement standards-based education and measurement of student performance, ELLs must be included so that they have the same opportunities as their native English-speaking peers to graduate from high school and continue their education or training.

Adult education is essential to assist immigrants in overcoming language barriers and advancing in the workplace. English language skills improve immigrant adults' access to good jobs and health care for their family and enable them to help with schoolwork so their children can succeed as well. Many immigrants need English language skills to enroll in vocational training, advance in the workplace, support their children in schools and participate in their communities. In Illinois more than half of reported adult education students are enrolled in ESL classes.

## KEY ISSUES

Seven broad issues emerged as common across the three educational arenas studied:

- ☐ Systemic commitment to implement educational programs that meet the learning needs of ELL students - Key elements that must be addressed in this regard include barriers to *access*, the need for *outreach* and *communication*, and *flexibility* in terms of scheduling and programming to meet specific needs of immigrants.
- ☐ Bridging language acquisition and skills development through research-based approaches – More *research* is needed to identify what *instructional approaches* are most effective for ELL students and the elements of instructional approaches that have already demonstrated success should be replicated.
- ☐ Integration of educational programs for immigrant and refugee students into mainstream educational and training systems – Immigrants and refugees are often *marginalized from mainstream* educational programs.
- ☐ Availability of qualified teachers and appropriate training for teachers – There is a *shortage of teachers* qualified to teach immigrant and refugee students. In addition, better and increased *teacher preparation* is needed.
- ☐ Adequate data collection on immigrants and refugees to guide program and policy decisions – *Data is needed* to document the need for programs, tailor the development of services and demonstrate program outcomes.
- ☐ Development of meaningful standards and outcome measurements for ELL students – The application of *standards* and *outcome measures* may strengthen program accountability. However, high-stakes testing without accommodations for ELL students may have negative consequences.
- ☐ Coordination of resources and programs at the state and local levels – *Coordination* of existing *resources* and links between local *programs* are needed to build strong educational programs for immigrants.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The report's recommendations include policy recommendations directed at state level policymakers as well as programmatic, or practice, recommendations directed at the local school level and professional development entities. The key recommendations are presented in the three tables below.

**Table 1a – Summary of Key Recommendations  
EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ADULT LITERACY**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Policy Recommendations</b>	<b>Practice Recommendations</b>
<p><b>Systemic Commitment to Implement Programs for ELLs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Insufficient availability of programs</li> <li>☞ Barriers to access to preschool programs</li> <li>☞ Insufficient services for children aged 0-3</li> <li>☞ Inadequate communication with parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Allocate State funding to increase availability of early childhood, family literacy and after school programs proven to be effective in addressing immigrant needs.</li> <li>☞ Expand State eligibility requirements to expand program coverage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Innovate with program flexibility such as modified schedules and the use of family literacy mobiles.</li> <li>☞ Provide linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach to parents.</li> <li>☞ Set standards and provide training to family child care providers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research-Based Instructional Approaches</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Need research on and replication of effective approaches</li> <li>☞ Specific problems to overcome though better approaches include working with students with low levels of English language acquisition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Implement policies that support the best practices that emerge from research (e.g., review assessment and instruction policies for ELLs in early childhood)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Put in place research based models that develop pre-literacy and literacy skills</li> <li>☞ Identify, document, and implement best practices (e.g., training parents as first teachers and intergenerational literacy programs)</li> <li>☞ Conduct research to identify types of instructional programs that best address needs of bilingual children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Integration with Mainstream Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ ELLs are often isolated from mainstream students and programs</li> <li>☞ Early child programs across the state are inconsistent in addressing needs of ELLs</li> <li>☞ Problems in transition from early childhood to elementary school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Require better screening of ELLs and continuity between early childhood and elementary education</li> <li>☞ Establish outreach programs through state education agency, to help blend family literacy and early literacy into existing ESL curriculums.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Improve transitioning within schools between bilingual and mainstream programs</li> <li>☞ Create more blended programming to ensure that ELLs receive appropriate services (eg, special education, gifted)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Qualified Teachers and Professional Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Lack of available teachers</li> <li>☞ Teacher education does not prepare teachers for bilingual and bicultural students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Increase recruitment and professional development with incentives such as tuition scholarships, especially for Type 29 Bilingual Education certificate holders to work toward the Type 04 Early Childhood Education certificate.</li> <li>☞ Develop guidelines that address qualifications for programs that serve ages 0-3.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Increase recruitment efforts for bilingual/bicultural teachers for early childhood education</li> <li>☞ Develop bilingual and bicultural education curriculum for teacher education programs.</li> <li>☞ Provide professional development geared toward bilingual and bicultural early childhood education and family literacy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adequate Data Collection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Data is needed on numbers and characteristics of ELLs and on specific programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Require early childhood programs to collect and report data on the number of ELLs enrolled as well as the number screened who are on waiting lists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Develop a research agenda to examine what is happening in the immigrant communities and how best we can serve this growing population.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standards and Outcome Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Insufficient standards and assessment mechanisms to measure ELL student performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Require developmental screening in native language in Early Childhood programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Develop assessment tools appropriate for ELLs in early childhood (ages 0-8)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordination of Resources and Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Need greater coordination and consistency between programs to provide integrated services</li> <li>☞ Need more coordination between programs of different funding sources and beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Strengthen coordination between state agencies and coordinate funds from multiple sources</li> <li>☞ Build stronger connections between adult education and early childhood programs</li> <li>☞ Standardize programs offered by community-based organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Establish links between schools and community programs</li> <li>☞ Provide comprehensive services, coordinating various services offered to immigrants and refugees</li> <li>☞ Increase collaboration between early childhood and adult education programs</li> </ul>

**Table 1b – Summary of Key Recommendations**

**INTERMEDIATE, MIDDLE, AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

<p><b>Systemic Commitment to Implement Programs for ELLs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Schools are not adapted to meet needs of ELLs</li> <li>☛ Services do not extend beyond regular school day</li> <li>☛ Communication with parents who do not speak English causes barriers</li> <li>☛ Cultural barriers to communication must be overcome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Include ELL considerations within school reform and mainstream program decisions</li> <li>☛ Develop State policy and standards for interpreters and translators in schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Develop scheduling that provides a sustained and stable learning environment and provides for extended day learning opportunities.</li> <li>☛ Provide linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach to parents.</li> <li>☛ Use student data to create individualized academic plans</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research-Based Instructional Approaches</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Need research on and replication of effective approaches</li> <li>☛ Specific problems to overcome through better approaches: students with low levels of English language acquisition and academic progress, high school drop outs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Implement policies that support the best practices that emerge from research (e.g., develop models for educating newcomers with gaps in their education)</li> <li>☛ Provide incentives for high school completion such as in-state tuition</li> <li>☛ Develop State guidelines on retention and promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Expand use of existing best practices (e.g., creating smaller classes with safe environments, helping students prepare for higher education)</li> <li>☛ Improve language support by providing intensive ESL instruction and native language support for newcomers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Integration with Mainstream Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ ELLs are often isolated from mainstream students and programs</li> <li>☛ ESL and bilingual teachers often work in isolation</li> <li>☛ Problems exist in transition from ESL or bilingual programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Implement policies that promote better transitioning from bilingual or ESL programs into mainstream courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Improve transitioning for ELLs from elementary to high school</li> <li>☛ Create more blended programming to ensure ELLs receive appropriate services, including gifted education, special education, vocational training</li> <li>☛ Increase interaction between immigrants and mainstream students</li> </ul>
<p><b>Qualified Teachers and Professional Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Lack of qualified bilingual and ESL teachers</li> <li>☛ Teacher education does not prepare teachers for bilingual and bicultural students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Provide incentives for bilingual and bicultural candidates to study education</li> <li>☛ Create an audit to determine what higher education is doing for bilingual education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Increase training in cultural and linguistic competency for all teachers, through teacher education and in-services professional development.</li> <li>☛ Hire bilingual/bicultural counselors</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adequate Data Collection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Data is needed on numbers and characteristics of ELLs (e.g., date of arrival and years of previous schooling) and on specific programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Require collection of data to assess student progress and program effectiveness</li> <li>☛ Use data to evaluate policies such as exit criteria for long-term ELLs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Develop research agenda</li> <li>☛ Systematically collect data on school progress in, for e.g., parent communication, teacher in-services, alternative curriculum.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standards and Outcome Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Insufficient standards and assessment mechanisms to measure ELL performance</li> <li>☛ Proper assessments needed to measure ELL progress under new accountability standards of No Child Left Behind Act.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Develop a system for evaluating progress of ELLs that documents student performance in English acquisition and core subjects.</li> <li>☛ Develop assessments in the core subjects appropriate for use by English language learners, that are in line with State standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Ensure appropriate support for ELLs to ensure their educational needs are met as they work toward achieving the AYP targets.</li> <li>☛ Implement rigorous curriculum based on State standards.</li> <li>☛ Use assessment results to guide student placement and instruction.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordination of Resources and Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Need to coordinate education, health, social, and other services for immigrants</li> <li>☛ Need to coordinate resources to address dispersion of immigrants across school districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Establish State level policy to address special education needs of immigrant families</li> <li>☛ Reimburse schools for costs in excess of per pupil expenditure, to fund newcomer centers</li> <li>☛ Strengthen network of service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Increase linkages among programs and provide comprehensive services, through, e.g. newcomer centers</li> <li>☛ Develop statewide resources that can be shared</li> </ul>

**Table 1c – Summary of Key Recommendations  
ADULT EDUCATION**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Policy Recommendations</b>	<b>Practice Recommendations</b>
<p><b>Systemic Commitment to Implement Programs for ELLs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Need to reduce barriers to access, caused by scheduling, transportation, geography, family issues for women, and dispersion of immigrant programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Expand public transportation services especially to suburbs</li> <li>☛ Provide more flexible funding formula to encourage program innovation and flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Create more flexible schedules such as weekend and evening classes</li> <li>☛ Use distance education.</li> <li>☛ Offer courses within learners workplaces or communities</li> <li>☛ Provide affordable, quality, convenient childcare</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research-Based Instructional Approaches</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Need research on and replication of effective approaches</li> <li>☛ Specific problems to overcome though better instructional approaches include transition from ESL to work and inadequate programs for the elderly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Implement policies that support the best practices that emerge from research (e.g., link adult ESL with workforce skills training)</li> <li>☛ Streamline funding by basing funding decisions on program standards rather than attendance hours</li> <li>☛ Fund adult education for elderly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Research best practices and the impact of adult education, e.g, the connection between English proficiency, job skills and wages</li> <li>☛ Expand use of existing best practices for each educational arena (e.g., maximizing class intensity and using distance education for adult education)</li> <li>☛ Add pre-employment skills and job information to adult ESL courses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Integration with Mainstream Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Need to integrate adult education for immigrants with employer-supported programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Provide incentives to employers to allow for and fund training at the workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Improve coordination between adult education and employers</li> <li>☛ Conduct outreach to business community</li> </ul>
<p><b>Qualified Teachers and Professional Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Lack of available teachers</li> <li>☛ Lack of uniform hiring standards</li> <li>☛ Use of part-time teachers, low pay and lack of benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Provide incentives for programs to hire full-time adult education instructors</li> <li>☛ Increase funding for professional development and teacher salaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Review qualification requirements for adult ESL teachers</li> <li>☛ Increase use of distance education to train teachers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adequate Data Collection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Data is needed on numbers and characteristics of ELLs and on specific programs. E.g: limited data exists on impact or coverage of adult ESL services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Require collection of data to assess student progress and program effectiveness</li> <li>☛ Support and coordinate existing efforts such as National Assessment on Adult Literacy</li> <li>☛ Use data to reassess policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Support data collection and coordinate with indicators collected nationally</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standards and Outcome Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Insufficient standards and assessment mechanisms to measure ELL student performance</li> <li>☛ Limited range of reliable ESL tests for adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Develop State task force to review funding formulas based on attendance hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Develop alternative assessment tools</li> <li>☛ Follow recommendations of Program Standards for Adult Education English published by International TESOL in 2000.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordination of Resources and Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Need to coordinate resources to maximize impact of funding</li> <li>☛ Need better communication and coordination among providers</li> <li>☛ Need to coordinate adult education programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Establish a state level coordination council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Increase communication and coordination among service providers</li> <li>☛ Consolidate and coordinate state funded adult education programs (ESL, citizenship, tutoring, GED, etc)</li> </ul>

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Report

In April of 2001, the Education Committee of the Illinois Immigrant Policy Project (IIPP) was convened by the Department of Human Services and the State Board of Education to develop recommendations that would strengthen immigrant education programs in Illinois. The committee is part of the Illinois Immigrant Policy Project Roundtable Initiative that is directed toward framing the issues of policy and program that should be addressed by the State as immigration continues over the next decade. During the past five years, IIPP has supported eight studies that have had a significant influence on Illinois' legislative, administrative and private sector response to the needs of immigrants and refugees.

The IIPP Education Committee is comprised of a representation of stakeholders in immigrant education including regional superintendents, local school board members, principals, teachers, state legislators, representatives from the Governor's office, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Department of Human Services, the Illinois Community College Board; the Adult Learning Resource Center, the Urban Institute, and community based organization staff. The Education Committee followed a process that incorporated research as well as public comment and discussion to identify impediments to immigrant access to and success in education; and to propose changes in policy and practice that would reduce or eliminate these impediments. Its primary focus was on policies and practices that would improve education for low-income, language-minority families and individuals.

The Education Committee reviewed three background papers prepared to help the Committee to identify issues to be addressed in the following areas:

- ② Early Childhood Education (ages 0-8) and Family Literacy – *Challenges and Promising Practices in Early Childhood and Family Literacy Education for Language Minority Students*, by the National Association for Bilingual Education
- ② Intermediate, Middle and Secondary Education – *Challenges Facing High Immigrant-Serving Secondary Schools in the Context of Standards Based School Reform*, by Michael Fix and Jorge Ruiz Velasco of The Urban Institute
- ② Adult Education and Transition to Work – *Keys to the Golden Door? Adult ESOL, Literacy and Employment Preparation*, by Heide Spruck Wrigley of Aguirre International

In June of 2001, a one-day hearing-style consultation brought together 70 policymakers, administrators, practitioners, academicians and community representatives to discuss the broad issues put forth by the Education Committee and to identify policy and practice initiatives that promise to strengthen immigrant education systems in Illinois. The proceedings of the consultation have been incorporated into the recommendations for immigrant education policy and practice in Illinois that are laid out in this report. In addition, excerpts from the background papers have been incorporated into the report in the various issue descriptions and, where noted, in the recommendations.

### B. Importance of Addressing Education Needs of Immigrants

Almost 15% of Illinois residents – 1.75 million people – are foreign-born, with approximately 40,000 new arrivals each year. More than half of the state’s population growth in the 1990s was due to immigration. Immigrants and refugees<sup>ii</sup> are a vital part of our community, not only bringing rich cultural diversity but also helping to maintain our state’s labor force and tax base. They comprise a growing percentage of the Illinois workforce. Preliminary studies have shown that immigrants pay \$6.11 in taxes for every \$1.00 of public service they utilize.

Education is a critical tool for immigrants as they strive to meet their own potential and become dynamic members of Illinois society. The importance as well as the challenge of providing education to immigrants is heightened by the language barriers faced by many immigrants. The 1990 U.S. Census estimated that there were two million language minority individuals residing in the state of Illinois. By 2000, the new census estimated that there are 2.4 million people, nearly 1 in 5 Illinois residents, who speak a language other than English at home. The percent of people who speak Spanish at home in Illinois increased from 6.8% in 1990 to 11% in 2000. Six percent of Illinois residents speak Polish, Russian, German or another European language at home, and 2% speak an Asian or Pacific Island language.<sup>iii</sup>

Many communities and school systems receiving new immigrants have little experience or infrastructure to serve non-native English speakers. In the 1990s, immigrant populations grew in Chicago area suburbs and many counties outside of the Chicago metropolitan area. Though Chicago was once the principal port of entry for immigrants to Illinois, 41.5% of legal immigrants in the late 1990s settled directly in the suburbs.<sup>iv</sup>

Educational systems throughout the state must therefore work to develop programs that meet the needs of the growing immigrant population. A unique set of challenges presents itself in each of three arenas of education: early childhood education and family literacy; intermediate, middle, and secondary education; and adult education.

## **1. Early Childhood Education and Family Literacy**

An extensive body of research indicates that preschool experiences are central to students' development of contextual knowledge as well as to their development of language, social, and cognitive abilities. For children living in poverty, preschool helps offset the social, emotional, cognitive and physical challenges that—if left unattended—place them at risk for school failure in later years. For language minorities, preschools can provide highly effective bilingual programs that build on children's existing language strengths and cultural ties. Nevertheless, for most language minority families the promise of such early intervention remains unfulfilled.

According to the Census Bureau's March 2001 release of pre-primary school enrollment numbers, only 56% of Asian three to four-year olds are enrolled in some type of preschool program. The number is even lower for Hispanics—37% of three to four-year old children are enrolled. And, while 20 percent of students enrolled in programs like Head Start speak a language other than English (in Chicago 43% of preschool participants are Hispanic), the majority of America's language minority children have never participated in a Head Start program.

Where family literacy programs are concerned, research has demonstrated the positive influences that they can have on subsequent literacy achievement in school. This fact is of great importance to language minority parents, many of whom face considerable linguistic and educational challenges – especially in taking part in their own children's day-to-day education.

In light of this, early childhood education and family literacy programs hold great promise for immigrant language minority families. Much remains to be done, however, to ensure that the programs are accessible to these communities and that they adequately address their needs.

## **2. Intermediate, Middle, and Secondary Education**

According to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), more than 143,000 students who are ELLs were enrolled in the state's schools during Fiscal Year 2000. Although these students speak 124 different languages, over 110,000 of them speak Spanish as their home language. From 1985 to 1999, the number of ELLs who are enrolled in Illinois public schools increased by 136 percent. In Chicago, this number increased by 94 percent, while in the suburbs and other parts of the state the increase was 212 percent. While almost half of all ELLs in Illinois attend Chicago Public Schools, ISBE reports that most of the growth in ELL enrollment is occurring down-state and in the counties surrounding Chicago: DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties. About 16 percent of students in Chicago Public Schools are ELLs.

Intermediate, middle, and secondary education face several unique challenges in regard to the immigrant population. Most importantly, schools must develop appropriate means of addressing the needs of language minority students in the context of the standards-based accountability systems being instituted throughout the state and the country. As schools implement standards-based education and measurement of student performance, ELLs must be included so that they have the same opportunities as their native English-speaking peers to graduate from high school and continue their education or training.

There are two sub-populations of ELLs of special concern. One is the set of immigrant children who arrive not as young children but as teens. Many of these late entrants must overcome critical literacy gaps and the effects of interrupted schooling in their home countries. The time available for these late arriving secondary students to master a new language and pass subjects required for high school graduation is limited. As a result, language and content instruction must be offered simultaneously rather than sequentially.

The second population of emerging concern among educators can be classified as “long term” ELLs. This population is composed of ELL/immigrant children who spend many years in a bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) program but do not progress sufficiently in English literacy to meet state or local criteria for promotion from ELL status.

### **3. Adult Education**

For many new immigrants and refugees learning English means having access to the keys that open the golden door. Behind the door is the world of English where immigrants comprehend what doctors and social service workers try to explain to them and where speaking on the phone in English loses its terror. This is a world where English learners have access to good jobs and health care for their family and where they are able to help with schoolwork so their children can succeed as well. In this place adults no longer have to depend on their children to translate and they can make friends with neighbors who don't share their language. Behind the golden door is a world of work where immigrants are not defined by their lack of English but by the skills and experiences they bring to the job.

While about one third of the legal immigrants arriving in Illinois during the period 1990-1996 had professional occupations, an almost equal number were service workers or manual laborers. Many of these immigrants require English language skills to enroll in vocational training, advance in the workplace, support their children in schools and participate in their communities. In Illinois more than half of reported adult education students are enrolled in ESL classes.

Adult education finds itself at a crossroad, as the Workforce Investment Act puts a great deal of emphasis on workforce development and collaboration among service providers. Calls for collaboration require creative responses so that funding streams can be brought together to develop comprehensive programs that combine skills training, with social service support on the one hand and quality English language education and literacy development on the other. On the other hand, the focus on employment related skills will make it difficult to support and implement programs for those not in the labor force, made up mostly of learners hoping to transition to higher education, work-at-home women who want to increase their communication skills and further their education, and the elderly for whom participation in ESL programs may mean less social isolation and an opportunity to join with others to learn and share stories.

### C. Structure of the Report

The remainder of the report summarizes policy and practice recommendations for each of the three educational arenas – early childhood and family literacy; intermediate, middle, and secondary education; and adult education. Recommendations are distinguished between state level policy recommendations and program practice recommendations directed at the local school level or professional development entities including colleges and universities.

In each section, the recommendations are presented together with a description of the specific issues and challenges to which they are responding. These issues fall under the following seven broad issue areas that apply to all three arenas.

- (a) Systemic commitment to implement educational programs that meet the learning needs of ELLs - Key elements that must be addressed in this regard include barriers to *access*, the need for *outreach* and *communication*, and *flexibility* in terms of scheduling and programming to meet specific needs of immigrants.
- (b) Bridging language acquisition and skills development through research-based approaches – More *research* is needed to identify what *instructional approaches* are most effective for ELLs and the elements of instructional approaches that have already demonstrated success should be replicated.
- (c) Integration of educational programs for immigrant and refugee students into mainstream educational and training systems – Immigrants and refugees are often *marginalized from mainstream* educational programs.
- (d) Availability of qualified teachers and appropriate training for teachers – There is a *shortage of teachers* qualified to teach immigrants and refugees. In addition, better and increased *teacher preparation* is needed.
- (e) Adequate data collection on immigrants and refugees to guide program and policy decisions – *Data is needed* to document the need for programs, tailor the development of services and demonstrate program outcomes.
- (f) Development of meaningful standards and outcome measurements for ELLs – The application of *standards* and *outcome measures* may strengthen program accountability. However, high-stakes testing without accommodations for ELLs may have negative consequences.
- (g) Coordination of resources and programs at the state and local levels – *Coordination of existing resources* and links between local *programs* are needed to build strong educational programs for immigrants.

## II. EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY LITERACY

### A. Commitment to Implement Programs that Meet ELL Needs

#### 1. Issue Description

The existing number of early childhood and family literacy programs is insufficient to address the needs of immigrant and refugee communities. This situation is evident in the large portion of immigrants who are not enrolled in these programs. Insufficient supply of appropriate programs, inadequate outreach to parents, as well as limited parent involvement in available programs, continue to pose challenges. Costs of existing programs also pose a serious challenge for over twenty-five percent of language minority families live at or below the federal poverty level. Expenses related to preschool care and instruction represent a considerable hardship for most of these households.

There are three specific issues that must be addressed in Illinois to increase the state's commitment to early childhood education and family literacy: (i) access to preschool programs; (ii) insufficient services for children aged 0-3; and (iii) inadequate communication with parents.

#### *Access to Preschool Programs*

Many immigrant and refugee children do not attend preschool. Existing pre-kindergarten programs cannot meet the demand for preschool education. The Chicago Public Schools system has a waiting list of over 12,000 children for preschool programs. Often immigrant and refugee children live in neighborhoods where public schools are overcrowded and cannot provide space for preschool programs. State funding for preschool programs is limited.

Even when preschool programs are available, some immigrant and refugee parents do not feel comfortable placing their children in preschool programs because of cultural beliefs or because the program does not address the language and cultural needs of their children. Nevertheless, studies have shown high-quality early childhood programs have an impact on students' performance in school including effects on achievement, grade retention and high school graduation. Children who have a rich language and literacy experience in preschool are less likely to have difficulties learning to read in elementary school.

#### *Services for Children Aged 0-3*

There is a gap in services available for children aged 0-3. High-quality childcare and child development programs cannot meet the demand for services. There is a shortage of infant care providers, and existing programs have long waiting lists. Finding suitable childcare is particularly difficult for parents with little education, low incomes and no tradition of leaving children with caretakers outside of the family. Many parents have trouble finding a program that is flexible enough to accommodate different work schedules.

#### *Communication with Parents*

Communication between parents and early childhood and family literacy programs is limited by differences in language, culture, attitudes and expectations. Many immigrant parents do not speak or read English. Furthermore, school staff have difficulty communicating with immigrant parents when they do not overcome cultural differences and varying perceptions of the role of schools and parents in a child's education. Immigrant parents may experience culture shock and feelings of low self esteem as they deal with their own adjustment to a new culture.

Parents involved in early childhood and family literacy programs do not always have a strong voice in program decision-making. Yet, Head Start guidelines clearly state that program models should reflect the needs of the community. In other early childhood education programs it is also important for the consumer to have a voice.

Also of great importance is the reluctance of some immigrant and refugee parents to have anyone other than family members take care of their young children. In fact, nearly half of Hispanic mothers opt to stay at home during the early years of their children's lives. Those needing childcare frequently prefer calling on relatives—who may be available for little or no cost—rather than searching for a preschool. Insufficient outreach exists to immigrant and refugee parents regarding the importance of early childhood education.

## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

### *Policy Recommendations:*



Make early childhood education an equitably funded state priority such that preschool is available to all 3 and 4 year old children whose parents wish them to attend. Fully implement the Illinois State Board of Education strategic commitment to support early childhood education.



Expand programs that work with young children and their families by expanding resources and eligible client base for successful programs and reviewing the eligibility requirements for all state, local and federally funded preschool and family literacy programs to ensure that services for immigrants are maximized.



Provide state funding and incentives for districts to keep schools open after school hours and offer parent-child literacy programs in the evenings or as a bridge to after school tutoring programs.

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*



Use family literacy mobiles to serve communities with limited early childhood resources. Literacy mobiles would have activities culturally appropriate for parents and children, and materials in the language(s) that parents speak.

Provide linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach that informs parents about early childhood education and literacy, and encourages parents to participate on school committees.



Provide translations of key school materials to parents and conduct parent meetings, orientations and workshops in native language.



Offer state-sponsored workshops for teachers to promote family literacy experiences, combat misconceptions and develop an acceptance of parents.

*Practice Recommendations for Local Schools and Professional Development Entities:*



Create a bridge program that dovetails with Head Start to accommodate working parents' schedules and encourage them to participate in parent child and parent education activities.



Set standards and provide training to family child care providers

**B. Bridging Language Acquisition through Research-Based Approaches**

**1. Issue Description**

As in all other programs, to ensure increased access and improved quality of services to immigrants and refugees, implementation of early childhood and family literacy programs should be monitored, and program design should be research-based. Currently, increasing the level of English language acquisition for all ELLs is a prime issue of concern that requires research and the adoption of best instructional approaches.

*Low Level of English Language Acquisition*

Overcrowding, lack of coordination between programs and inadequate language support services in elementary schools can impede ELLs' English language acquisition. Some children go through the U.S. school system but do not achieve full literacy in English. Hispanics are about twice as likely as non-Hispanic white students to read well below average (NAEP). And, while the National Academy of Science (NAS) cites evidence that limited or non-English speaking language learners are more likely to become better readers of English when they receive initial instruction in their native language, the majority of these students receive little—if any—specialized instruction.

There is a widely held belief that it is difficult for a classroom or school to make up for lack of literacy activities in the family. Thus, there is an emphasis on pairing family literacy programs with early education programs. Projects that rely solely on the family to provide intervention for their young children do not work as well as those programs that also involve professionals.

Appropriate instructional approaches must be adapted and successful programs expanded, based on research results and best practices. Early childhood educators can work with adult ESL programs to introduce the same sharing and family history exercises and experiences they promote in their own classrooms. One example is the Center for Applied Linguistics “Six Journeys to Immigrant Literacy,” which includes themes such as “Memories of Chinese Festivals” and “New Country, New Women: Care-givers Stories.”

Teachers are needed who can use the students’ native language in instruction and who have a solid understanding of the cultural context that the student brings to the classroom. Strong bilingual education programs (see Box 1) — including several throughout the state of Illinois — are rooted in this concept and have shown considerable success not just in teaching children English but in helping them attain overall academic success.

### **BOX 1: THREE SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS IN ILLINOIS**

#### **El Valor – Parents as First Teachers**

The Parents as First Teachers program trains selected parents in El Valor’s Head Start Program to work with families that have children between three and five years of age. Through this home visiting model, El Valor parent-tutor mentors provide educational enrichment for children and support parents as their children’s first teachers.

#### **Rachel Carson Transitional Bilingual Education Program**

Rachel Carson is a pre-K through 8th grade urban school with 92% Spanish speaking students. It is a bicultural school with a transitional bilingual education (TBE) program and a preschool dual language program. Although only 40% of the students are enrolled in TBE, most of the ancillary staff, music, gym, computers, and language arts teachers are bilingual. The reading series contains a transition component and allows bilingual and English-only classes at the same level to study similar literature, themes and skills.

#### **Project FLAME - Family Literacy for Latinos**

Project FLAME (Family Literacy: *Aprendiendo, Mejorando, Educando*/Learning, Bettering, Educating) is a program that provides literacy training and support for Latino parents who are English language learners, so that they can influence their children’s literacy and academic achievement in a positive manner. The design includes two integrated components — Parents as Teachers sessions and Parents as Learners sessions. Program evaluations have consistently documented that children whose families have participated in Project FLAME score 30 points higher than their peers on standardized tests and require fewer special school services, such as tutoring.

Good program design should also consider that language minority children will be at different levels of proficiency at the time of enrollment. Programs need to facilitate the transition from early childhood to elementary education for both parent and child.

Many ELLs enrolled in good preschool programs encounter, upon enrolling in kindergarten, that they are placed in programs that assume low levels of achievement and focus on remedial instruction in an attempt to make up for perceived deficiencies. Programs for ELLs should also acknowledge that even though many language minority families come from the same country and speak the same language, they have greatly varied needs.

## 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

- ☐ Develop first language literacy in tandem with ESL, using multiple models such as transitional bilingual education (TBE) and dual language programs. Put in place research based models that develop pre-literacy and literacy skills in ELLs.

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level and Professional Development Entities:*

- ☐ Identify, document and disseminate the best practices of programs such as Project FLAME, AVANCE, Parents as First Teachers and the Intergenerational Literacy Project. Study programs that differentiate between recent arrivals and native born persons.
- ☐ Build on programs that provide adult language learners with community-based opportunities to develop communication skills and content knowledge relevant to their daily lives, such as seeking employment.
- ☐ Fund research to identify the types of instructional programs that best address the educational needs of young bilingual children.

## C. Integration of Programs into Mainstream Education

### 1. Issue description

The improvement of early childhood education and family literacy programs requires better integration of these programs with mainstream education. A key issue resulting from this problem is that early childhood programs throughout the state do not consistently address the unique needs of immigrant and refugee children in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

There is often a lack of continuity between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten so that children may go from an English-language pre-kindergarten to a bilingual kindergarten. Early childhood programs throughout the state have different approaches to serving ELLs. The Early Childhood Block Grant of Illinois does not require bilingual education for pre-kindergarten students. As a result, some districts hire monolingual (English) pre-kindergarten teachers and do not provide native language development or language support services to children who are ELLs and who may benefit from such services. Districts may not have a systematic approach to identifying ELL children, assessing their English language ability or screening non-English speaking children's developmental stages.

Common criteria are needed for the identification, screening and instruction of children who are ELLs. These criteria could include identification of ELLs through a home language survey; developmental screening in native language; full native language pre-literacy development provided by a bilingual teacher when 20 or more ELLs speak the same language; and language support services such as bilingual aides when fewer than 20 ELLs speak the same language.

## 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations

### *Policy Recommendations:*



Incorporate in the Early Childhood funding requirements criteria for the identification, screening and instruction of ELLs, similar to those used in the Transitional Bilingual Education program for K-12.



Create linguistically appropriate screening for language and developmental need, ensuring that schools screen and identify the dominant language of pre-kindergarten students upon entry and require that qualifying students receive appropriate bilingual or ESL language instruction and support services.



Require that the developmental screening conducted upon entry be administered in the student's dominant language to avoid mislabeling students as at-risk or in need of special education.



Require school districts with large numbers of ELLs to coordinate Early Childhood pre-kindergarten with Transitional Bilingual Education/Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) programs in kindergarten through third grade education to provide continuity of services and instruction for ELLs.



Require districts with large numbers of ELLs to provide native language and ESL support to ELLs in pre-kindergarten programs.



Create supportive transition programs in schools to help students move from bilingual to mainstream classes to prevent students from getting "lost" in mainstream classes and failing due to inadequate language support services.



Establish outreach programs through the state education agency to provide adult educators with tools to blend family literacy and early literacy practices as strands of their already existing ESL curriculums.

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*



Guide schools to identify and provide teachers with supplies, and materials appropriate for ELLs.

## D. Qualified Teachers and Professional Development

### 1. Issue description

An ample supply of well-trained, bilingual professional staff is essential for the success of early childhood and family literacy programs. Two key issues must be addressed in this regard: (i) the availability of teachers; and (ii) the preparation of teachers.

#### *Availability of Teachers*

The lack of bilingual and ESL teachers in early childhood classrooms is compounded by program requirements that exclude certain qualified bilingual teachers. School districts cannot find enough qualified bilingual/bicultural teachers to fill open positions. In addition, districts have difficulty recruiting pre-kindergarten teachers with ESL backgrounds.

Pre-kindergarten teacher certification requirements do not address the needs of ELLs. Pre-kindergarten teachers are required to hold an Early Childhood (Type 04) certificate, but the 04 certificate has no bilingual or ESL requirements. Transitional Bilingual Education (Type 29) certificate holders must be bilingual, and have the qualifications to provide native language support in the classroom, but they are not eligible to teach in early childhood programs unless they also hold the Early Childhood certificate. The restriction that prevents bilingual Type 29 certified teachers from teaching pre-kindergarten further limits the pool of qualified applicants for positions.

#### *Teacher Preparation*

Teacher education programs do not prepare all early childhood teachers to work effectively with immigrant and refugee students and their families. Many early childhood teachers have not received instruction in the developmental issues of ELLs and appropriate teaching methodologies to address these, nor are all teachers trained to work with parents from other cultures. Some young children come to school suffering from emotional or adjustment issues related to their refugee or immigrant experience, and teachers are not prepared to identify these issues.

### 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations:

#### *Policy Recommendations:*



Provide incentives such as tuition scholarships for bilingual teacher aides to work toward teaching degrees and Transitional Bilingual Education (Type 29) certificate holders to work toward the Early Childhood (Type 04) certificate.



Modify current state pre-kindergarten teacher certification requirements to allow districts to hire Type 29 certificate holders with work in Early Childhood Education to teach pre-kindergarten, with the stipulation that they obtain a Type 04 certificate within a specified time.

- Develop language support guidelines that address teacher and staff qualifications for programs that serve ELLs aged 0-3.

*Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

- Increase recruitment efforts for bilingual/bicultural teachers for early childhood education, targeting especially bilingual/bicultural teachers with Type 04 certificates, potential teachers from parents, community members and high school and college students from immigrant families.

- Encourage teachers who have some ELLs in their classrooms to enroll in teacher education courses for ESL approval to develop expertise in working with ELLs.

- Increase the number of counselors and increase the number of multicultural counselors on school staffs.

*Recommended Practices for Professional Development Entities:*

- Develop bilingual and bicultural education curriculum for core curriculum of teacher education programs in all colleges and universities.

- Develop staff development and teacher education programs for bilingual/bicultural teachers in city colleges and universities that incorporate the theories and foundations of bilingual education and early childhood education with sound practices (using guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Illinois Learning Standards).

*Recommended Practices for Local School Level and Professional Development Entities:*

- Provide professional development geared toward bilingual and bicultural early childhood education and family literacy.

- Provide workshops throughout the state for teachers to promote a family literacy approach that accepts parents as authentic partners in the education of their children and connects home and school learning.

- Provide all teachers within a school setting with tools to work with students from different cultural backgrounds and to promote acceptance and celebration of diversity in the classroom.

- Offer anti-bias training to all teachers in all schools.

- Offer teachers and school staff who work with refugees training in adjustment issues, post-traumatic stress disorder, trauma and development. Link teachers with community and in-school resources for mental health and social services to support students.

E. Adequate Data Collection

**1. Issue description**

There is a great scarcity of specific information on the level of language minorities' (including immigrants and refugees) participation in several key programs. Also worth noting is the lack of data that exists with respect to language minorities — particularly where low-incidence populations are concerned. Emphasis should be placed on the collection and disaggregation of this data as it will help to greatly enhance the design and impact of programs.

## 2. Policy and Practice Recommendations

### *Policy Recommendations:*



Require early childhood programs to collect and report data on the number of ELLs enrolled as well as the number screened who are on waiting lists.

### *Practice Recommendations for Professional Development Entities:*



Develop a research agenda to examine what is happening in the immigrant communities and how best we can serve this growing population.<sup>v</sup>

## F. Standards and Outcome Measurements for ELL

### 1. Issue description

Like other states in the U.S., Illinois has placed particular emphasis on literacy and accountability. As with all other populations, however, to ensure the success of language minorities these loftier expectations must be accompanied by increased and targeted support.

Illinois has a well-developed system of content and performance standards, and the State considers English language learners (ELLs) in the statewide assessment component of the accountability system. For the first 3 years of participation in a state approved Bilingual/ESL program, these students can either take the regular tests (Illinois State Achievement Test—ISAT) or the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE). These efforts are commendable, and more must be done to build on the practice.

## 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations<sup>vi</sup>

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*



As content standards are implemented, districts must acknowledge the special implications of—and provide adjustments for—ELLs of all language backgrounds.



Where schools are concerned, an extra effort must be made to provide ELLs with a robust curriculum that incorporates the standards and is delivered by well-trained teachers.



As research yields more information about appropriate assessment of ELLs, continued refinements to the assessment system—including measurement of skills in the native language—must also be made.

## G. Coordination of Resources and Programs at State and Local Level

### 1. Issue Description

Greater coordination is needed to maximize the effectiveness of early childhood education and family literacy. Specifically, there is a need for more consistency and coordination between programs to provide integrated services to families and young children.

Public schools do not have all the resources necessary to support immigrant and refugee children in the schools. To provide more integrated services, there must be more coordination between early childhood programs that have different funding and target populations, as well as coordination between early childhood programs and those that provide other services to families.

### 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations

#### *Policy Recommendations:*



Strengthen coordination between state agencies such as the Illinois Department of Human Services and private organizations such as the Daycare Action Council, with the educational resources devoted to early childhood education.



Coordinate funds from multiple sources to maximize resources for young children and families.



Increase collaboration between the state agencies and federal programs serving different age groups and populations.









Build stronger connections between adult education and early childhood programs at the state level.



Standardize programs offered by community-based organizations (CBOs) by conducting audits and inspections and establishing equitable funding and standards.

*Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

-  Build partnerships between community programs and the public schools.
-  Link refugee and immigrant families to multicultural programs and institutions.
-  At all levels coordinate training and services of the schools and multicultural institutions offering resettlement and counseling services.
-  Strengthen capacity to provide comprehensive services to immigrant families by providing technical assistance and support to CBOs and by assisting neighborhood schools to become community centers for the immigrant population that can offer drop-in programs for parent/child interactive play and activities, education and childcare.
-  Create more salary equity between community organizations and public school employees who teach Head Start.
-  Include community organizations in grants and structure grants to encourage community organization collaboration. Fund small projects that encourage collaboration.

**III. INTERMEDIATE, MIDDLE, & SECONDARY EDUCATION**

A. Commitment to Implement Programs that Meet ELL Needs

**1. Issue Description**

Though Illinois has been among the most generous states in funding programs for ELL children in the public schools, resources and program innovation have not kept pace with the growing needs. In the case of intermediate, middle and secondary education, the key challenges that require an increased commitment at the administrative level are related to the need for greater flexibility in school scheduling and programs, and the need for improved communication with the parents of ELLs. Four specific issues must be addressed in this area: (i) adapting schools to meet ELL student needs; (ii) extending services beyond the regular school day; (iii) communicating with parents who do not speak English; and (iv) overcoming cultural barriers to communication.

### *Adapting Schools to Meet ELL Student Needs*

Some districts and schools lack the flexibility needed to effectively address the needs of second language learners, and in particular, those with gaps in their schooling. As noted in the Introduction Section, immigrant and refugee children represent an increasing percentage of public school students in Illinois and they are enrolling not only in Chicago schools, but also in suburban and downstate districts with little experience in educating ELLs. An increasing number arrive with large educational gaps, interrupted schooling or with little or no record of their previous schooling. Schools struggle to provide appropriate grade level placement that gives these students the support that they need in order to meet the Illinois Learning Standards.

A significant number of immigrant students arrive after the school year has begun or leave before it finishes. When parents do not work in agriculture, migrant education funding is not available to address the needs of transient students. Schools receive funding for services for migrant agricultural worker families but not for similar services needed by other transient worker families (e.g., racetrack workers).

The U.S. school system is often not flexible enough to address the learning needs of these students. Traditional scheduling is not always appropriate for immigrant students. For example, frequent class changes may not be the best approach for educating students who are struggling to learn English and adjust to a new culture and school system. Sufficient flexibility in scheduling and availability of resources in the schools is needed to provide services based on students' needs (e.g., ESL, special education). Scheduling and resource limitations can restrict services available to students. A focus is needed on changing the existing environment of schools to meet students' needs.

### *Extending Services Beyond the Regular School Day*

Immigrant and refugee students often need educational support beyond the regular school day. ELLs have to learn English as well as subject matter to succeed in school. Students' limited English skills can lead them to lag behind in school subjects. Often students do not have the opportunity to practice their English language skills outside of school. In addition, parents may not be able to help students with homework because of language or educational barriers. Many ELLs need tutoring programs that can help them to keep up with schoolwork, build English language skills and social skills.

### *Communicating with Parents Who Do Not Speak English*

Schools do not always communicate effectively with immigrant and refugee parents. Often schools do not have the resources to communicate with parents who do not speak English. Using students or family members as interpreters is inappropriate in many situations such as discussion of a student's academic performance. Schools should not allow students to translate for their parents in critical incidents involving the student. However, in-school interpreters are not usually trained in interpretation skills, and sometimes they are unqualified to interpret the subject matter presented. The skills of the interpreter are important in meetings such as Individual Education Plan (IEP) conferences where communication with the parents is vital. Likewise, key written materials need to be translated into the parents'

language. Without translation, parents who do not read English are expected to sign documents that they do not understand.






### *Overcoming Cultural Barriers to Communication*

Cultural barriers prevent parents and teachers from collaborating. It is human to make false assumptions about parents because of cultural differences. For example, a teacher may assume that parents who do not help their children with homework are not interested in their children's education. Parental involvement is defined differently in different cultures. Lack of participation does not necessarily mean lack of value for education. Teachers need to understand parents' culture to communicate with them. Conversely, a parent may be hesitant to deal with the U.S. school system because he/she does not understand it.




## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

In order to address these four issues and take the steps necessary to increase the state's commitment to implement programs that meet the needs of ELLs in the school system, the following actions are recommended.

### *Policy Recommendations:*

-  Ensure that the needs of ELLs are a priority consideration in whole school reform. Establish a high level of commitment to meet the needs of ELLs and support that commitment with strategic plans at the state and district level.
-  Fund services for transient students whose parents are not agricultural workers.
-  Develop standards for interpreters and translators who work in schools.
-  Increase the use of trained interpreters and translated material by developing regional or statewide language resources that districts can utilize.
-  Develop language policy for school districts that specifies how interpreters and translations will be provided for parents.

### *Practice Recommendations for the Local School Level:*

-  Utilize student data (career interests, academic progress, social/emotional development, linguistic proficiency) to provide an individualized academic education plan for the student's continuous progress.
-  Develop scheduling that provides a more stable and sustained environment for learning. This could include reducing the number of class changes for newly arrived students, using block scheduling to extend the time spent on subject matter, and/or developing alternative school schedules with different starting times to accommodate students who work or have other responsibilities.
-  Expand extended learning opportunities for ELLs, including tutoring programs before and after school, on Saturdays, and during the summer. Tutoring programs could be offered by the school, by volunteers at the school,

or at community-based organizations or in students' homes and work, in collaboration with teachers for outcome/progress follow-up.



Provide training for translators/interpreters in the school systems and for school staff in interpretation skills and the ethics of interpreting.



Outreach to parents with programs and materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.



Use linkages with ethnic community organizations to reduce parents' fear of the U.S. school system.



Help teachers develop a culturally responsive understanding of parent involvement.



Communicate with parents about involvement in the school, through family literacy and adult education programs.



Offer parent orientation programs for immigrant and refugee parents at local schools. Programs should be tailored to the needs of non-native English speakers and new arrivals to the United States who may be unfamiliar with the U.S. school system.

## B. Bridging Language Acquisition Through Research-Based Approaches

### 1. Issue Description

The gap in language acquisition and the low high school completion rates of minority students reflect the need for continued research and adoption of instructional approaches that best meet the needs of ELLs. Students who are ELLs vary considerably with respect to the number of languages they speak, the level of prior schooling in their native languages, the level of parent education, and the nature of home literacy practices (e.g., whether they read or are read to at home) as well in the degree to which they are linguistically isolated from English learning outside the classroom setting. All of these factors have been found to bear on classroom learning and may require different kinds of interventions and teaching strategies.

The key issues of concern regarding intermediate, middle, and secondary education that needs to be addressed through the adoption of better research-based instructional approaches are the high level of high school dropouts among immigrant students and the students classified as "long term" ELLs.

### *High Level of High School Drop Outs*



The high school dropout rate among minority students is very high. The issue of high school completion is a concern particularly for Latino students and those with interrupted schooling. The decision to drop out of school is influenced by the relative safety of the school environment, possibilities of obtaining post-secondary opportunities, availability of ESL and bilingual instruction to support English language learners, and school overcrowding. Furthermore, some students leave school to find jobs and help support their families.

### *Long Term ELLs*




A group of students of particular concern is the population comprised of ELLs who spend many years in a bilingual or ESL program but do not progress sufficiently in English literacy to meet state or local criteria for promotion from ELL status. Others move into mainstream classes before they are truly proficient in academic English and struggle to meet class expectations. Better approaches are needed to assist these students in increasing their level of academic achievement and English language acquisition.


## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

### *Policy Recommendations:*

-  Provide incentives for high school completion such as in-state college tuition for children of undocumented parents. This group of students has little incentive to excel in high school because they are not eligible for in-state tuition rates or financial aid, and thus cannot afford to attend college.
-  Develop state guidelines for elementary schools at the intermediate level on retention/promotion that promote learning for ELLs. These policies should be based on an assessment of the impact of retaining ELLs who do not meet district promotion requirements, and an examination of district retention policies.

### *Practice Recommendations for the Local School Level:*

-  Create smaller-sized programs/schools that offer a safe environment, less anonymity for students and more opportunities for students to interact with caring adults at school on a regular basis.
-  Help students to identify, prepare for and pursue opportunities for further education and careers after high school.
-  Improve language support by providing more intensive ESL instruction as well as native language support whenever possible for new arrivals and by developing sheltered English content courses.

 Educate parents about the importance of getting a high school education in the United States.

 Study, document, and disseminate best practices.

C. Integration of Programs into Mainstream Education


**1. Issue Description**


Michael Fix and Jorge Ruiz Velasco note that one particularly troubling trend among children in immigrant families is their segregation within schools. One half of ELL students (K - 12) attend schools where a third or more of their fellow students also have difficulty speaking English. By way of contrast, only two percent of non-ELLs attend such schools. This means that immigrant children are going to schools that are not just ethnically and economically segregated, but also linguistically isolated.

Students placed in bilingual and ESL programs are sometimes isolated and have little contact with English-speaking students in schools. In some cases, this is because students attend schools where most students are ELLs. In other cases, it is a result of scheduling within the school. This isolation hinders their language acquisition. Furthermore, ELLs with other special needs are not always fully integrated into the other programs offered by schools. ELLs with disabilities may not receive all the language and special education services to which they are entitled. ELLs with advanced knowledge in different subject areas may not be identified and offered appropriate coursework.


**2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

*Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

 Develop more seamless programming so that services available in schools can be blended to address the individual needs of students.

 Create student team learning with mainstream and ELLs to avoid the isolation of ELLs and encourage interaction between different groups of students.

*Practice Recommendations for Professional Development Entities:*

 Study and develop best practices for integrating bilingual and special education programs and for transitioning students from bilingual programs into mainstream classes.

D. Qualified Teachers and Professional Development

**1. Issue Description**

As in all educational arenas, the issues of availability of qualified teachers and appropriate resources for teacher preparation and ongoing training are essential to meeting the needs of ELLs in intermediate, middle, and secondary education.

### *Availability of Teachers*

There is a lack of qualified bilingual and ESL teachers. As the population of immigrant and refugee students grows, the demand for bilingual and ESL teachers also increases. However, school districts often have difficulty recruiting teachers for these positions because of the limited number of qualified candidates. As a result, schools are constrained in their efforts to offer full bilingual and ESL program services to all ELLs. The lack of qualified bilingual teachers is especially acute for students with special needs.



### *Teacher Preparation*

Many teachers are not prepared to address the language, cultural and adjustment needs of immigrant students. Immigrant children have language and cultural barriers to learning in U.S. schools that need to be addressed by teachers and school staff. Newly arrived immigrant children undergo a cultural adjustment process that can take three to five years, and this process impacts students' learning. Children of immigrant parents face language barriers at school as well as a cultural disconnect between the expectations at home and those at school. Schools need staff who can identify refugee and immigrant students' needs and communicate with children and parents from other cultures.



Preparation for working with immigrants is needed for all teachers and not only ESL and bilingual teachers. Many immigrant and refugee children spend at least part of their school day in mainstream classes taught by teachers with little or no training in working with language minority students. In particular, mainstream high school teachers need to be able to address students' literacy needs. Training on cultural competency and how to work with language minority students would help teachers offer a multicultural perspective to all students and would benefit both students who are English language learners and those who are fluent in English.

## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

### *Policy Recommendations:*

-  Provide incentives and support for bilingual/bicultural candidates to study education.
-  Create an audit of practice to determine what universities and colleges are doing to recruit and train teachers to work with English language learners.

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

-  Increase the number of credentialed bilingual and ESL teachers by encouraging bilingual teacher assistants to pursue education to obtain a teaching degree and encouraging strong classroom teachers to pursue ESL endorsement.
-  Develop in-service training for all current teachers and administrators in schools with immigrant students, - with special training provided for teachers of newcomers –on cultural competency for working with language minority

students that includes awareness and sensitivity, and how to assess and recognize emotional needs of students and adjustment issues.



Increase capacity of schools to address the social and psychological issues that students face, by hiring more bilingual/bicultural counselors.



Promote greater cultural understanding by encouraging teachers and school staff to participate in ethnic cultural activities in the communities of their students, promoting multicultural activities in school settings, and forming cultural focus groups for teachers to share and learn about ELLs.



Focus efforts on retention as well as recruitment of teachers.

#### *Practice Recommendations for Professional Development Entities*



Market the teaching profession to ethnic communities where there is a growing need for teachers. Promote the value of teaching as a profession.



Include training in education of English language learners and multicultural perspectives as a requirement for all graduates of teacher education programs.

### E. Adequate Data Collection

#### 1. Issue Description



Data-driven reform can be the lynchpin of a sound accountability system. At the school level, data on how recently students have immigrated and on their level of previous education have been found to be helpful to teachers; yet, schools do not often collect these data. Such data might also help school-level staff identify sub-populations of students (e.g., under-schooled newcomers) who might have literacy needs that are not squarely met by standard ESL and bilingual programming. The lack of data to guide decisions is a key issue that needs to be addressed.

More information is needed on the characteristics of English language learners and how schools are working with them. Currently, Illinois does not collect school-level data on the number of ELLs who are retained in grade (a factor that has been found to correlate with dropping out) nor do districts routinely collect and report school-level data on how many ELLs are served in support programs other than ESL and bilingual; for example, the number also served in programs for students at risk under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title I) or in Special Education programs. This type of data would help state and district level educators measure local program effectiveness and identify unmet needs.








More information is needed at the state and district level to guide the development of programs for ELLs. Districts need more detailed information about the performance of students within the different ethnic groups represented in the school. Both the state and districts need more information about the good practices that schools have implemented as well as unsuccessful strategies. This information would help to guide more effective training, program development and funding of innovative programs. There is a need for collaboration across agencies to collect data.

## 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations

### *Policy Recommendations:*

-  Collect and aggregate data on students and student outcomes to reevaluate policies, such as the exit criteria for long-term ELLs.
-  Collect data on successes and failures in school report cards, with more detail such as dropout rates by ethnic group and gender.

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

-  Collect data to report on what schools are doing in the following areas:
  -  Parent Communication
  -  Teacher in-services
  -  Ways of tapping into students' knowledge and experience
  -  Alternative curriculum
  -  Addressing the needs of long term ELLs who do not meet program exit criteria
-  Use data to identify best practices that can be replicated, strategies that work and don't work, and the effectiveness of innovation.

## F. Standards and Outcome Measurements for ELL

### 1. Issue Description

No discussion of immigrant education can meaningfully take place outside the context of the standards-based school accountability movement and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. The current emphasis on school standards and outcomes began in 1994, when Congress required all states to implement comprehensive accountability systems for schools receiving federal funds under Title I. These new accountability systems were to be based on state-established content standards for reading and math and on assessments aligned with those standards. The new law required states to hold all students to the same performance standards and further required states to hold schools and districts accountable for student performance. Most states, including Illinois, have subsequently developed standards-based accountability systems for a wider number of core subjects and for all public schools.

NCLB built upon this base and further developed guidelines for accountability. Under NCLB, states are responsible for setting strong academic standards for what every child should know and learn in reading, math and science at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, schools will have to measure student progress and better target resources by administering tests in all schools. Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, tests must be administered every year in grades 3-8 in math and reading. Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, science achievement must also be tested.

States are required to define adequate yearly progress (AYP) for students and to develop a timeline for meeting the requirement that 100 percent of students meet

proficiency in standards by 2013-2014. Title I-funded schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress goals for two consecutive years must give parents of the students attending these schools an opportunity for transfer to a higher-achieving public school in the district (public school choice). The district is responsible for paying for or providing transportation and may use a portion of its Title I funds for this purpose.

The new law has implications for students who are ELLs. Under NCLB, all ELLs must be tested at least once a year using an English proficiency test. They also must be included in state accountability systems, including testing in reading and math for grades 3-8 beginning in 2005-2006, and testing in science by 2007-2008. Math and science tests may be administered in native language or English. Reading tests may be administered in English or native language for the first three years a student is enrolled in U.S. schools. In Illinois, current state law requires districts to administer an English proficiency test to ELLs annually. An adapted math test in simplified English is also administered to ELLs in selected grades. However, NCLB will require schools to test all ELLs in grades 3-8 in content areas and will hold schools accountable for ensuring that these students meet AYP. ELL test results will be included in the criteria used to determine whether Title I schools have met annual yearly progress goals.

The previous exclusion of ELL immigrant youth from standards-based accountability systems threatened to widen performance differences between native-born and immigrant populations. However, applying a one-size-fits-all accountability system to a special needs population in schools with low capacity to meet their needs threatens equally undesirable consequences. These include increased grade retention and drop-out rates among students and low morale among teachers and administrators. Clearly, the challenge is to extend accountability systems to ELLs in ways that give educators the resources and incentives they need to focus on low-performing students. Prior to 2002, Illinois had no state assessments for measuring ELLs progress in core subjects until after they had been in language development programs for more than three years, and Illinois had not established state-wide content standards for the special language development courses that serve as gateways to the core curricula.

## 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations

### *Policy Recommendations:*



Develop assessments in the core subjects appropriate for use by English language learners, that are in line with State standards.



Develop a system for evaluating the progress of ELLs that clearly documents student performance in English acquisition and core subjects and avoids categorizing beginning ELLs as low performing based on English language ability alone.

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*



Ensure appropriate support for ELLs to ensure their educational needs are met as they work toward achieving the AYP targets.



Implement rigorous curriculum based on State standards.



Use assessment results to guide student placement and instruction.

G. Coordination of Resources and Programs at State and Local Level

**1. Issue Description**

Increased coordination of resources and programs is needed to enhance services for immigrant students, particularly given the diverse needs of immigrants and the changing migration patterns that are bringing immigrants into areas without large existing communities of recent immigrants. Two specific issues need to be addressed: (i) the need for a coordinated approach to serving the social, health, educational, and other needs of immigrant students and families; and (ii) the need to coordinate resources to address rising dispersion of immigrants across school districts.

*Need for Coordinated Approach to Serving Immigrant Students' Diverse Needs*

Emotional, social and health-related issues as well as varying levels of previous educational attainment and gaps in education can all impede upon learning at school for some immigrant and refugee children. We cannot expect students to succeed in schools without fully understanding and concurrently addressing the needs of the entire immigrant family. Many newly arrived families, as well as longer term residents, have social service and healthcare needs that are unaddressed. Families need efficient access to centralized social services, health services and educational information. Often school social work and counseling staff are overburdened and linguistically unable to assess the needs of immigrant and refugee families and students. School staff may not be aware of the community resources that exist to address the needs of immigrant and refugee families.

Many newly arrived immigrant and refugee children come to the United States after a long ordeal and traumatic experiences. Their learning capacity may be limited and affected by severe psychological and adjustment issues in addition to difficulties related to acculturation. Withdrawal, isolation, sadness, acting out and a whole range of negative behaviors may be rooted in their life experiences. Furthermore, as mentioned above, immigrant students sometimes have gaps in their schooling and are at different educational levels than their peers of the same age. Educational levels and language proficiency of their parents, also influence the ability of immigrant students to become proficient in English and perform well in school.

Schools usually do not provide any type of newcomer program within the school that could provide a sheltered, supportive environment to new arrivals. A center could also coordinate the efforts of social service, health and educational agencies and consolidate the need for multiple service referrals into a single location. Welcome centers could provide area language minority residents with an efficient one-stop resource for recently arrived families. Student newcomer programs for recently arrived immigrants could incorporate language proficiency assessment in native language; literacy skills assessment in native language; health and immunization services; literacy tutors to work with small groups of students after school hours; high quality materials and technology to motivate students to acquire English skills.

Newcomer programs also offer an academic approach to helping students who are not at grade level in their own language to achieve academic and language learning. The coordinated effort and safe environment allows an appropriate means for focused attention on students who have gaps in their schooling, without allowing them to get lost in the system, and ensuring their needs are addressed more effectively.

#### *Need to Coordinate Resources due to Changes in Where Immigrants Live*

School districts with immigrant populations may not be equipped to meet the educational needs of ELLs. As immigrant and refugee families settle in communities, their school districts must address the needs of these students. However, school districts often do not have the material, experience, trained staff or language resources to provide necessary services. When ELLs include many language groups, it is more difficult for the district to provide native language resources to all ELLs. Furthermore, community services for immigrant and refugee populations are not in place in all communities. Schools often have difficulty finding bilingual resources locally.

## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

### *Policy Recommendations:*



Establish a state level policy that recognizes the importance of addressing the special needs of the immigrant family in order to provide effective education programs for immigrant children. This recognition would lend support to the concept of the immigrant family welcoming center.



Address school funding issues that create uneven funding for districts.



Reimburse school districts for costs that exceed the average per pupil expenditure to form high quality newcomer programs for immigrant/refugee students in their first year of education in the U.S.

- Identify the special health and mental health service needs of language minority children and develop a plan to strengthen the network.

*Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

- Establish linkages with refugee and immigrant social services and mental health services for technical assistance and resources. For example, promote participation of refugee and immigrant mental health or psychological professionals in school counseling services and case management.
- Develop plans to assist students with gaps in the schooling and provide specialized services to them through newcomer programs.
- Provide comprehensive orientation and support to new students through newcomer centers that co-locate multiple service providers in school district facilities or serve as a central point of referral for education, social services and health services.
- Develop statewide resources that would include curriculum, materials and information for teachers, translated school documents, as well as contact information for language services, bilingual professionals and community resources, and collaborate among districts to share these resources and training programs statewide.
- Utilize existing regional systems to provide resources (translating, testing, etc.) to support low incidence language populations in districts.

#### **IV. ADULT EDUCATION**

##### **A. Commitment to Implement Programs that Meet ELL Needs**

###### **1. Issue Description**

The primary issue that needs to be addressed in order to enable the state to act on its commitment to provide adult education for English language learners is the need to reduce barriers that limit access of immigrants to these programs. The key barriers to access are related to: (i) scheduling; (ii) transportation; (iii) geography; (iv) family issues, particularly for women; and (v) dispersion of immigrant programs. Standard class structures and schedules do not meet the needs of immigrants facing this combination of barriers.

###### *Scheduling*

Traditional program schedules often conflict with the work schedules of immigrants. Many immigrants hold more than one job, work overtime, travel long distances to and from work, and/or have work schedules that change weekly.

### *Transportation*

Transportation to and from classes can be a significant barrier since public transportation may be inadequate or unavailable at the times and locations needed. In cases where immigrants rely on others who do have cars for rides to classes, the attendance of several people becomes dependent on one person.

### *Geography*

Immigrants in downstate and rural areas do not always have easy access to ESL or citizenship services in part because the communities in which they live are not prepared to provide these services to them. This occurs in some cases because the immigrant populations are scattered geographically and in others because large groups of immigrants arrive in a sudden influx into communities with limited previous experience with immigrants. Finding qualified ESL teachers is also more difficult in downstate areas with smaller immigrant population bases.

### *Family Issues*

Family issues can also hinder educational access or progress, especially for women. Affordable, convenient, quality childcare is often not available to women who want to participate in educational programs. Domestic violence and discrimination issues, as well as lack of support from husbands or other family members are often additional obstacles that women must overcome.

### *Dispersion of programs*

The funding of separate initiatives for literacy, family literacy, citizenship, ESL, workforce development, and welfare reform create a barrier by confusing learners seeking services and programs. The programs themselves try to provide services with inadequate and unconnected multiple funding streams. Coordination with, and transition to, other types of classes and programs is lacking.

## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

### *Policy Recommendations*












Expand services provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) in order to make district transportation accessible and affordable to/from classes and worksites, especially in suburban locations.



Provide a more flexible funding formula to encourage program flexibility and innovation, particularly in areas without high concentrations of students. For example, funding could be based on unique need, innovative programming or performance standards, rather than on attendance hours.

*Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

-  Accommodate schedules by having an open registration and flexible class transfer policies.
-  Create more flexible scheduling options including weekend classes or classes combined with conversational sessions with tutors in immigrant homes or nearby locations.
-  Increase provision of materials that can be more readily used by working immigrants to practice English on their own, such as lending libraries of video and audio tapes, and greater availability of bilingual practice materials.
-  Offer courses within learners' workplaces and communities, including existing school sites, apartment complexes, community centers, libraries, and local businesses.
-  Offer courses that are accessible to learners in rural areas, including the use of distance education such as telecourses, audio classes, and online courses.
-  Recruit and train volunteer tutors to provide supplementary conversation practice for students, particularly in isolated areas.
-  Balance cost effective larger classes with more costly smaller classes in isolated areas.
-  Address issues of concern to immigrants in ESL classes, thus making the content more relevant to learners. For example, classes could address domestic violence, discrimination, confidence building and knowledge of rights issues.
-  Make affordable childcare available and convenient to classes at all hours (to accommodate work schedules). One way to achieve this is for women students to form babysitting cooperatives, which would give employment to some and free the rest to attend classes.

B. Bridging Language Acquisition Through Research-based Approaches

**1. Issue Description**

Additional research is needed to identify issues in improving the quantity and quality of adult education programs. Specific areas that need particular attention and improved instructional approaches include transitional programs and courses for elderly immigrants.

### *Quantity and Quality of Programs*

An insufficient number of programs and classes are available to meet the needs of immigrant students and existing programs are not of sufficient duration or intensity. Quality programs with strong applied language skills curricula taught by well-prepared and supported professional instructors are limited, and quality is uneven across programs. The quality of instruction may also be affected by lack of materials in native languages as well as students' desire for more conversation classes (i.e. using the phone, interviewing) and more listening practice (TV, videos, etc). Best practices on the delivery of quality programs of sufficient intensity need to be explored and applied broadly.

### *Transition from ESL to work*

There is a lack of connection between ESL and transition to work programs as well as too few employment-linked programs. Limited language skills and cultural barriers prevent many immigrants from attaining opportunities that lead to upward mobility. Yet, workers who can benefit from employment related ESL often cannot access such programs.

The impact of adult education on welfare savings has been demonstrated (see Adult Education and Literacy Report to the Governor and General Assembly), but additional research on impact and best practices is needed.

### *Elderly Immigrants*

Elderly immigrants have needs that are not matched with class offerings. English language acquisition for socialization, citizenship, and community involvement are especially important to the elderly, yet state and federal outcomes reporting give priority to meeting work and educational attainment goals that are not realistic or appropriate to the needs of the elderly. The focus of work that is prevalent in many curricula is important to many immigrants but not relevant to the elderly.

## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

### *Policy Recommendations:*







Allocate district and state funds for additional services, including supplementing awards for (i) high quality programming and supportive services, (ii) workplace enhancement basic skills; (iii) smaller programs; and (iv) training and administrative support for newer programs.








Add adult education for the elderly as a regular category for state level funding and develop a strategic plan to address the special needs of the elderly.

*Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

-  Add pre-employment skills and short-term vocational training to existing programs and incorporate into curricula.
-  Provide information about jobs and job training to learners who are enrolled in traditional ESL classes.
-  Develop a process to acquire adequate funding based on actual need, to assist adult learners and their families with the services needed.
-  Replicate, using state funds, effective programs for the elderly, such as the Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly (CLESE) demonstration model, “Bright Ideas,” that teaches English Literacy/Civics Education to the elderly.

*Practice Recommendations for Professional Development Entities:*

-  Conduct research to study the connection between English proficiency, job skills, and wages. For example, look at the Illinois Department of Public Aid/Refugee Resettlement Project research conducted in the 1980s.
-  Identify research on the number of hours needed to increase levels of English proficiency.
-  Conduct or locate research on the number of children affected by parents who attend classes and make this research known to legislators, in order to increase understanding of the impact of adult education.
-  Study and document best practices from existing programs, such as the Refugee Resettlement’s vocational education and vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) programs, which provide evidence of career and upward mobility through use of a model that combines the use of CBOs and large institutions.
-  Assure that research on Illinois adult populations at risk that are used for program planning and funding build in formulas for the underreporting of undocumented immigrants.

C. Integration of Programs into Mainstream

**1. Issue Description**

In adult education, the key issue for integration is the need to integrate education for adult immigrants with employer-supported programs, wherever possible providing adult education at the workplace.

## *Employers and Workplace Education*

Upward job mobility for immigrants requires sufficient English proficiency and basic skills. The most convenient place for immigrants to acquire skills is at the workplace, yet employers may not be willing or able to offer workplace education. Workplace learning does have the same barriers of childcare, transportation, and fatigue of students that face immigrants in accessing ESL classes, but workplace learning provides greater convenience and accessibility for many immigrants.

There are a number of challenges to workplace education programs. Some employers do not have the expertise or resources to implement such programs. Some employers are not able to pay employees while they are in workplace ESL classes. Also, some employers who have paid workers to attend classes under special programs in the past, did not continue the classes after funding ended. Employers who do not support employees' Vocational ESL or ESL participation prohibit immigrants from developing the English skills necessary for job upgrades. Some employers may do this because they want a stream of low wage workers.

Several other issues also impact workplace programs and need to be addressed. Each workplace has different needs and uses its own unique vocabulary. Workplaces may experience management turnover, which means workplace educators may have to start from square one with new management staff. Management may not continue to be involved with the classes and provide the needed feedback and support. The state does not currently provide employers with sufficient incentives to participate in training programs.

## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**

### *Policy Recommendations:*



Provide incentives such as grant dollars or tax credits to employers to participate in and finance on-site adult education for adult ELLs.



Build upon existing successful models such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program and the Illinois Secretary of State Skills Enhancement grants, which provide employers with funds to implement workplace education program in partnership with an educational provider.

### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*



Conduct outreach to the business community on the importance of ESL and VESL and the need to view immigrant workers as resources who merit investment in education.



Improve coordination and information sharing between adult education programs and employers so that adult education programs learn the specific needs of each employer and are able to work with employers to develop work-related materials to help workers advance in jobs.



Include entrepreneurship, business development, and financial planning in workplace skills training, to meet the needs of workers at different levels.

## D. Qualified Teachers and Professional Development

### 1. Issue Description

The field of adult education has a particular set of issues that lead to problems in the availability and preparation of teachers. The lack of uniform standards for hiring, the practice of relying on part-time instructors, pay inequities, the absence of benefits, and the continual need to provide baseline training undermines learning. These problems have long been decried in the field of adult education. High rates of teacher turnover undermine the stability and consistency of a program since programs must devote most of their efforts to hiring and training new staff and thus have less time and energy for program development and refinement.

These problems are compounded in the case of adult ESL because of the limited pool of instructors with specific qualifications working with ELLs. While many adult ESL teachers have teaching experience, many have had little or no training to prepare them for the demands of ESL instruction.

An important question in this field is the determination of qualifications required for teachers of adult ESL classes. If credentials are set too high, it may limit the number of candidates within a community who can teach. A lack of native speaking staff for registration and testing, as well as teaching of entry level ESL classes, which can lead to students becoming frustrated when they do not understand the process and giving up on learning English. While some argue for higher professional standards, other views include the need to balance a credentialing system between advanced degrees and acceptance of non-traditional qualifications more likely to be found within immigrant communities.

### 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations

#### *Policy Recommendations:*



Make immigrant education a priority for education by funding both the provision of services and continuing professional development.



Provide incentives for programs to hire full-time instructors.



Review the qualification requirements for teachers and consider allowing communities to determine qualifications and then be judged based on outcomes. Qualifications could include personal experience similar to that of the students, stated level of education, teaching in home country, plus the requirement of teacher training, including teacher exchanges, mentoring, and

peer coaching. Qualifications could also differ depending on the types of students (e.g. low education versus high education students).

- Support efforts of the Illinois Adult and Continuing Education Association (IACEA) in promoting and providing staff development and training. IACEA has an annual statewide conference and has actively supported the Adult Education Service Center Network in its role of providing staff development and training.

*Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

- Pay higher salaries and benefits to teachers, and pay teachers for their time while in training.

- Provide more training to upgrade and maintain teacher skills, especially in technology use.

- Increase recruitment of qualified bilingual adult education teachers by targeting bilingual speakers in adult ESL programs, working with local colleges and universities to help identify potential staff or assist with training staff, and by applying for and using AmeriCorps volunteers.

*Practice Recommendations for Professional Development Entities:*

- Use distance education technology (telecourses, audio classes, and online courses) for ESL teacher training.

- Evaluate the (proposed) professional standards recommendations after piloting their use. Minimum requirements include a BS/BA degree, new teacher orientation, and ongoing professional development hours based on full time or part time status.

E. Adequate Data Collection

**1. Issue description**

There is limited data on the success of adult ESL programs. For example, there is no data that tells us the extent to which the Illinois system is meeting the demand for ESL services, the outcomes across service providers, or the extent to which current programs are successful in preparing adult immigrant learners for further education or for vocational technical training. Nor do we have information on what difference participation in programs is making in immigrant learners' lives in terms of outcomes not presently captured by the National Reporting System but important to immigrants nevertheless.

A system that works should be able to tell us how successful current programs in ESL and literacy are in helping learners meet their goals through various aspects of the programs such as: facilitating access to services; decreasing social isolation and increasing community participation; moving immigrants out of poverty and into stable living situations; helping immigrants gain access to jobs that pay a living wage; providing immigrants with the knowledge and skills needed to support the schooling of their children; making it possible for immigrants to acquire the skills needed to access and succeed in high performance jobs (such as technology-related skills and SCANS<sup>vii</sup> type skills; and providing immigrants who have higher levels of education with access to professional and other career services

Tracking learner paths across delivery systems is fraught with issues of confidentiality and concerns about only providing education to those who can show social security numbers.

## 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations<sup>viii</sup>

### *Policy Recommendations:*



Support the data collection efforts promoted by the National Assessment on Adult Literacy (NAAL), which can provide background information on adult immigrants, their language and literacy levels and their participation in the labor force.



Coordinate data collection systems with existing national efforts such as those of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning Literacy and the National Assessment on Adult Literacy.

## F. Standards and Outcome Measurements for ELL



### 1. Issue Description

Meaningful standards and outcome measures are needed to monitor the quality of programs and to provide benchmarks to service providers. Furthermore, standards and outcome measures are directly tied to funding as funding currently rewards programs for the numbers of learners who attain certain outcomes such as passing the high school equivalency test (GED) and gaining citizenship.



There is currently a limited range of valid, reliable ESL tests for adults, and tests do not fully measure progress. The assessment instruments that are currently used to measure progress in learning English are costly to administer and need to be updated. An option to consider is the implementation of alternative assessments with rubrics, but this raises questions of how to report on a larger scale. Establishment of standards and funding based on performance can be difficult when class hours are insufficient for students to progress adequately and testing is required at a frequency that may be too short to see progress.

## 2. Practice and Policy Recommendations

### *Policy Recommendations:*

-  Develop a task force to review the link of outcome measures to the current funding formulas.
-  Simplify the information gathering/tracking system to allow more flexibility in entering test scores with less frequent testing requirements.

### *Practice Recommendations for the Local School Level:*

-  Strive to meet the recommendations in the Program Standards for Adult Education English for Learners of Second Languages Programs published by International TESOL in 2000.
-  Develop alternative assessment models such as portfolios with rubrics.

## G. Coordination of Resources and Programs at State and Local Level

### 1. Issue Description

As in the case of other educational arenas, coordination of resources and programs is important for improving the delivery of adult education to immigrants across the state. However, to achieve this, three specific issues must be addressed: (i) determining the maximum impact of limited funding dollars for Illinois; (ii) communication and coordination among providers; and (iii) coordination of adult education programs.

#### *Maximum impact of limited funding dollars for Illinois*

Funding dollars are limited and the needs, as determined by research, are significant in all areas of the state. Coordination of resources is thus important to ensure maximum impact and appropriate distribution of funds.

#### *Communication and coordination among providers*

There is a lack of communication among various service providers so an immigrant entering an education program rarely has access to other educational programs from which he/she could benefit.


Communities, especially those with newly arrived immigrant populations, may not have appropriate services or structures in place to address the needs of the population. Cultural diversity may place stress on individuals and the community, which can exacerbate communication problems.


### *Coordination of adult education programs*

A disconnect currently exists between various types of adult education and training programs for immigrants, which leads to duplication and fragmentation. Programs including ESL, Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), tutoring, welfare reform, citizenship initiatives, and family literacy, have different sets of rules for program management and funding. Multiple proposals must be submitted for funding and data collection associated with each is often different.


## **2. Practice and Policy Recommendations**


### *Policy Recommendations:*


 Develop a strategic plan to adequately address the needs of the increasing adult ESL population statewide, with both the resources available among agencies and increased funding strategies.


 Establish a state level coordination council to identify services available to immigrants from all agencies (e.g. education, public welfare, public health, employment). Designate staff from each agency to assist local communities with services to immigrants, especially those communities with large sudden influxes of immigrants.


### *Practice Recommendations for Local School Level:*

 Consolidate and coordinate adult education programs to (i) end the disconnect between programs; (ii) strengthen ties between vocational education and job placement services; and (iii) expand the existing service network so strengths are used and success replicated.

 Establish a statewide and citywide network to increase service provider communication of services, strengthen interagency connections, and coordinate childcare and transportation services.

 Create an inventory of adult education funders, providers, and services to promote coordination, avoid duplication and maximize resources.

 Develop comprehensive program planning that coordinates all the educational funding sources for maximum coverage of educational needs, along with other types of funding to address supportive needs of students.

 Design a response format or structure to assist local communities in developing a local immigrant coordinating council to address the issues in their communities.



Provide in-services for community members and leaders on issues such as cultural diversity and leadership.

## V. CONCLUSION

Improving educational programs for immigrants is a priority for Illinois, since these programs can allow immigrants to integrate into society and contribute to our economy and culture more quickly and effectively. English language literacy and academic achievement are cornerstones for immigrants, providing the basis for acquisition of other knowledge and workforce skills. As the State contends with conflicting demands for limited resources, careful consideration must be given to weighing the benefits of investments in education against the costs associated with an under-educated population and under-skilled workforce. A focus on directing resources toward best practices and highly effective programs is needed; this implies a more efficient use of existing resources and reallocation of resources to meet priorities and maximize effectiveness.

Concrete recommendations have been set out in this paper for policy and programmatic changes that will enhance education for immigrants in the key educational arenas of early childhood education and family literacy; intermediate, middle, and secondary education; and adult education. A complete list of the recommendations contained in the report is replicated in Annex I. Several common issues and recommendations emerged across the three educational arenas examined.

Improving the quality of education for immigrants requires institutional flexibility that can be achieved through administrative leadership demonstrating a systemic commitment to implement educational programs that meet the needs of English language learners. State policies should demonstrate a commitment to address the needs of ELLs and allow for local flexibility to design programs that best serve ELLs. Schools should develop scheduling that best supports the learning needs of individual ELLs. Educational support outside of the regular school day should be expanded for Kindergarten- 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to help them build English and academic skills and complete homework assignments. Adult education programs should implement class times, locations and teaching approaches that accommodate working immigrants' busy schedules. They should also address common barriers to participation, such as transportation and childcare. Education programs should be available to immigrants of all ages. In particular, the State should make early childhood education available to all three and four year olds. Programs for 0-3 year olds should be expanded.

The State should encourage the development of language and cultural resources for school districts through existing regional systems. Educational institutions should work to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers to participation. They should identify and make use of language resources to transmit vital information to immigrants who do not speak English. In preschool through high school environments, the use of skilled interpreters and translated documents is essential when communicating with parents. Educational institutions should hire bilingual staff, develop linkages with immigrant communities and encourage teachers to acquire cross-cultural awareness to build connections with immigrant ELLs and the parents of young ELLs.

The State should gather information to identify what instructional approaches are most effective for ELLs. Current instructional programs do not fully address

many ELLs' learning needs in the areas of language and literacy. Successful programs must take into account the diversity and varying needs within the ELL population, as well as research-based instructional approaches.

Professional development entities, especially research universities, should work with the local school level to conduct research and document best practices. Educational programs, with the support of state policies and funding, should seek to replicate best practices.

Effectiveness will be improved through the integration of educational programs for immigrants into the mainstream educational and training programs. In order to enhance integration, more blended programming is needed from early childhood education through high school, to ensure that immigrant students benefit from the educational offerings and academic instruction provided to all students, including special education, gifted education, and vocational training. Furthermore, schools should plan for better transitioning between bilingual or ESL classes and mainstream classes both within an attendance center and between attendance centers when students move from preschool to kindergarten or elementary school to high school. Opportunities for joint activities between newcomers and established immigrants and between immigrants and mainstream students need to be expanded. Adult education programs need to expand course offerings that fully integrate language and work skills development. State level policy makers need to provide incentives to employers such as tax credits for employers who support workplace training for immigrants.

There is a shortage of teachers qualified to teach immigrants and inadequate training for new and existing teachers in working with bilingual and bicultural students. Teacher recruitment efforts should target immigrant communities and provide career ladder opportunities and support such as tuition scholarships to individuals with an interest in teaching. The state should review certification requirements to ensure that they do not contribute to the inadequate supply of qualified bilingual and ESL teachers in pre-kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Likewise, proposed professional standards for adult education teachers should be evaluated.

Teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities should include coursework in teaching ELLs and multicultural education as core components of all teacher education programs. Professional development entities should offer training in teaching ELLs to existing teachers, including mainstream pre-kindergarten through high school teachers as well as adult education teachers statewide. They should also use technology to increase distance education programs to reach larger numbers of potential teachers including those located in geographically isolated communities. Incentives should be offered to teachers to participate in training.

Adequate data collection is needed on immigrants and refugees to guide program and policy decisions. Policy makers need to institute requirements for the collection of data to document the need for programs, the characteristics of students, and the effectiveness of the instructional programs in schools. Educational programs need to systematically collect data, and, together with

professional development entities, a research agenda should be developed to guide data collection and analyze results.

The State should develop meaningful standards and outcome measurements for ELLs to track ELL student progress in all areas. It is essential that appropriate assessments be identified to measure ELL student abilities and performance. School children, in particular, should be assessed not only in the area of English language acquisition, but also in developmental and academic areas. The curriculum for ELLs should address both English language acquisition and indicated content areas. In the case of school children, a rigorous curriculum based on the Illinois Learning Standards is indicated. Schools should develop newcomer programs with specialized instruction to accommodate the needs of immigrant children who arrive with limited schooling in their native language.

Stakeholders at the state and local level must build partnerships to strengthen coordination of resources and programs available to immigrants in order to facilitate service delivery to families with multiple needs and to promote sharing of resources across institutional and geographic boundaries. Coordination is needed among providers of education, healthcare, employment programs and social services.

Policy makers should establish a state level coordination council and strengthen interagency connections in order to ensure improved coordination and effective distribution of resources across the state. The state should promote linkages between early childhood programs and adult education programs; between employment programs and adult education; and between schools and providers of social services, mental health services and health care. Locally newcomer centers should be established in school districts with significant numbers of recently arrived immigrant children with gaps in their education or other characteristics that put them at risk of failure in school. Newcomer centers provide comprehensive services to families through either co-location of multiple services referral to other programs.

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<sup>i</sup> Throughout the remainder of the report, the term “immigrants” will be used to refer to all foreign-born persons including those who immigrated as refugees.

<sup>ii</sup> Throughout the remainder of the report, the term “immigrants” will be used to refer to all foreign-born persons including those who immigrated as refugees.

<sup>iii</sup> David Mendell and Achy Obejas, “English on Wane in Illinois Households,” Chicago Tribune, August 6, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>iv</sup> Rob Paral, “Suburban Immigrant Communities: Assessment of Key Characteristics and Needs,” Chicago: Fund for Immigrants and Refugees, August 2000.

<sup>v</sup> This recommendation comes from the background paper prepared by the National Association for Bilingual Education, and is adopted from recommendations defined by the National Head Start Latino Leadership Network at its 1999 Summer Institute.

<sup>vi</sup> These recommendations on Standards and Outcome Measures for early childhood education and family literacy come from the background paper prepared by the National Association for Bilingual Education.

<sup>vii</sup> SCANS skills refer to a set up competency-based skills for work and life developed in 1990 by the U.S. Labor Department’s Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills.

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viii These recommendations related to data collection for adult education were adopted from Heide Spruck, *Keys to the Golden Door? Adult ESOL, Literacy and Employment Preparation* (Aguirre International, 2001) and were added subsequent to the public hearing in which the remainder of the recommendations in this report were developed.