

# Research Evidence Against Dismantling the U.S. Department of Education: **How to Protect and Improve Programs for English Learners**

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# Meet the Team



**Cara Jackson**  
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# Meet Our Guest Panelists



**Montserrat Garibay**  
Fmr. Asst. Dep. Secretary  
USED & Director OELA



**Megan Hopkins**  
Professor, UC San Diego



# Our Goal

Provide evidence-based research to inform and strengthen advocacy efforts against the dismantling of the Education Department





# Guiding Questions

What role should the federal government play in the delivery of educational opportunity?

How will dismantling the Education Department impact the quality and efficacy of programs that are supported by federal funding?

How effective have federal programs been in delivering on their intended goals to improve equity, expand opportunity, and support students facing particular challenges?

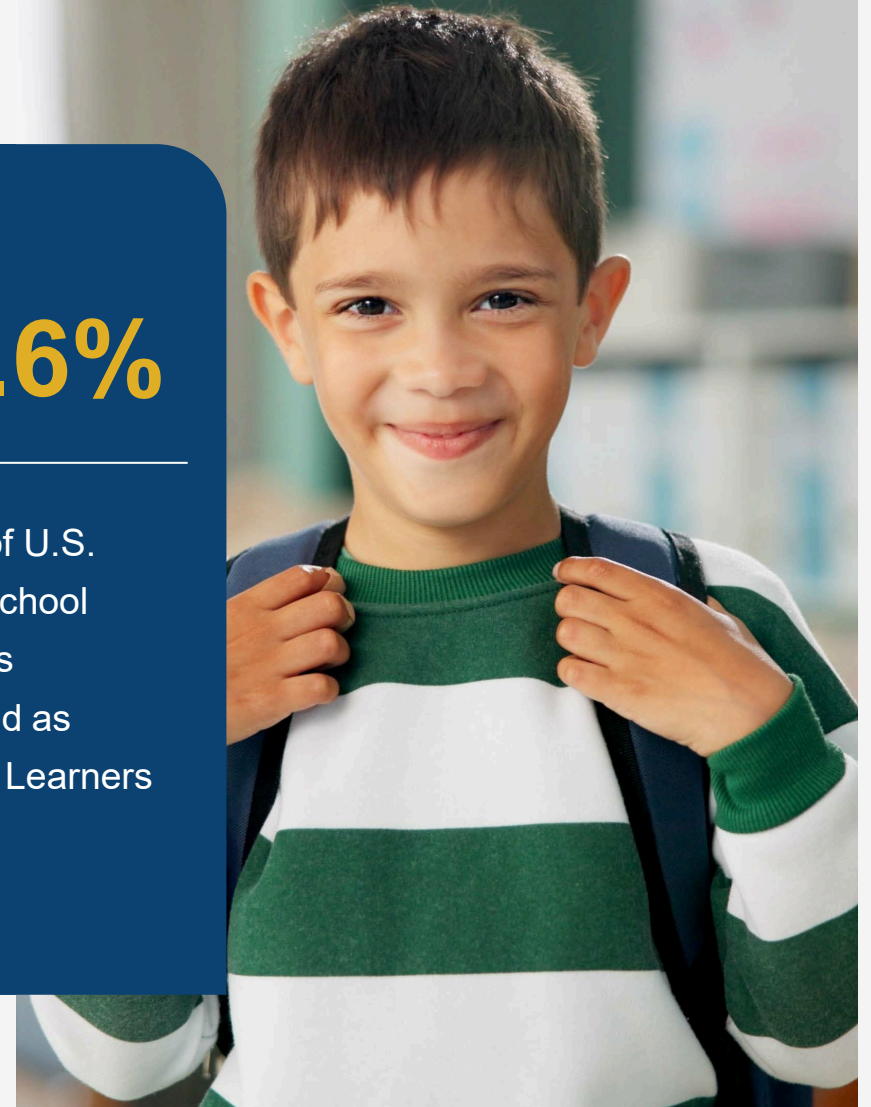


# Title III English Language Learners

- Title III supports English Learners and recent immigrants in public schools
- In FY25, \$890 million allocated to all 50 states
- Nearly all 5.3 million English Learners participate in Title III funded programs

**10.6%**

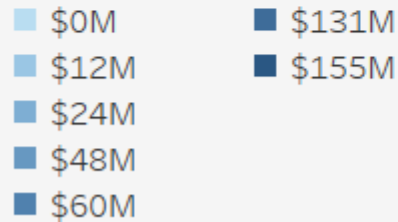
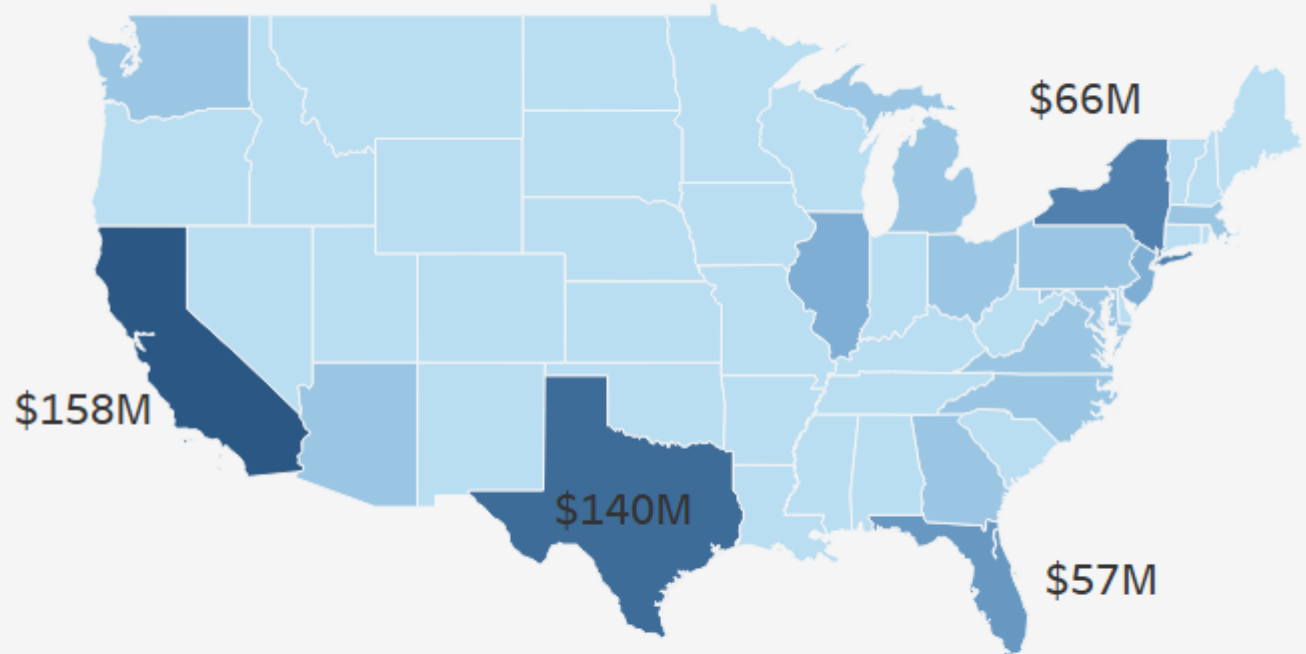
Share of U.S.  
public school  
students  
identified as  
English Learners



# Title III Funding, 2024

## Title III By State

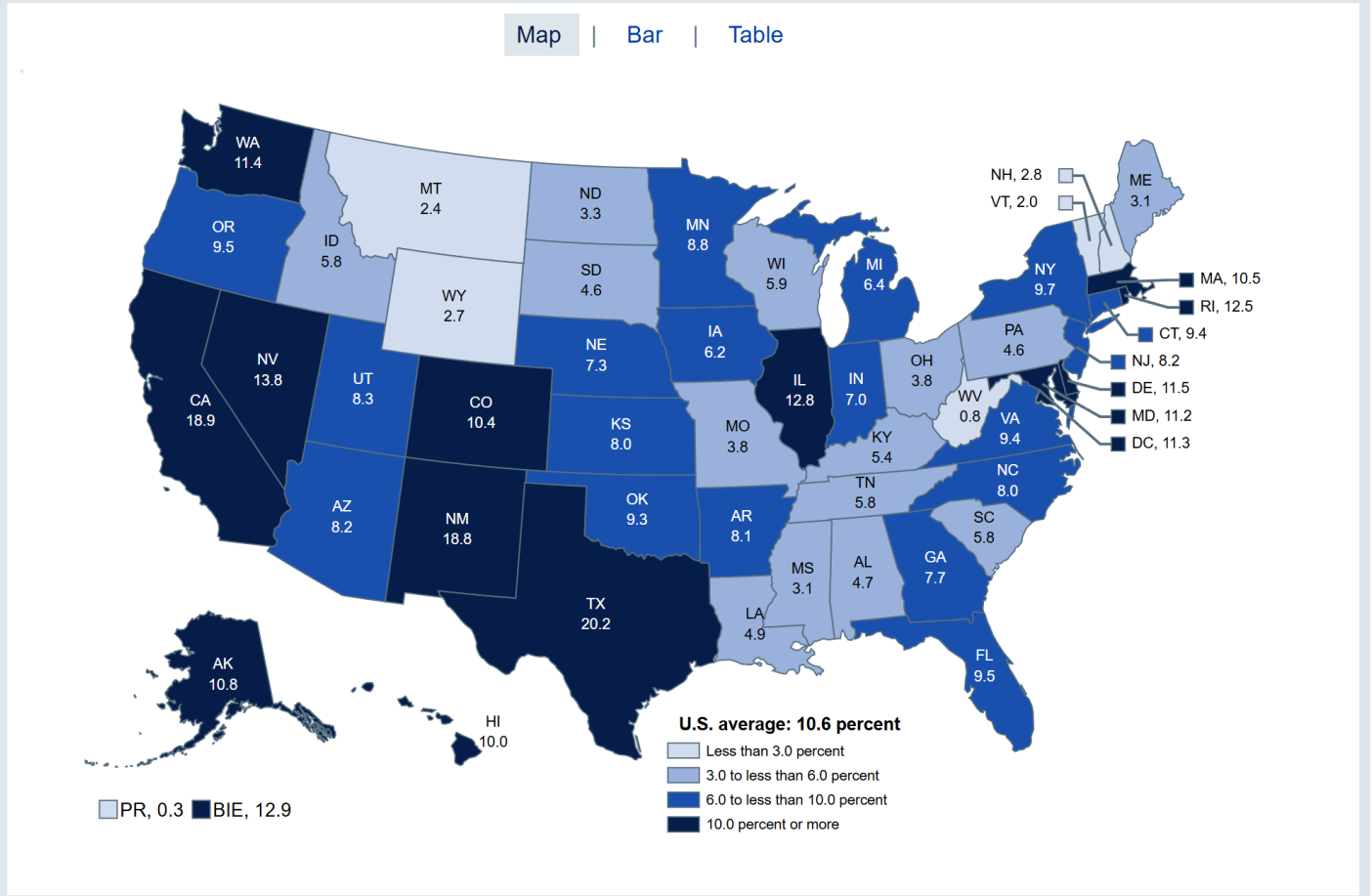
Four states – California, Texas, New York and Florida – receive about half of all Title III funding



# English Learners By State

States in the South and West have the highest proportions of English Learners

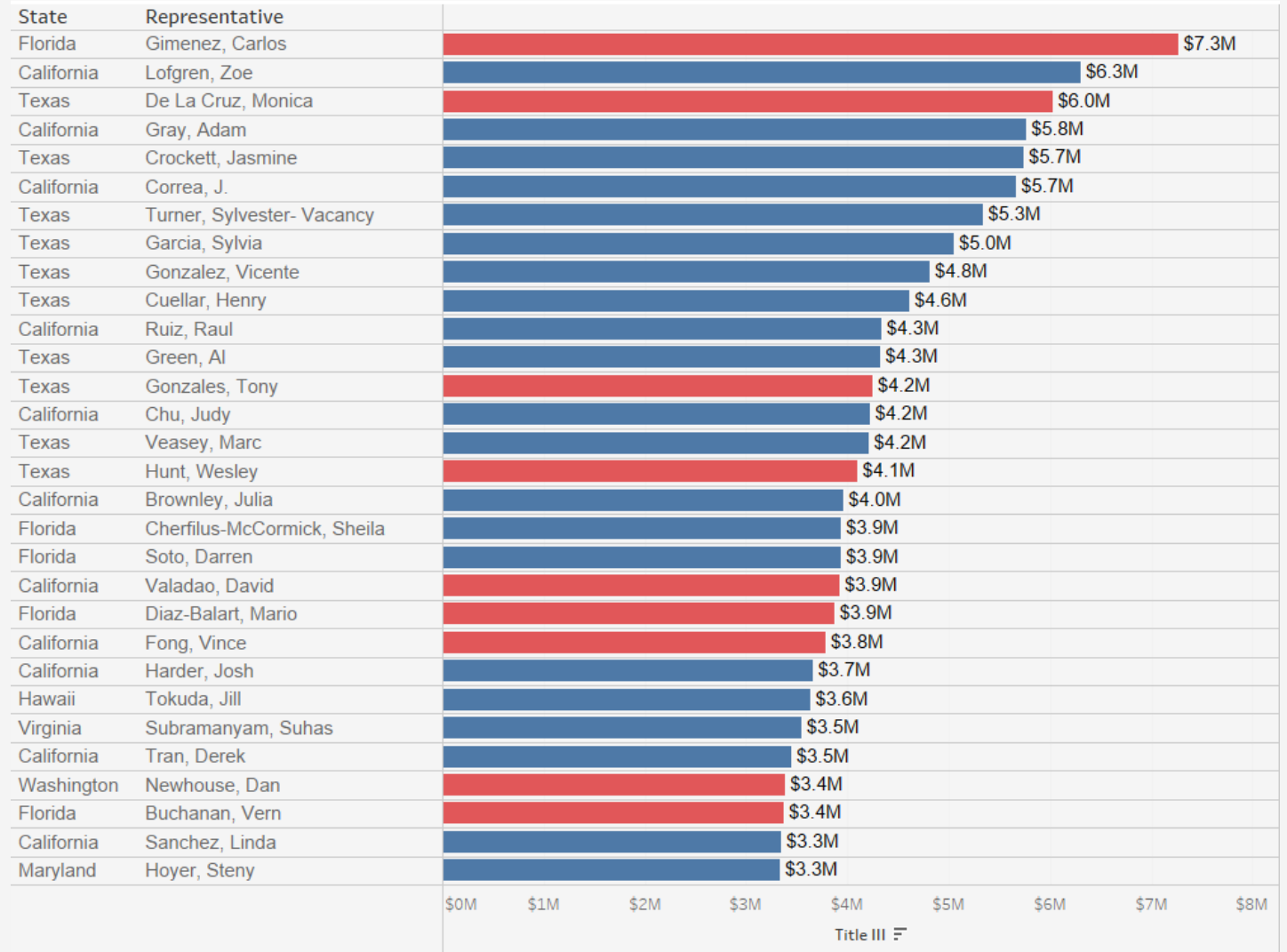
Figure 1. Percentage of public school students who were English learners (ELs), by state or jurisdiction: Fall 2021



# A Bipartisan Issue

The congressional districts that receive the most Title III funding are represented by both Republicans and Democrats

Title III Funding by Congressional District





# Threats to English Learners

## Executive Orders:

- Dismantling Education Department
- Limiting undocumented students access to public benefits
- Designating English as the official language

## Funding:

- President's FY26 budget request eliminates Title III
- Attempted impoundment of Title III funds for FY25

## DOGE:

- Massive staff cuts, including Office of English Language Acquisition & IES
- Research and evaluation projects terminated
- Hundreds of attorneys at OCR fired



# POLICY OVERVIEW AND FINDINGS





## TITLE III: English Language Acquisition

### What is the purpose and goals? What population is it meant to serve?

To ensure that English learners and recently arrived immigrant students...

1. Attain **English proficiency**
2. Achieve **academic content mastery** at the same level expected of all students

...by providing supplemental language instruction and support services.



## TITLE III: English Language Acquisition

# Three Core Activities

Language Instruction  
Educational Programs



Professional Development



Parent, Family and  
Community Engagement





## TITLE III: English Language Acquisition

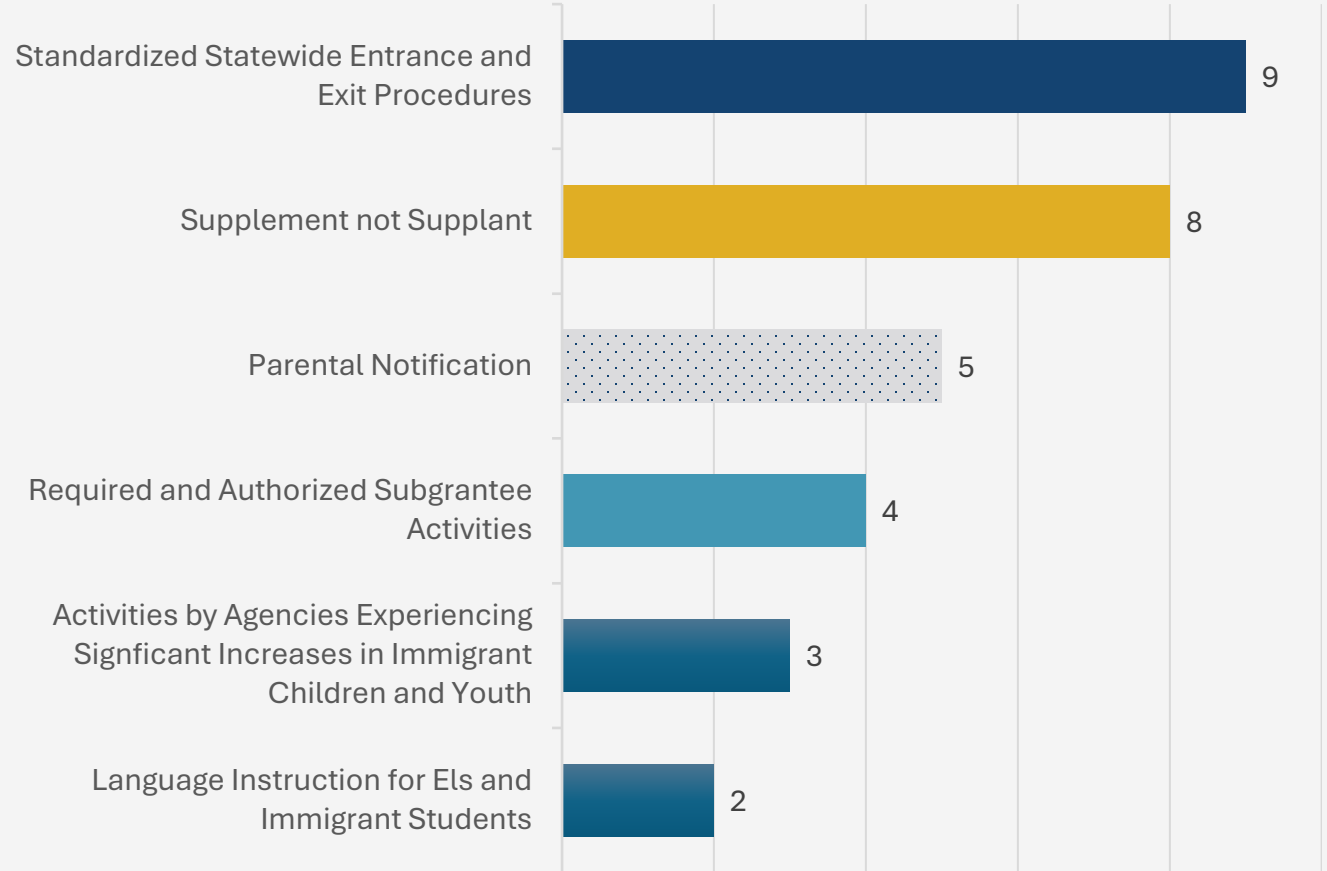
# How would the elimination of program monitoring and evaluation affect program quality?

- **Program monitoring** was oriented around compliance with Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and related civil rights laws
- The Government Accountability Office's ongoing monitoring reveals **persistent challenges** in ensuring Title III programs effectively serve English learners
- Without ongoing monitoring, state states may be **out of compliance** with the ESEA



# Recent Compliance Reports

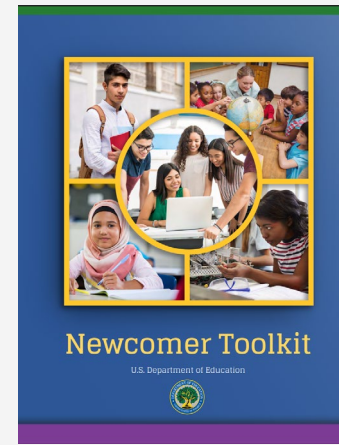
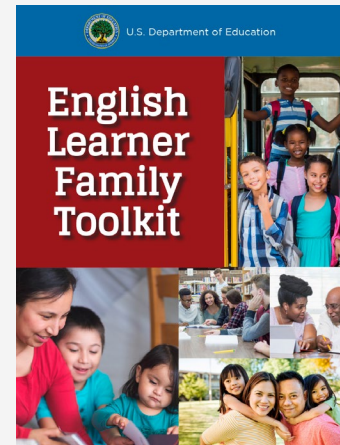
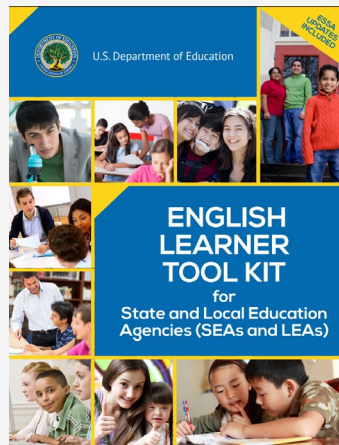
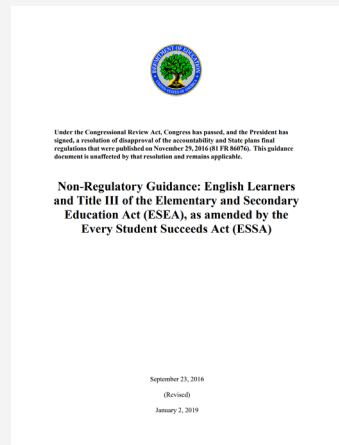
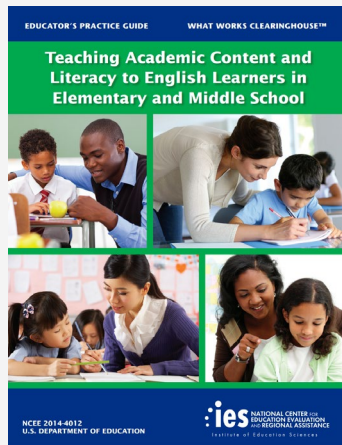
From 2018 through 2023,  
Education Department  
progress monitoring reports  
for 12 states flagged these  
areas for action steps:





## TITLE III: English Language Acquisition

**How will the dismantling of the Education Department impact the delivery and quality of programs?** The Education Department produces numerous resources to help states and districts serve English learners effectively.





## TITLE III: English Language Acquisition

# Moving Forward

Public opinion appears favorable toward the federal government playing a major role in providing funding for schools serving low-income students and students with special needs. A potential path forward could include:

- Increase dissemination of **evidence-based resources** from IES' What Works Clearinghouse and Regional Educational Labs
- Seek out areas of **agreement**, e.g., Education Department's new priority focus on high-impact tutoring
- States and districts will need to make **effective use of scarce dollars**. Outcomes based contracts can ensure both districts and providers are implementing programs effectively.



# RESEARCH SYNTHESIS





# Have federal programs for elementary and secondary education through Title III shown evidence of success in achieving program goals?

- Are there evidence-based programs and practices that **improve English proficiency** and academic learning among ELs?
- Are Title III funds used by school districts on **evidence-based** programs and practices?
- Are funding levels **adequate** for achieving Title III goals?



# Rapid Research Review

A systematic process designed to quickly assess the state of a field while minimizing bias in literature.

**500**

Search results

**23**

Research reviews

**51**

Empirical studies



## Research Synthesis

# Findings

There is much to be **improved** with respect to English Learner education in the US and **we know a lot** about how to do that.

It is **not clear** that Title III funds are being used to **support these practices**, a cancelled Title III evaluation could have provided answers.

Districts report significant **unmet need** for prepared EL teachers and all states use Title III funds to better **prepare their workforce** to support ELs.

Title III funding for English Learners and recent immigrants is **inadequate**.





# Are there evidence-based programs and practices that improve English proficiency and academic learning among ELs?



The rapid review **unequivocally** shows that there are many evidence-based practices that states and districts can employ to support English proficiency and academic learning.





# Are Title III funds used by LEAs on evidence-based programs and practices?

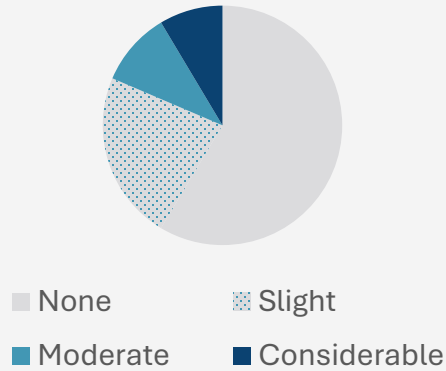


- GAO **compliance reports** reveal persistent challenges that states face in ensuring Title III programs effectively serve English learners.
- A 2012 **implementation study** found that Title III led to changes in standards, testing, accountability, and data systems for ELs, but that the policy should be refined to build capacity, improve teacher quality, etc. The 2019 follow-up was cancelled.
- There is considerable **unmet need** for **trained and prepared educators**, even though teacher professional development is in the top Title III grantee activities.



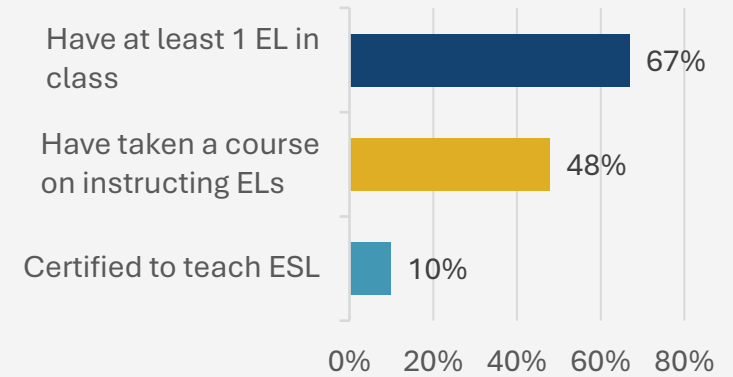
# Workforce Challenges

## ESL Teacher Shortage



**One-third** of district leaders are experiencing a **moderate or severe shortage** of ESL teachers. (RAND 2022)

## Teacher Training



**Most** teachers in the U.S. instruct EL students, but too few have received proper training. (Mavrogordato et al. 2024)



# Are funding levels adequate for achieving Title III goals?



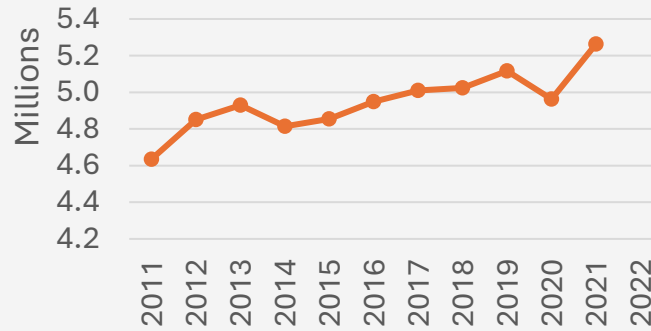
- Several studies examined the adequacy of Title III funding; **none** found it to be adequate.
- Title III officials and district administrators reported Title III funds are **helpful but insufficient** (2012 Implementation Study)



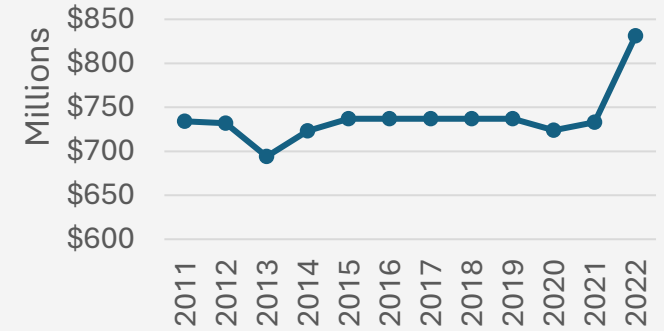
# Funding Challenges

Federal funding for ELs is not keeping pace with either the growth of the population or inflation.

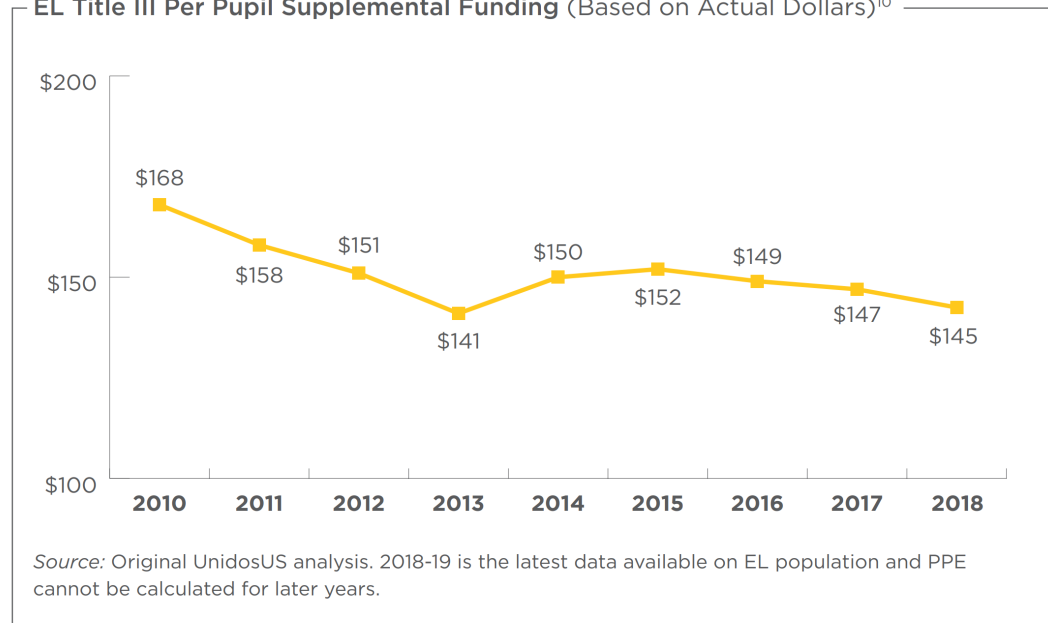
English Learners



Title III



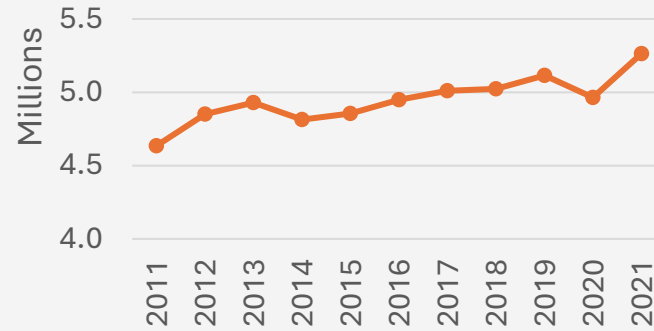
EL Title III Per Pupil Supplemental Funding (Based on Actual Dollars)<sup>10</sup>



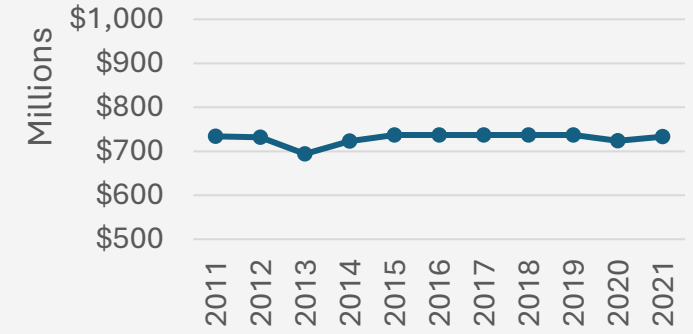
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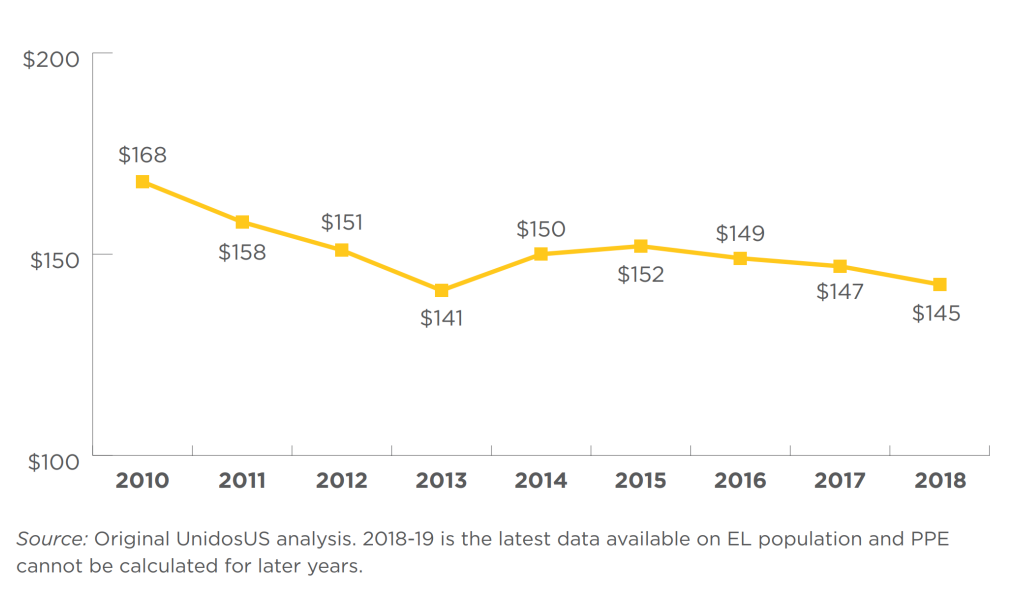
English Learners



Title III



EL Title III Per Pupil Supplemental Funding (Based on Actual Dollars)<sup>10</sup>





**Title III may be struggling to meet its goals due a lack of educator preparation and inadequate funding that has not kept pace with the growing EL population, but not because we lack evidence for what works to support English Learners and recent immigrants.**

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**KEY TAKEAWAY**



## Protecting English Learners

# Takeaways

There is promising research on evidence-based practices that can improve language acquisition and academic learning, and Title III funding has the potential to support that innovation, but...

- **Government oversight** is needed to ensure that states are complying with the rules of how that funding is used. Not all states are acting properly even with monitoring in place.
- The Department plays a critical role in **evaluating evidence and disseminating best practices**, a process that would be far less effective if decentralized.
- Title III funding is **inadequate** to address the growing English Learner population. Maintaining, or ideally **increasing, funding** will benefit all students by giving teachers effective strategies to support English Learners in all classrooms.





# Thank you

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