A REPORT
TO THE
ARIZONA LEGISLATURE

Division of School Audits

Special Study

Arizona English Language Learner Program

Fiscal Year 2010

June • 2011
Report No. 11-06

STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Debra K. Davenport
Auditor General

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STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

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AUDITOR GENERAL

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June 21, 2011

Members of the Arizona Legislature

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer, Governor

The Honorable John Huppenthal, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, *Arizona English Language Learner Program, Fiscal Year 2010*. This special study was conducted pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes §§15-756.12 and 41-1279.03. I am also transmitting within this report a copy of the Report Highlights to provide a quick summary for your convenience.

Statute requires Arizona schools to comply with the State's Structured English Immersion models to teach English Language Learner (ELL) students. This report describes the Arizona Department of Education's monitoring efforts and the extent to which school districts and charter schools have complied with the state-mandated models. It also discusses the extent to which ELL students have made progress in their English language proficiency since the State adopted the models in fiscal year 2008 and the limitations on attributing such progress to the models.

As outlined in its response, the Arizona Department of Education agrees with all of the findings and recommendations.

My staff and I will be pleased to discuss or clarify items in the report.

This report will be released to the public on June 22, 2011.

Sincerely,

Debbie Davenport
Auditor General

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STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Arizona English Language Learner Program

REPORT
HIGHLIGHTS
SPECIAL STUDY

Our Conclusion

Models for the English Language Learner programs were adopted in fiscal year 2008; however, almost two-thirds of the school districts and charter schools reviewed had not fully implemented the Structured English Immersion (SEI) models by fiscal year 2010. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) monitors implementation, and given the level of noncompliance, it should exercise more oversight. Although more students have attained English proficiency since the State adopted the SEI models in fiscal year 2008, other factors could explain the higher reclassification rates, and there are significant data limitations regarding program implementation and student outcomes.

2011

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English Language Learner Program

The structure of Arizona's English Language Learner (ELL) programs is primarily based on Laws 2006, Ch. 4. The law specified that an ELL Task Force develop models for ELL instruction, that school districts and charter schools (districts) adopt one or more of the models, and that ADE provide technical support and monitor compliance with the State's models.

Determining ELL status and assessing student progress—School districts identify ELL students through a home language survey and an English language proficiency test. A student identified as not English proficient is then placed in an ELL program.

ELL students are tested annually to determine progress in becoming proficient in English. After a student is classified as proficient, the student is retested annually for the following 2 years to monitor whether the student remains proficient and, if not, re-enters an ELL program.

ELL students are those whose native language is not English and who have difficulty reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending English such that it limits success in the classroom.

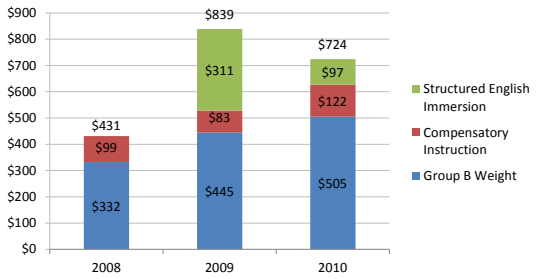
SEI models require 4 daily hours of English language instruction—School districts must use Structured English Immersion (SEI) models, developed by the ELL Task Force, to teach ELL students. These models require students to receive 4 hours of English language development per day in an SEI classroom setting with other ELL students. The models were designed so that ELL students could become proficient in 1 year.

In schools with 20 or fewer ELL students, the district may create Individualized Language Learner Plans (ILLPs) with some or all of the English language instruction occurring in a mainstream classroom setting. Some districts provide a combination of the SEI and ILLP instruction.

Fewer ELL students in Arizona—Most Arizona ELL students speak Spanish and are concentrated in the elementary grades. The ELL student population has decreased by 38 percent between fiscal years 2008 and 2010, from about 170,000 to 106,000. The number has declined in this period because ELL students became proficient at higher rates, 15 percent withdrew from the program, and there were 35 percent fewer new ELL students.

ELL funding doubles then drops along with enrollment—Funding for ELL programs comes from state and federal monies. State funding is based on three funding formulas. The amount almost doubled between fiscal years 2008 and 2009 and then dropped along with program enrollment in fiscal year 2010.

State Funding for ELL Programs Per ELL Student[1] Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010



[1] For comparability across fiscal years, each student is based on an average student enrollment on October 1, December 15, and February 1.

Structured English Immersion models not fully implemented

A review of the ELL programs of 73 districts and charter schools in fiscal year 2010 found that:

- 63 percent had not fully implemented all SEI model requirements
- 45 percent did not provide 4 hours of English language development
- 38 percent did not provide grammar instruction
- 27 percent did not have qualified ELL teachers
- 25 percent did not group students properly with similar proficiency levels

Successful districts reported that they overcame challenges to implementing the program by monitoring frequently, ensuring teacher qualifications, and training teachers.

ADE monitors about half of the ELL districts annually and sends requests for corrective action plans to districts in noncompliance. Since fiscal year 2008, 74 percent (88 of 119) of ADE-monitored districts received corrective action letters. Of those 88, 67 received a follow-up review and 33 required further corrective action. In order to enforce compliance, the law permits the State Board of Education (Board) to withhold SEI funds. However, ADE has not yet reported noncompliant districts to the Board.

Recommendation—ADE should report noncompliant districts to the Board for possible withholding of SEI funds.

Structured English Immersion models' impact unknown

Because the SEI model programs are relatively new and not fully implemented at many districts, data must be gathered over a longer period of time to identify the impact of those programs on ELL students.

Proficiency rate increased—In fiscal year 2008, when the SEI models were introduced, 22 percent of ELL students were reclassified as proficient. In fiscal years 2009 and 2010, reclassification rates increased to 31 percent state-wide. However, the progress level of students who did not become proficient remained about the same.

Status of ELL Students Who Did Not Reach Proficiency
Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010

Fiscal Year	Unknown[1]	Regressed	Maintained	Progressed
2008	28%	2%	39%	31%
2009	20%	3%	50%	27%
2010	22%	6%	43%	29%

[1] Includes students who did not take a second test, such as students who withdrew from the program and those who were not in school on the assessment date.

Several factors, other than SEI models, may be responsible for increased proficiency:

- Increased emphasis on English language development and increased program monitoring
- Greater percentages of students starting at the intermediate proficiency level in fiscal years 2009 and 2010 than in fiscal year 2008

Because data is either unavailable or unreliable, the effect of SEI models is unknown—Reliable and consistent information on program implementation and program outcomes is needed to assess the SEI models' effectiveness. However, we identified inaccurate rosters of ELL students and inaccurate reporting of program types used by districts. Further, data on the quality and quantity of instruction is not available. For example, ELL students are supposed to receive 4 hours of English language development instruction, but there is no state-wide data on whether they actually receive those required hours. In addition, information on program outcomes in the model programs' initial years is not consistent and is potentially unreliable. Specifically, the Arizona Instrument for Measuring Success (AIMS) changed during these years, and adequacy of the State's English proficiency test is under federal review.

Recommendation—ADE should work with districts to improve reliability of program participation data and collect additional data on program participation and student outcomes.

Arizona English Language Learner Program

A copy of the full report is available at:
www.azauditor.gov
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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS
SPECIAL STUDY
June 2011

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Arizona Revised Statutes §15-756.12 requires the Auditor General to conduct a biennial audit of the effectiveness of the State's English Language Learner (ELL) program. This study, the first conducted by this Office in response to this requirement, addresses the following two issues:

- The extent to which school districts and charter schools[1] have implemented state-mandated instructional models—called Structured English Immersion (SEI) models.
- The extent to which ELL students have made progress in their English language proficiency since the SEI models were adopted in fiscal year 2008, and the limitations on attributing such progress to the state-mandated models.

State's ELL program mandated by 2006 law

ELL students are those whose native language is not English or whose English proficiency is significantly affected by another language and who are not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English (see textbox). The structure of ELL programs in Arizona is based primarily on Laws 2006, Ch. 4. The law specified that an ELL Task Force develop state-wide SEI models for ELL instruction and identify the minimum amount of English language development per day for all models. The law also specified that first-year ELL students were to receive a minimum of 4 hours of English language development per day. The SEI models were to be designed so that most ELL students could become English-proficient within one year. The SEI models were adopted in September 2007.

The law also directed the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to report ELL information collected from districts, provide technical support to districts, and monitor districts' compliance with the models.

English Language Learner

An individual who:

- Is 3 to 21 years old;
- Is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary or secondary public school;
- Has a native language other than English or whose English proficiency is significantly impacted by a language other than English; and
- Has speaking, reading, writing, or comprehension problems sufficient to limit success in English language classrooms, on state assessments, and participating in society.

[1] For consistency, school districts and charter schools are both referred to as "districts" in this report.

Program structure and requirements

Arizona law specifies how districts determine ELL student eligibility, progress, and English proficiency. In addition, the state-adopted SEI models specify the types of programs that districts can use to teach ELL students. Specifically:

Determining eligibility and assessing students' progress—Arizona districts have a two-step approach for determining whether a student should be placed in an ELL program. First, districts identify potential ELL students through a home language survey taken when students enroll in school. If the survey indicates that a student primarily speaks a language other than English, the district then applies the second step: it administers a state-adopted English language proficiency test, called the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA).[1] Even if the initial survey indicates that a student primarily speaks English, the student can also be assessed with AZELLA if teachers or other school officials believe that the student is not English-proficient and if the student's parent or guardian consents. Students identified as not English-proficient by AZELLA are placed in an ELL program.

Districts also use AZELLA to assess ELL students' progress in becoming proficient in English. Using AZELLA, districts can re-test ELL students up to two times per school year. When students are reclassified through AZELLA as English-proficient, they exit the ELL program. Once they leave the program, they are retested annually for 2 years to monitor proficiency. If the monitoring tests show that a student is no longer English-proficient, the student re-enters the program, subject to parental consent.

The AZELLA assessment has changed since its initial adoption in 2007. In this report, the version used between fiscal years 2007 and 2009 is referred to as AZELLA1, and the version used beginning in fiscal year 2010 is referred to as AZELLA2. Both assessments include subtests that assess students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking comprehension of English.

Adopting programs that meet state requirements—In September 2007, the ELL Task Force adopted its research-based SEI models, which are required to be used in all Arizona schools unless, on a case-by-case basis, the Task Force approves a district's alternative approach. The models include requirements for the length and content of English language instruction, student placement in structured English immersion classrooms, and teacher qualifications (see textbox on page 3 for an overview of the requirements).

During fiscal year 2010, Arizona districts were operating two main types of ELL programs to meet the SEI models' requirements:

- **Structured English Immersion (SEI) classroom—**This approach places all students who are not English-proficient, as determined by AZELLA, into their own classroom for ELL instruction. Each day, students are required to be provided 4 hours of English language development instruction. English language development instruction

[1] Prior to fiscal year 2010, the home language survey also identified a student for AZELLA testing if any member of the student's household spoke a language other than English.

emphasizes concepts such as semantics, syntax, word structure, and pronunciation. The SEI models also require that, when possible, districts should group ELL students in SEI classrooms based on grade and similar English proficiency levels. Further, SEI classroom teachers should be highly qualified, according to requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and have proper SEI training, according to Arizona law. Classroom and instructional material should also be in English and reflect the students' English language development goals.

- **Individualized Language Learner Plan (ILLP)**—Schools with 20 or fewer ELL students within a three-grade span may choose to create ILLPs for those students. These students are placed in classrooms with English-proficient students. The ILLPs should detail how each individual ELL student will receive the required 4 hours of English language development instruction in this setting and identify the teacher(s) responsible for the instruction. Some districts that provide English language development instruction through ILLPs also provide additional English language development instruction to students individually or in small groups in an SEI classroom setting. The individual and small group instruction is meant to provide ELL students with some instructional time from a highly qualified teacher, who can further support these students' English language development.

Structured English Immersion Model Requirements:

- **English language development hours and components**—ELL students receive 4 hours of English language development instruction daily in the following instructional areas: Oral English and Conversation, Grammar, Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary. All classroom instruction and instructional materials should be in English.
- **Grouping Requirements and ILLPs**—ELL students are placed into SEI classrooms according to ELL proficiency level in class sizes not exceeding the non-ELL average class size in the district. Schools with 20 or fewer ELL students within a three-grade span may choose to create individualized language learner plans (ILLPs) for those students. These students may be placed in classrooms with English-proficient students. The ILLPs should detail how each individual student will receive the 4 hours of English language development instruction in this setting.
- **Teacher Qualifications**—All teachers in SEI classrooms must have an SEI, English as a Second Language, or Bilingual Endorsement and be "Highly Qualified." Endorsed teachers have completed certain subject area classes, such as the methods for teaching a foreign language. Highly Qualified teachers have sufficient college education in their teaching areas and have passed required Arizona educator proficiency assessments. Additionally, SEI teachers at the middle school and high school level must be Highly Qualified in English or Language Arts.

English Language Learners in Arizona

Arizona has a higher proportion of ELL students than nearly all other states. Nation-wide, there were approximately 4.5 million ELL students in 2009, composing 9 percent of the total student enrollment for kindergarten through grade 12. By comparison, Arizona's ELL students composed

13 percent of the total student population in 2009 and 10 percent in 2010. In 2009, Arizona was one of five states with the highest concentration of ELL students, along with California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas. Analysis of ADE data shows the following about Arizona's ELL students:

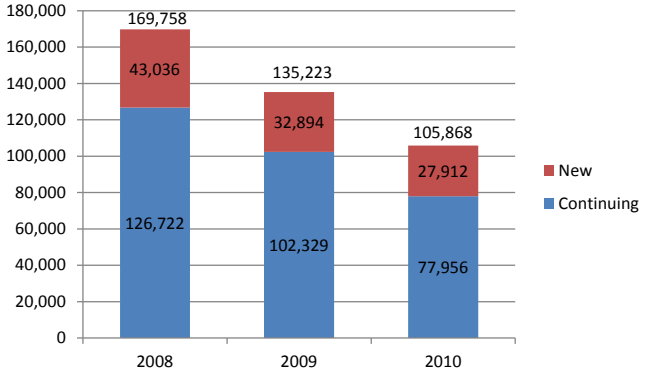
- **Most ELL students speak Spanish—**Across the State, ELL students collectively speak more than 66 different languages, but Spanish predominates. According to the home language survey, in fiscal year 2010, 80.4 percent of Arizona's ELL students spoke Spanish. The next most commonly spoken languages other than English were Navajo (1.4 percent), Arabic (1.1 percent), and Vietnamese (0.9 percent). Eleven percent of Arizona's ELL students reported a home language of English, but a prior Office of the Auditor General report noted that a similar percentage reported by ELL students in 2007 was likely overstated.[1]

- **ELL students concentrated in elementary grades—**In Arizona, the majority of ELL students are in elementary grades. The percentage of Arizona's ELL students diminishes consistently from kindergarten through twelfth grade. In fiscal year 2010, 49 percent of Arizona's ELL students were in kindergarten through grade 2, 27 percent were in grades 3 through 5, 13 percent were in grades 6 through 8, and 11 percent were in grades 9 through 12. Over 20 percent of Arizona's ELL students were kindergarteners, while fewer than 3 percent of ELL students were in grade 12.

- **ELL population has decreased significantly—**As shown in Figure 1, Arizona's state-wide ELL population decreased by 63,890 students, or 38 percent, between fiscal years 2008 and 2010. The decreases can be attributed to a reduction in new ELL students entering the program, an increase in the percentage of students being reclassified as proficient, and the high number of continuing ELL students who withdrew from the program for other reasons. Specifically:

  - **Fewer new ELL students—**In fiscal year 2008, about 43,000 new ELL students entered the program, compared to 28,000 new students in fiscal year 2010, a 35 percent decline. In contrast, Arizona's total student population of about 1 million students increased by about 1 percent during this period. The cause for the significant decrease in the new ELL student population is beyond the scope of this study. Although it is possible that a fiscal year 2010 reduction in the number of questions

Figure 1: ELL Student Population
Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of ELL students' participation and proficiency data for fiscal years 2008 through 2010 provided by ADE.

[1] *Baseline Study of Arizona's English Language Learner Programs and Data, Fiscal Year 2007.*

asked in the home language survey could have resulted in an underidentification of new ELL students, it likely did not. The decline in new ELLs was greater between fiscal years 2008 and 2009, when the home survey still included questions about language(s) spoken by family members. Further, as previously noted, even if the student's home language is reported as English, the student may be identified by teachers or other district officials and be tested to determine English language proficiency.

- **More students reclassified as proficient—**In fiscal year 2008, 22 percent of ELL students were reclassified as proficient and exited the program. In both fiscal years 2009 and 2010, the reclassification rate was 31 percent. As discussed in Finding 2, it is not clear whether the higher reclassification rate is due to the state-wide SEI models or to other factors.

- **Many students withdrew from program—**In fiscal year 2008, 18 percent of ELL students withdrew from the program and did not return in the subsequent year because they moved out of state, dropped out of school, or their parents or guardians waived their participation in the program. In fiscal year 2009, 12 percent of students withdrew from the program and did not return in 2010.

Funding from several sources

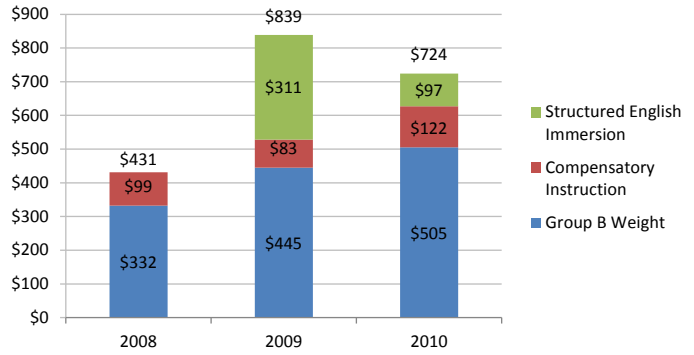
Funding for ELL programs is potentially available from several state and federal sources. First, by reporting their number of ELL students to ADE, districts are eligible for additional monies for ELL programs through the State's school funding formula (known as ELL Group B Weight monies) and the federal Title III program. Second, districts may submit budget requests to ADE for monies to cover the incremental costs of implementing their SEI models (see textbox for a definition of incremental costs). However, if a district's ELL Group B Weight monies are sufficient to cover the incremental costs of its SEI model, no additional SEI monies are awarded through the budget request process. Third, districts may submit budget requests to ADE for monies to implement Compensatory Instruction programs—programs that provide additional English language development instruction outside of the normal school day, such as before- and after-school tutoring and summer school.

Incremental costs as defined by A.R.S. §15-756.01 are costs associated with an SEI model that are in addition to the normal cost of conducting programs for English proficient students. These typically include costs for additional SEI classroom teachers and SEI teacher training.

State funding for ELL programs underwent several substantial changes between fiscal years 2008 and 2010, as shown in Figure 2 on page 6. With the addition of SEI monies in fiscal year 2009, the per-student ELL funding almost doubled over the prior fiscal year. Although the ELL Task Force's SEI models were adopted in fiscal year 2008, districts did not receive any SEI funding that year. However, districts received approximately $70 million of funding, or $431 per ELL student, from the State's Group B Weight monies and Compensatory Instruction grants. In fiscal year 2009, districts received nearly $41 million, or $311 per ELL student in SEI funding,

$445 per student in Group B Weight monies, and $83 per student in Compensatory Instruction grants.

Figure 2: State Funding for ELL Programs Per ELL Student[1] Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010



[1] For comparability across fiscal years, each student is based on an average student enrollment on October 1, December 15, and February 1.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the Grants Management Enterprise system data, Group B Weight funding, and ELL students' participation and proficiency data for fiscal years 2008 through 2010 provided by ADE.

Total per-student ELL funding dropped in fiscal year 2010 because of a drop in SEI funding. In fiscal year 2010, total state funding for districts' ELL programs was over $67 million, or $724 per ELL student. This per-student amount included $97 in SEI funding, $505 in Group B Weight monies, and $122 in Compensatory Instruction grants. For fiscal year 2010 SEI awards, ADE increased the maximum number of students in a 3-grade band who qualify for ILLPs from 16 students to 20 students. This policy change increased the number of ELL students eligible for ILLPs and therefore reduced the number of SEI-funded teachers.

FINDING 1

Most districts reviewed have not fully implemented State's SEI program models; improved oversight needed

School districts' and charter schools' adoption of state-required Structured English Immersion (SEI) models for their English Language Learner (ELL) programs remains a work in progress, and additional oversight appears necessary to accomplish the task. In fiscal year 2010, almost two-thirds, or 46 of the 73 districts and charter schools (districts) reviewed either by the Auditor General's Office or the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), had not fully implemented the SEI models. For example, nearly one-half of the reviewed districts failed to provide 4 daily hours of English language development, a key requirement of the SEI models. Other deficiencies included failing to group students properly, provide qualified teachers, provide required instructional components of English language development, or provide proper Individual Language Learner Plans (ILLPs). Further, since fiscal year 2008, ADE has conducted 119 monitoring visits and given 88 ELL programs corrective action plans to address the districts' deficiencies in implementing the SEI models. Thirty-three of the 88 noncompliant districts were still out of compliance when they were reviewed again the following year. Although it is required by statute to report these continuing noncompliant districts to the State Board of Education for possible withholding of SEI monies, ADE has not done so. Carrying out this responsibility is needed not only to comply with statute, but also to help ensure districts are implementing state requirements.

Almost two-thirds of programs reviewed did not fully comply with SEI models

In fiscal year 2010, auditors and ADE monitoring staff reviewed the ELL programs at 73 districts that varied in size, type, and percentage of ELL students.[1] Forty-six of the 73 districts reviewed, or 63 percent, had not fully implemented all of the SEI models' requirements (see Appendix, Table 5, page a-1). Specifically, as shown in Table 1 on page 8, problems included offering insufficient hours of instruction, not grouping students as required by statute, and not ensuring that teachers and instructional content met model requirements. Some district officials reported challenges to implementing the model requirements but one district in particular indicated that staff development and program monitoring are critical to successful program implementation.

[1] In the 2008 *Baseline Study of Arizona's English Language Learner Programs and Data, Fiscal Year 2007* (*Baseline Study*), auditors reviewed 18 districts' compliance with the SEI models. As a followup to that report, in fiscal year 2010, auditors visited 10 districts included in the original study and reviewed ADE's monitoring notes for the remaining 8 districts. Auditors also reviewed the monitoring notes for the additional 55 districts monitored by ADE in fiscal year 2010. For additional information on the methodology used to review implementation status, see the Appendix, page a-1.

Table 1: Number of Reviewed Districts Not Meeting Certain SEI Models' Requirements
Fiscal Year 2010
(Unaudited)

	Noncompliant programs within the 73 programs reviewed	
SEI models' requirements	**Number**	**Percentage**
4 daily hours of English language development	33	45%
Proper ELL student grouping	18	25%
Highly qualified teachers with SEI endorsements	20	27%
English language development instructional components covered	28	38%

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of fiscal year 2010 ELL student schedules, student and teacher files, observations of ELL classrooms, interview with program staff, survey responses provided by district program officials, and monitoring data and letters collected and prepared by ADE.

Thirty-three districts failed to schedule 4 hours of English language development—In fiscal year 2010, 33 of the 73 districts failed to schedule the required 4 hours of English language development instruction. Further, for the 40 districts that scheduled 4 hours, weak program controls meant that auditors or ADE monitoring staff could not determine whether the 4 scheduled hours of English language development were consistently provided to all ELL students, despite classroom visitations and reviews of student schedules, class rosters, and lesson plans. Auditors' interviews with district officials determined that many district ELL coordinators do not regularly visit classrooms or monitor whether teachers adhere to lesson plans that meet SEI model requirements.

Eighteen districts did not properly group ELL students—Auditors' comparisons of SEI class rosters to student lists with ELL proficiency and grade levels found that 18 of the 73 districts did not meet the requirements to group students with similar proficiency levels. Depending on the number of ELL students in each grade and proficiency level, the SEI models require programs to group students with similar proficiency levels. For example, at one of the districts monitored by ADE, there were two schools where the class rosters indicated that SEI classrooms should have been formed. However, those ELL students were placed in a mainstream classroom with non-ELL students and provided 4 hours of English language development through the use of an ILLP.

Twenty districts had teachers who did not meet model requirements—Twenty of the 73 districts had at least one SEI teacher who did not meet the SEI teacher requirements. The SEI model requires all SEI teachers to have an endorsement for SEI, English as a Second Language, or bilingual instruction and to be "highly qualified"—that is, to have sufficient college education in their teaching areas and have passed required Arizona educator proficiency assessments. Teachers that lack such additional training may not be familiar with the teaching methods and instructional content that is most appropriate for ELL students.

Twenty-eight districts did not offer some of the required instructional content—Twenty-eight of the 73 districts did not provide grammar instruction, a key instructional component of the SEI model. According to the SEI models, SEI classrooms must provide English language development instruction aligned with state-adopted language standards and skills. According to ADE officials, grammatical instruction delivered through the state-adopted Discrete Skills Inventory is a key component of the 4-hour requirement of the SEI models. The Discrete Skills Inventory provides a road map to teaching grammar across grade levels and includes parts of speech and grammar skills.

Districts report challenges to, and solutions for, implementing the models—Districts cited various challenges to complying with the SEI models, including finding and training SEI teachers and ensuring that ILLPs and SEI lesson plans meet the 4-hour requirement. For example, officials at a rural district indicated that they struggle to find mainstream teachers, and finding teachers with SEI endorsements was even more difficult. An official at another district was skeptical whether mainstream teachers could integrate the required 4 hours of English language development for their ELL students on ILLPs in mainstream classes. Such challenges can be difficult, but districts have found ways to deal with them. In particular, program officials at a district that fully implemented the program in 2008 stressed that professional development and oversight of staff were the biggest factors that aided program compliance. Other districts may be able to achieve similar results by following the steps they suggested, including:

- **Monitoring of SEI classrooms—**At this district, every SEI teacher's classroom is observed 3-4 times per month by either the district's ELL Director or an instructional specialist. Each teacher's lesson plans are reviewed for model compliance, and the teacher receives feedback on instructional strategies.
- **Monitoring of ILLPs—**The ELL Director also selects and monitors the mainstream teachers who have students on ILLPs.
- **Teacher training and qualifications—**The 60-hour training for SEI endorsement was spread across 3 years for each teacher to ensure retention and relevance of training. Finally, the district provides ongoing ELL training for teachers who are already SEI-endorsed. In fiscal year 2011, the district has scheduled 8 supplemental trainings for its ELL teachers.

ADE monitors implementation, but does not report noncompliant programs to the State Board of Education

ADE is required to monitor ELL programs each year, issue a corrective action letter if a district's program is noncompliant, and conduct annual follow-up visits until the district corrects program deficiencies. Between fiscal years 2008 and 2010, 88 (74 percent) of the 119 ADE-monitored districts failed to comply with one or more of the model requirements and 33 of these had not corrected all deficiencies by the annual followup. As required by statute, ADE should report districts in continuing noncompliance to the State Board of Education (Board), but it has not done so.

By statute, ADE monitors different categories of ELL programs—Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-756.08, ADE is required to monitor the ELL program of at least 32 districts and charter schools each year. These districts are categorized into three different groups based primarily on the number of ELL students in the program:

- **Category 1—**On a yearly basis, ADE is required to monitor at least 12 school districts or charter schools with the highest population of ELLs in the State. Each district or charter school is monitored at least once every 4 years.

- **Category 2—**On a yearly basis, ADE is required to monitor at least 10 school districts or charter schools that are not included in category one.

- **Category 3—**On a yearly basis, ADE is required to monitor at least 10 school districts or charter schools that are not required to provide instruction for ELLs for a majority of their grade levels.

If ADE finds that a program has not sufficiently implemented the SEI models, the district is given a corrective action letter that outlines its program's deficiencies. The district is required to create a corrective action plan that details how it will become compliant. ADE then performs follow-up monitoring visits each year until the district has corrected all of its deficiencies.

Majority of districts failed to comply with one or more requirements—Auditors' analysis of ADE's monitoring data for fiscal years 2008 through 2010 shows that the majority of districts ADE reviewed required corrective actions. As shown in Table 2, ADE has monitored 119 districts since fiscal year 2008.[1] Of these 119 districts, 88, or 74 percent, failed to comply with one or more of the SEI models' requirements and were given corrective action letters between fiscal years 2008 and 2010.

Table 2: Number of ELL Programs by Monitoring Outcome and Type of Monitoring Visit
Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010
(Unaudited)

	Categorical monitoring visits		Follow-ups	
Fiscal year	Number conducted	Number requiring corrective action	Number conducted	Number showing further corrective action needed
2008	34	22		
2009	51	45	22	14
2010	34	21	45	19
Total	**119**	**88**	**67**	**33**

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of fiscal year 2008 through 2010 monitoring data and letters collected and prepared by ADE.

[1] According to ADE officials, besides the 32 districts required by statute, ADE monitored an additional 19 districts and charter schools in fiscal year 2009 to ensure that the programs with the highest population of ELL students were implementing the models as early as possible.

The table also shows that districts do not necessarily bring themselves into compliance when corrective actions are pointed out. ADE data indicates that in fiscal years 2008 and 2009, 67 districts required corrective action. As of fiscal year 2010, 33, or about one-half, of these districts still required further corrective action after ADE's follow-up review.

Statute requires stronger oversight by ADE—Although ADE's monitoring and follow-up visits have provided a significant amount of assistance to districts since the program's first years of implementation, statute also envisions a further role for this monitoring—ensuring compliance with state requirements. Arizona Revised Statutes §15-756.08 requires ADE to report to the Board district programs found in continued noncompliance during a follow-up visit. If the Board also finds the district out of compliance, statute calls for the district's SEI funding to be withheld by ADE until the program becomes compliant. ADE has not presented to the Board any of the 33 districts that remained in noncompliance after the follow-up review. ADE should report the districts that remain out of compliance to the Board for possible withholding of SEI funds, as required by statute.

Recommendation

As ADE continues its monitoring of district ELL program implementation, it should report noncompliant districts in continuing corrective action status to the Board for possible withholding of SEI funds.

FINDING 2

More students achieve proficiency since State adopted SEI models, but models' impact on results is unknown

The percentage of English Language Learner (ELL) students attaining proficiency in English has risen since the State adopted Structured English Immersion (SEI) instruction models, but the models' effect on these results remains unknown. Since fiscal year 2008, when the models were adopted, the state-wide rate for reclassifying ELL students as English-proficient increased from 22 percent to 31 percent in fiscal year 2010. However, the extent to which this early change in the reclassification rate can be attributed to the partially implemented SEI models is unknown for two main reasons:

- First, there have been changes in other factors that could explain higher reclassification rates, such as more state-wide funding for ELL programs and greater percentages of students at the intermediate proficiency level who are more likely to reclassify than students at lower proficiency levels.

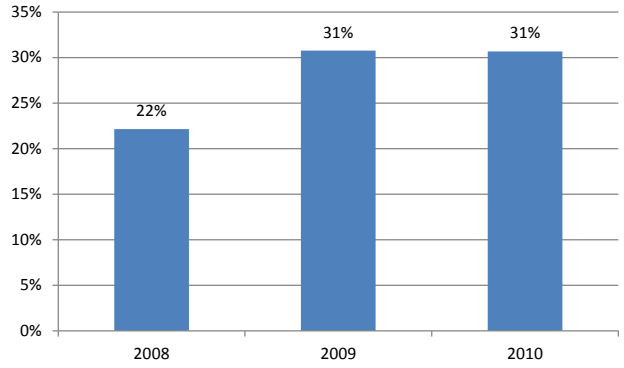
- Second, there are significant data limitations. Considerable data about program implementation and student outcomes is unavailable or unreliable, and districts' partial implementation of the models limits the extent to which before-and-after comparisons can be made.

Determining the impact of the different types of SEI model programs will require both improvements in measurement and additional time to identify trends in the factors affecting reclassification.

State-wide proficiency rate increased to 31 percent in fiscal year 2010, but progress rates for students at lower proficiency levels remain unchanged

In fiscal year 2008, the first year that SEI models were adopted but prior to their implementation, 22 percent of ELL students were reclassified as proficient and exited the program. As Figure 3 on page 14 shows, in fiscal years 2009 and 2010, the reclassification rates had risen to 31 percent.

Figure 3: Statewide Reclassification Rates
Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of ELL students' participation and proficiency data for fiscal years 2008 through 2010 provided by ADE.

This state-wide rate is representative of reclassification rates found at many districts. About one-half of the State's districts reclassified between 20 and 39 percent of their students in fiscal year 2010. Districts that reclassified at rates higher than 39 percent or lower than 20 percent typically served fewer ELL students. At these districts, the rates are likely skewed by the small numbers of ELL students and the unique circumstances of the program, such as having only 20 students and reclassifying half of them one year.

For students who did not become sufficiently proficient to leave the program, the level of progress remained about the same in all three years. The AZELLA instrument used in testing proficiency has several classification levels, ranging from pre-emergent to proficient (see textbox). For the students who were not reclassified as proficient, Table 3 compares the percentages of ELL students who progressed from, regressed from, or maintained the same proficiency levels as prior to program entry for the year. Between fiscal years 2008 and 2010, the percentage of ELL students who made progress through the four lower proficiency levels stayed within a range of 27 to 31 percent. In fiscal year 2010, a lower percentage of students maintained their proficiency level and a slightly higher percentage of students regressed levels compared to the prior fiscal year.

Proficiency Levels:

Proficient
↑
Intermediate
↑
Basic
↑
Emergent
↑
Pre-emergent

Table 3: Status of ELL Students Who Did Not Reach Proficiency
Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010
(Unaudited)

Fiscal Year	Unknown[1]	Regressed	Maintained	Progressed
2008	28%	2%	39%	31%
2009	20%	3%	50%	27%
2010	22%	6%	43%	29%

[1] Includes students who did not take a second test, such as students who withdrew from the program and those who were not in school on the assessment date.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of ELL students' participation and proficiency data for fiscal years 2008 through 2010 provided by ADE.

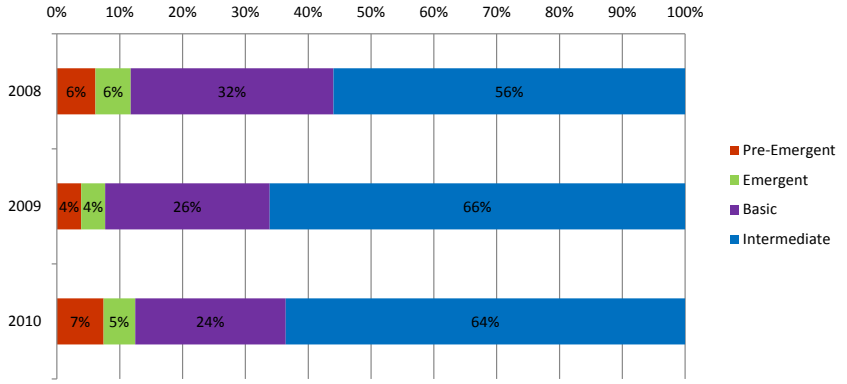
Factors other than the models may explain higher proficiency levels

The extent to which the higher reclassification rates can be attributed to the new SEI models is unknown. One reason is that other factors changed within the same time period. For example, between fiscal years 2008 and 2010, reclassification rates may have been affected by changes in state ELL funding, oversight, and commitment to teaching ELL students, and changes in ELL students' starting English proficiency levels. Any or all of these factors could explain the higher reclassification rates. In addition, research suggests that the mobility of ELL students might also have an effect on reclassification rates, however the mobility of Arizona's ELL students did not change appreciably during this period.

Additional ELL teaching emphasis and program monitoring—The higher reclassification rates in fiscal years 2009 and 2010 may have been affected by educators' response to the increased attention policy-makers placed on ensuring that Arizona's ELL students become English-proficient, culminating in the adoption of the SEI models. Further, statutorily required oversight by ADE and the Office of the Auditor General may also have positively impacted reclassification rates. The increased emphasis on ELL students' English language development and the accompanying oversight may have provided additional pressure on all districts to focus on, and dedicate more resources to, teaching ELL students English. Further, as shown in Figure 2 on page 6, the State's per-pupil ELL funding almost doubled between fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

Higher percentages of students at the intermediate level—Another factor that may have led to higher reclassification rates is that ELL students began fiscal years 2009 and 2010 with higher levels of English proficiency than in fiscal year 2008. As shown in Figure 4 on page 16, 66 and 64 percent of ELL students started at the intermediate level in fiscal years 2009 and 2010, respectively, compared to 56 percent in fiscal year 2008. As one would expect, greater percentages of students at the intermediate level are associated with higher reclassification rates, as this is the proficiency level immediately preceding proficient. In fiscal year 2010, the ELL students who tested at the intermediate level prior to entering the program accounted for 85 percent of the students who were reclassified as English-proficient by the end of that fiscal year. Thus, the 10 percentage point difference in students starting the fiscal year at the intermediate level may have contributed to the 9 percentage point difference in reclassification rates between fiscal years 2008 and 2009. However, it cannot be determined whether the higher percentages of students at the intermediate level in fiscal years 2009 and 2010 is a result of the program's impact, the cumulative effect of prior years' ELL programs, or some other factor.

Figure 4: ELL Students' Proficiency Levels at the Beginning of the Year
Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of ELL students' participation and proficiency data for fiscal years 2008 through 2010 provided by ADE.

Highly mobile students become proficient at lower rates, but remain a small percentage of ELL students across fiscal years—One factor that has not changed in the years since the SEI models were adopted is the percentage of ELL students who are highly mobile—that is, who change schools several times within a school year. As shown in Table 4, across proficiency levels, ELL students in Arizona who attend only one school are more likely to become proficient than those who attend two or more schools. For example, almost half of the students who tested at the intermediate level and remained in one school during fiscal year 2010 were reclassified as proficient, compared to 36 percent of the highly mobile students who attended three or more schools that year. In addition, the mobile students typically entered the program at lower proficiency levels than other students in fiscal year 2010. Research has shown that highly mobile students pass standardized assessments at lower rates.

Table 4: Reclassification Rates of ELL Students Grouped by Number of Schools Attended and Proficiency Level
Fiscal Year 2010
(Unaudited)

	Percentage of Students Reclassified as Proficient		
Prior Proficiency Level	**1 School**	**2 Schools**	**3+ Schools**
Pre-emergent	5%	3%	2%
Emergent	9%	9%	7%
Basic	19%	15%	9%
Intermediate	49%	41%	36%

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of ELL students' participation and proficiency data for fiscal year 2010 provided by ADE.

Despite the significant impact of mobility at the student level, less than 1 percent of Arizona's ELL students were highly mobile in fiscal year 2010. Further, between fiscal years 2008 and 2010, 92 percent of ELL students attended only one school each year.

Program impact obscured by data and measurement limitations

A second reason that the effect of new SEI models remains unknown is that the data needed to measure the models' impact is unavailable or unreliable. Auditors identified significant weaknesses related to two types of data. One type is implementation data—that is, data about the type, quality, and duration of the programs provided to ELL students. The second is outcome data—that is, data about program results, such as student proficiency levels and reclassification rates. ADE has improved how it collects and reports both types of information, which are required by statute, but further improvements can be made.

SEI model implementation data not reliable or available—Laws 2006, Ch. 4 requires ADE to annually collect ELL program participation data, such as the number of students enrolled in each type of SEI program model. In 2008, the Office of the Auditor General's *Baseline Study of Arizona's English Language Learner Programs and Data, Fiscal Year 2007* (*Baseline Study*) identified reliability issues with ELL program data and ADE subsequently has improved how it collects that information. However, auditors identified the following weaknesses in the implementation data used to determine whether ELL students were instructed according to the SEI models:

- **Program participation data—**In follow-up reports to the *Baseline Study*, auditors identified 911 students who were enrolled in the ELL program in fiscal year 2009 despite having tested as already proficient prior to entering the program. In addition, during performance audits of districts, auditors have identified errors such as inaccurate rosters of program participants and incorrect ELL program entry and exit dates. ADE and the districts have made progress in correcting these issues, but some reliability issues persist. To determine "who received what," valid counts are needed of eligible program participants and participation days.

- **Program type—**During test work for this study, auditors determined that districts did not reliably record a student's program type—SEI classroom or ILLP[1]—in the State's Student Accountability and Information System (SAIS). Students' SEI program type is important in assessing whether one program type may be more effective in promoting English proficiency. Further, SAIS does not contain an option to record participation in an ILLP program that provides a portion of instruction in an SEI pullout setting.

- **English language development hours—**As discussed in Finding 1 on page 7, the number of English language development hours is determined by scheduled hours, which are not frequently monitored through classroom observations by district program coordinators. Because the SEI model requires 4 hours of English language development instruction, it would be useful to know the actual number of English language development

[1] See the Introduction and Background, pages 2-3, for an explanation of these program types.

hours received by each ELL student in order to determine the impact of the SEI models. However, auditors' observation of the actual hours received by many students is not practical. At a minimum, auditors would need to know the number of scheduled instructional hours and would need to test district assurances that these hours were accurate. This would include instructional hours in each program type and for ILLPs that also provide instruction in an SEI pullout setting. This information was collected by auditors during district reviews but is not available state-wide.

- **Instructional quality—**The SEI models' effectiveness may be related to the quality of instruction in the classrooms. Officials at a district with high reclassification rates attributed much of its ELL program's success to the district's development and monitoring of its teachers. Research also suggests that ELL students' progress towards English proficiency may be related to instructional quality, including teachers' professional development and credentials.[1] There is insufficient data on instructional quality in Arizona's classrooms, making such assessments difficult. However, data on instructional quality may become available if Arizona's teachers are more consistently evaluated in terms of student outcomes as required by Arizona Revised Statutes §15-203 beginning in fiscal year 2013.

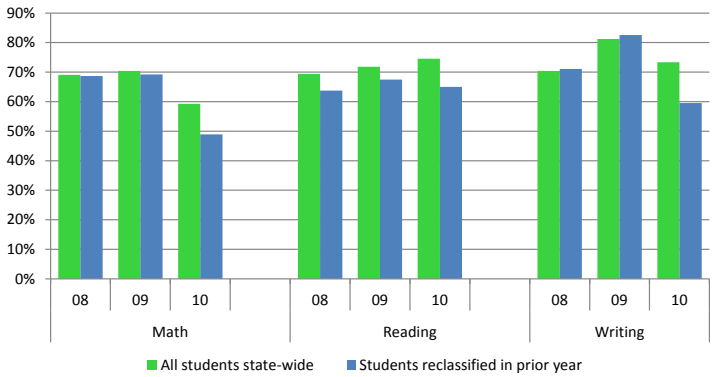
Inconsistent and potentially unreliable data on SEI model effectiveness—Reliable and consistent information on English proficiency and other student outcomes are needed for ADE and others to assess the effectiveness of the SEI models. Auditors identified the following weaknesses in the outcome data used to determine the effectiveness of the SEI models:

- **Adequacy of AZELLA measurements under federal review—**In August 2010, the U.S. Department of Education and the Justice Department submitted a joint letter to ADE raising concerns with AZELLA's methods for determining program eligibility, proficiency level, and exit from the program. Specifically, the federal departments claim that AZELLA fails to identify all ELL students, prematurely exits ELL students, and is not a valid measure of English language proficiency. As of June 10, 2011, ADE is in the process of responding to these claims.

- **Arizona Instrument for Measuring Success (AIMS)—**The assessments for AIMS changed between fiscal years 2009 and 2010, so the impact of the SEI models on the AIMS passing rates of reclassified students is difficult to assess. As seen in Figure 5 on page 19, reclassified students' passing rates fluctuated, but declined overall for the Math and Writing subtests between fiscal years 2008 and 2010. In addition, the gaps between state-wide passing rates and the passing rates of students reclassified in the prior year appear to have widened in that period. However, in fiscal year 2010, the Math subtest was changed and the Writing subtest was suspended for grades 3, 4, and 8. Therefore, it is not clear whether the fluctuations between fiscal years 2008 and 2010 are accurate representations of ELL student outcomes or are due to changes in the tests or the administration of the tests to ELL students.

[1] Jespen, Christopher and Shelly de Alth. (2005). *English Learners in California Schools*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California. Tong, Fuhui, et. al. Accelerating Early Academic Oral English Development in Transitional Bilingual and Structured English Immersion Programs. *American Educational Research Journal 45*, No. 4 (December 2008): 1011-1044.

Figure 5: Percentages of Reclassified Students and State-wide Students Passing AIMS Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of ELL students' participation and proficiency data for fiscal years 2007 through 2010 and AIMS test results for all students for fiscal years 2008 through 2010 provided by ADE.

Lastly, in a separate analysis of students reclassified in fiscal year 2007, the year prior to the SEI models, the passing rates on the AIMS Reading subtests appear to have improved further in the students' second and third years after reclassification. With additional years of data, a similar trend may be found for students reclassified under the SEI models.

- **Attendance, dropout, and graduation rates—**Besides test scores, other types of outcomes that are commonly used as student achievement indicators include attendance, dropout, and graduation rates. However, the attendance, dropout, and graduation rates of ELL students are affected by the timing of their reclassification and may not be accurate indicators of the SEI models' impact on these student outcomes. ELL students are included in the ELL subgroup, and there is no additional subgroup for reclassified English-proficient students. For example, if a student becomes reclassified prior to graduation, even just days beforehand, the student is included in the state-wide graduation rate and excluded from the ELL subgroup's rate.

Additional years and more reliable data needed to assess impact of SEI models

Because of the program's relative infancy, additional years of data are needed to assess the potential impact of the various types of SEI model programs. In fiscal year 2010, many of the ELL students in higher grades received instruction through the SEI models as well as the district program that preceded the models. Additional years of data are needed to assess the outcomes of students who received instruction only through the SEI models. Additional years of ELL data

collected in SAIS are also needed to more accurately compare short-term student outcomes, such as AIMS passing rates, and long-term student outcomes, such as graduation rates.

The additional years of data also need to be more reliable and comprehensive than data currently collected by ADE from districts. As discussed in the prior section, additional and more reliable information on how the SEI models are implemented is needed in order to assess "what kind of ELL instruction the student received." Similarly, more consistent and reliable information on student outcomes is needed to determine "whether the ELL instruction worked."

The additional information will help with comparisons of the effectiveness over time and across districts, but there are limits. Assessing a program's effectiveness generally requires being able to compare achievement levels to those achieved under some alternative approach. However, all of the 73 districts auditors and ADE reviewed at least partially implemented the SEI models in fiscal year 2010. The lack of a group of nonimplementing districts is appropriate because implementation is statutorily required, but there is no "control group" against which to measure the overall results achieved under the SEI models.

However, as more districts fully implement the SEI models and as more reliable program data is available over a longer period of time, comparisons of the SEI models' impact on reclassification rates and other student outcomes may become clearer. For example, this additional information could identify the relative effectiveness of the different types of programs—SEI classrooms and ILLPs, including ILLPs with pull-out SEI instruction—at improving ELL students' proficiency and achievement outcomes. This information could also identify trends in the relationships between English proficiency and other student outcomes. Lastly, the information could help to determine whether the initial increases in the reclassification rates can be sustained or improved.

Recommendation

1. To improve ADE's assessment of districts' implementation of the SEI models, ADE should continue to work with districts to:

    a. Improve the reliability of the program participation data, including ELL students' eligibility and participation dates, and the type of program provided to each student;

    b. Collect additional information related to program participation, including the number of English language development hours provided to each student by program type; and

    c. Consider collecting additional information that links student outcomes to instructional quality, such as information on teachers.

APPENDIX

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Office of the Auditor General's biennial audit of the State's English Language Learner (ELL) program was conducted pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes §15-756.12. This study focuses on fiscal year 2010 ELL programs operating at a sample of Arizona school districts and charter schools (districts) and reports on the programs' compliance with requirements of the Structured English Immersion (SEI) models (see Table 5). The sample of 54 districts and 19 charter schools includes all 60 programs monitored by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) in fiscal year 2010 and 13 additional programs included in the *Baseline Study of Arizona's English Language Learner Programs and Data, Fiscal Year 2007* (*Baseline Study*). Auditors reviewed the status of the *Baseline Study* programs in fiscal year 2010. Although the samples reflect a diversity of program types across the State, neither sample was chosen to be statistically representative. ADE's 60 monitored districts were chosen based on statutory requirements to monitor at least 32 districts annually based on the number and proportion of ELL students and follow up with programs that were not in compliance. In 2008, the *Baseline Study* sample programs were selected based on district size, location, number, and proportion of ELL population, and percentage of ELL students reclassified as proficient.

Table 5: Program Type and Implementation Status of ELL Programs Reviewed by Auditors and ADE Staff Fiscal Year 2010

	Program Type		
District or Charter School Name	SEI	ILLP	Model Fully Implemented
Antelope Union High School District		X	Yes
Bullhead City School District	X	X	Yes
Catalina Foothills Unified District	X	X	Yes
Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary District		X	Yes
Douglas Unified District	X	X	Yes
Flagstaff Unified District	X	X	Yes
Florence Unified School District	X	X	Yes
Friendly House, Inc.	X	X	Yes
Gilbert Unified District	X	X	Yes
Higley Unified School District	X	X	Yes
Laveen Elementary District	X	X	Yes
Madison Elementary District	X	X	Yes
New Horizon School for the Performing Arts	X	X	Yes
Noah Webster Basic School		X	Yes

Table 5 (Cont'd)

Paradise Valley Unified District	X	X	Yes
Phoenix Elementary District	X	X	Yes
Riverside Elementary District	X		Yes
Sacaton Elementary District		X	Yes
Sedona Charter School, Inc.		X	Yes
Sedona-Oak Creek JUSD	X	X	Yes
Tolleson Union High School District	X		Yes
Twenty First Century Charter School, Inc. dba: Bennett Academy		X	Yes
Vail Unified District		X	Yes
Vicki A. Romero High School	X		Yes
Wellton Elementary District		X	Yes
Wickenburg Unified District	X	X	Yes
Yuma Elementary District	X	X	Yes
Ajo Unified District	X	X	No
Alhambra Elementary District	X	X	No
American Charter Schools Foundation dba: West Phoenix High School	X		No
Avondale Elementary District	X	X	No
Balsz Elementary District	X		No
Boys & Girls Clubs of the East Valley dba: Mesa Arts Academy		X	No
Buckeye Elementary District	X	X	No
Cartwright Elementary District	X		No
Casa Grande Elementary District	X	X	No
Chester Newton Charter and Montessori School		X	No
Colorado River Union High School District	X		No
Coolidge Unified District	X	X	No
Country Gardens Educational Services, LLC		X	No
Creighton Elementary District	X	X	No
Deer Valley Unified District	X	X	No
Fountain Hills Unified District		X	No
Glendale Elementary District	X	X	No
Happy Valley School, Inc.		X	No
Horizon Community Learning Center, Inc.		X	No
Indian Oasis-Baboquivari Unified District		X	No
Isaac Elementary District	X		No
Liberty Elementary District	X	X	No
Little Lamb Community School		X	No
Midtown Primary School		X	No
Murphy Elementary District	X	X	No
Nogales Unified District	X	X	No
Osborn Elementary District	X	X	No
Pan-American Elementary Charter	X	X	No
Pendergast Elementary District	X	X	No
Peoria Unified School District	X	X	No
Phoenix Advantage Charter School, Inc.		X	No
Phoenix Union High School District	X		No
Prescott Unified District	X	X	No

Table 5 (Concl'd)

Roosevelt Elementary District	X	X	No
Rosefield Charter Elementary School, Inc.		X	No
Santa Cruz Valley Unified District	X		No
Southgate Academy, Inc.	X		No
Stanfield Elementary District	X	X	No
Sunnyside Unified District	X	X	No
Tempe School District	X	X	No
Tertulia[1]			No
Tolleson Elementary District	X	X	No
Tuba City Unified District	X	X	No
Tucson Unified District	X	X	No
Washington Elementary School District	X	X	No
Yuma Union High School District	X		No

[1] Provided bilingual instruction. Parents may request that a school provide bilingual instruction rather than SEI instruction.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of fiscal year 2010 ELL schedules and files, observations of ELL classrooms, interviews with program staff, review of survey responses provided by district and charter school program officials, and analysis of fiscal year 2010 monitoring data and letters collected and prepared by ADE.

In conducting this study, auditors used a variety of methods, including conducting site visits to observe sample programs and analyzing various records and data collected and compiled by ADE and information obtained directly from various school districts and charters. Specifically:

- To provide a background of ELL legislation, Arizona Fluency Standards, Arizona English Language Learner Assessment components, and SEI models, auditors reviewed Laws 2006, Ch. 4, current Task Force SEI models, and documents provided by ADE.
- To assess whether the districts fully implemented the model requirements, auditors interviewed the districts' program staff, visited program sites, performed file reviews, observed classrooms with ELL students, and reviewed data and reports collected and prepared by ADE. Program staff provided detailed schedules for fiscal year 2010 ELL classes and more general information on fiscal year 2010 schedules.
- To analyze sample ELL demographic, program participation, and outcome data, auditors used student-level data collected and reports prepared by ADE. School districts and charter schools enter student data into ADE's Student Accountability Information System (SAIS), and then ADE extracts and reports ELL-related information from SAIS to auditors. Auditors performed reasonableness tests of SAIS data for sample districts and charter schools.

The Auditor General and her staff express their appreciation to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the staff of the Arizona Department of Education, and the staffs of the Arizona public school districts and charter schools for their cooperation and assistance during this study.

AGENCY RESPONSE

State of Arizona
Department of Education
Office of John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction

June 8, 2011

Ms. Debra K. Davenport, CPA, CGFM, CFE
Auditor General
Office of the Auditor General
2910 North 44th Street, Suite 410
Phoenix, AZ 85010

Dear Ms. Davenport:

The Arizona Department of Education is providing the enclosed response to the Auditor General's revised report entitled "Arizona's English Language Learner Programs, Fiscal Year 2010."

We appreciate your cooperation with the process involved in the completion of this report. We acknowledge your consideration of our comments and suggestions during the course of your work.

Please feel free to contact our office if additional information is required in the completion of the report.

Sincerely,

John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Arizona Department of Education

State of Arizona
Department of Education
Office of John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction

ADE Responses Regarding Recommendations

Recommendation 1

As ADE continues its monitoring of district ELL program implementation, it should report noncompliant districts in continuing corrective action status to the Board for possible withholding of SEI funds.

ADE Response
The recommendation of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

The school year 2010-2011 marks the end of the third year of implementation of the Structured English Immersion (SEI) Models. As this is the second year of identifying chronic non-compliant districts, this is the appropriate time to begin to report to the State Board of Education (SBOE). The Office of English Language Acquisition Services (OELAS) has been working on the development of criteria for the identification of districts or charters to be referred to the State Board of Education for a finding of non-compliance pursuant to A.R.S. § 15.756.08 (J). The criteria will be based on the required components of the SEI program including:

- Four (4) daily hours of English Language Development (ELD)
- Proper ELL student grouping
- Highly qualified teachers with SEI endorsements
- English language development instructional components covered

OELAS is going forward with the above-listed criteria, identifying non-compliant districts pursuant to A.R.S. § 15.756.08 (J) and will begin reporting these at the September 2011 State Board meeting.

Recommendation 2

1. **To improve ADE's assessment of districts' implementation of the SEI Models, ADE should continue to work with districts to:**
   a) **Improve the reliability of the program participation data, including ELL students' eligibility and participation dates, and the type of program provided to each student;**
   b) **Collect additional information related to program participation, including the number of English language development hours provided to each student by program type; and**
   c) **Consider collecting additional information that links student outcomes to instructional quality, such as information on teachers.**

ADE Response

a) The recommendation of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented in the 2011-2012 school year, through Practitioners of English Language Learning (PELL) meetings, summer trainings, and through the annual OELAS Conference.

b). The recommendation of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented beginning in the 2011-2012 school year when OELAS will be working with IT to improve data collection.

c). ADE agrees to consider the collection of additional information that links student outcomes to instructional quality, such as information on teachers. At its April 25, 2011 meeting, the State Board of Education adopted the "Arizona Framework for Measuring Educator Effectiveness" framework based on the Teacher Accountability Task Force recommendation. ADE/OELAS will utilize this framework in the collection of this additional information when fully implemented.

ADE General Comments

Relevant to the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA), the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) is confident that this test is a valid and reliable measure of English language proficiency. This statement is supported in both the AZELLA Form AZ-1 and AZ-2 Technical Reports. Based on the rationale and purpose referenced in this document [p. 9 for (AZ-2)] the AZELLA performance has been analyzed based on *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing,* and is considered to be valid and reliable. The 2009-2010 AZELLA Form AZ-2 Technical Report issued in February 2011 was authored by Pearson Psychometric and Research Services, a unit of NCS Pearson, Inc.

As ADE assessments are always in the mode of continual improvement, the AZELLA is undergoing scheduled review and revision. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in early spring of 2011 and is scheduled for award in June 2011. Although AZELLA data has been carefully analyzed in the past, the new test offers an opportunity for additional studies to confirm the assessment's reliability and validity.

INTEGRITY
ACCOUNTABILITY
MAKING A DIFFERENCE