

**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

**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.

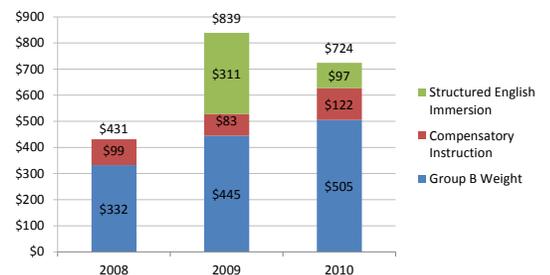
**SEI models require 4 daily hours of English language instruction**—School districts must use Structured English Immersion (SEI) models, developed by the ELL Task Force, to teach ELL students. These models require students to receive 4 hours of English language development per day in an SEI classroom 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<sup>1</sup>**  
 Fiscal Years 2008 through 2010



<sup>1</sup> 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 <sup>1</sup>	Regressed	Maintained	Progressed
2008	28%	2%	39%	31%
2009	20%	3%	50%	27%
2010	22%	6%	43%	29%

<sup>1</sup> 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.