MEMORANDUM
TO: Arlington School Board

FROM: ESOL/HILT Citizens Advisory Committee

DATE: November 19, 2018

SUBJECT: Recommending Year Report

Introduction: Summary of Recommendations

1. Make student English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels and corresponding coursework and sequencing more clear and accessible to parents. We propose to include the ELP level of each student in ParentVUE. Also, we recommend that the acronym "HILT" be eliminated from all course labeling in favor of using WIDA levels, which are the levels that the state of Virginia uses for ELP.

2. Add a full-time Early Childhood Specialist to the ESOL/HILT Office in the Department of Teaching and Learning. While there is currently a part-time employee in this position, there is a strong need for a full-time employee to coach and educate all early childhood teachers on effective and appropriate instructional strategies for Dual Language Learners (DLLs).
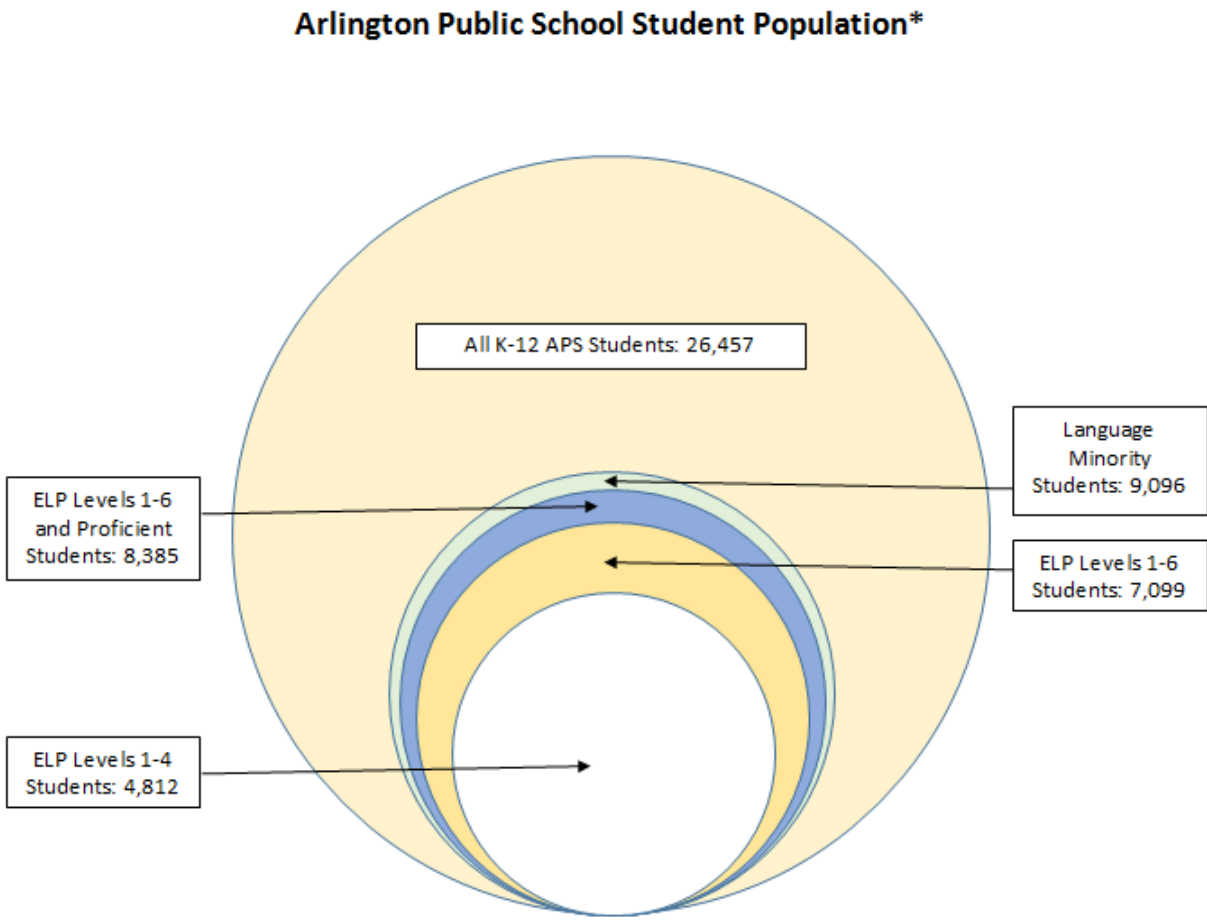
Background

Population

In APS, 9,096 students, or 34.4% of all students, are language minority students, which means that a language other than or in addition to English is spoken in the home. English Learners (ELs) make up 26.8% (7,099 students) of the total student population (26,457 students). This includes students with English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels of 1-6. Of these students, 18.2%, or 4,812 students, are ELP level 1-4. Also, 4.9%, or 1,286 students, have exited the program and are now proficient in the English language. Exhibit A shows this EL population data. Of the ELs, 3,957 are Elementary School students, 1,603 are Middle School students, and 1,654 are High School students.[1] See Appendix 1 for the number of ELs by grade band.

WIDA, which stands for "World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment," is a system that 39 states, including Virginia, use for language development standards and assessments to determine English Language Proficiency. The six ELP levels include the following: Level 1, Entering; Level 2, Emerging; Level 3, Developing; Level 4, Expanding; Level 5, Bridging; Level 6, Reaching. Level 6 students are considered

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[1] There is a slight increase in the total students here from the 7,099 mentioned above; these data calculations were done on October 10, while the 7,099 was calculated on October 1.

English proficient but are still monitored for two years and are able to receive accommodations if necessary. Due to a recalibration of the assessment scoring, there is currently no Level 5 in the state of Virginia. These levels of language proficiency are determined by the WIDA ACCESS test, which is a summative assessment that tests language skills through the content areas and is given annually (usually in February) to ELs in grades K-12. The performance definitions of these ELP levels are detailed in Appendices 2 and 3.

Exhibit A.

Arlington Public School Student Population*

All K-12 APS Students: 26,457

Language Minority Students: 9,096

ELP Levels 1-6 and Proficient Students: 8,385

ELP Levels 1-6 Students: 7,099

ELP Levels 1-4 Students: 4,812

* All student counts as of October 1, 2018
- ELP: English Language Proficiency
- Language Minority Students: Students who indicated a language in addition to or other than English spoken at home

Achievement
The following graphs, Exhibits B, C, D, E, and F, show SOL pass rates by ELP level on the 2017-2018 SOLs.
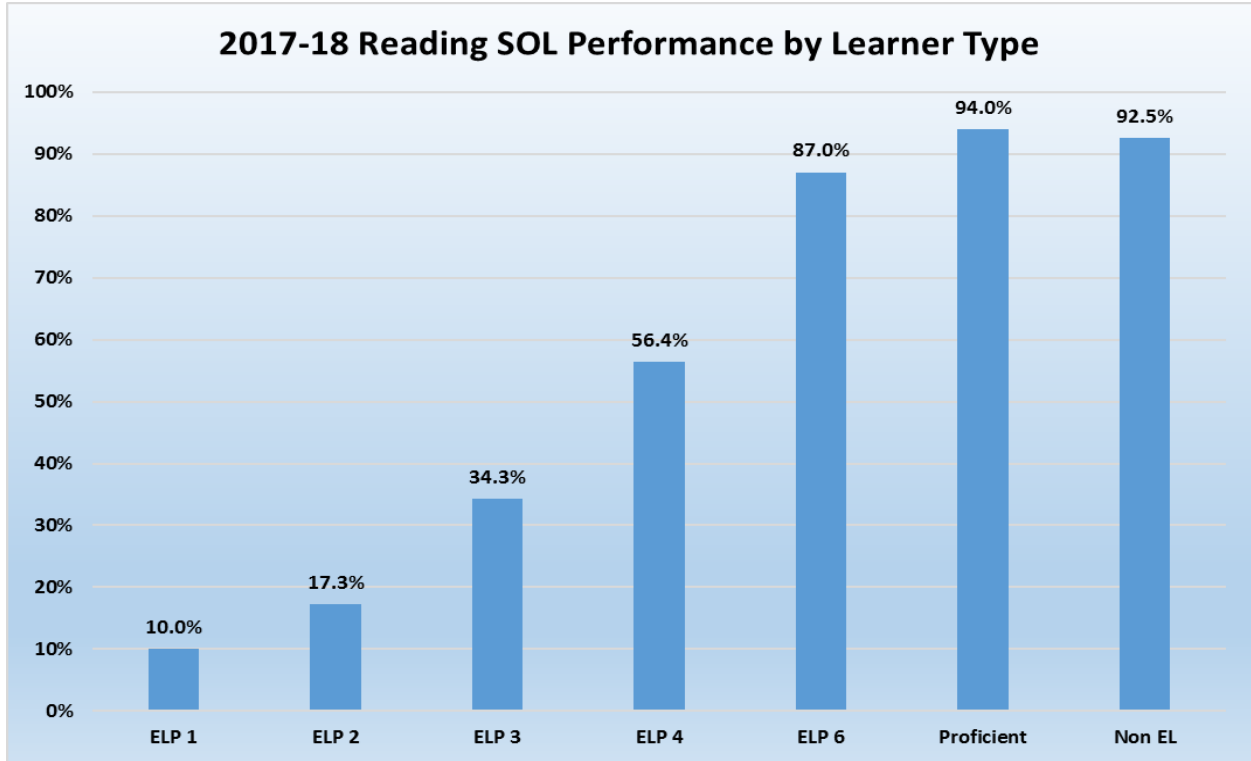
Exhibit B.

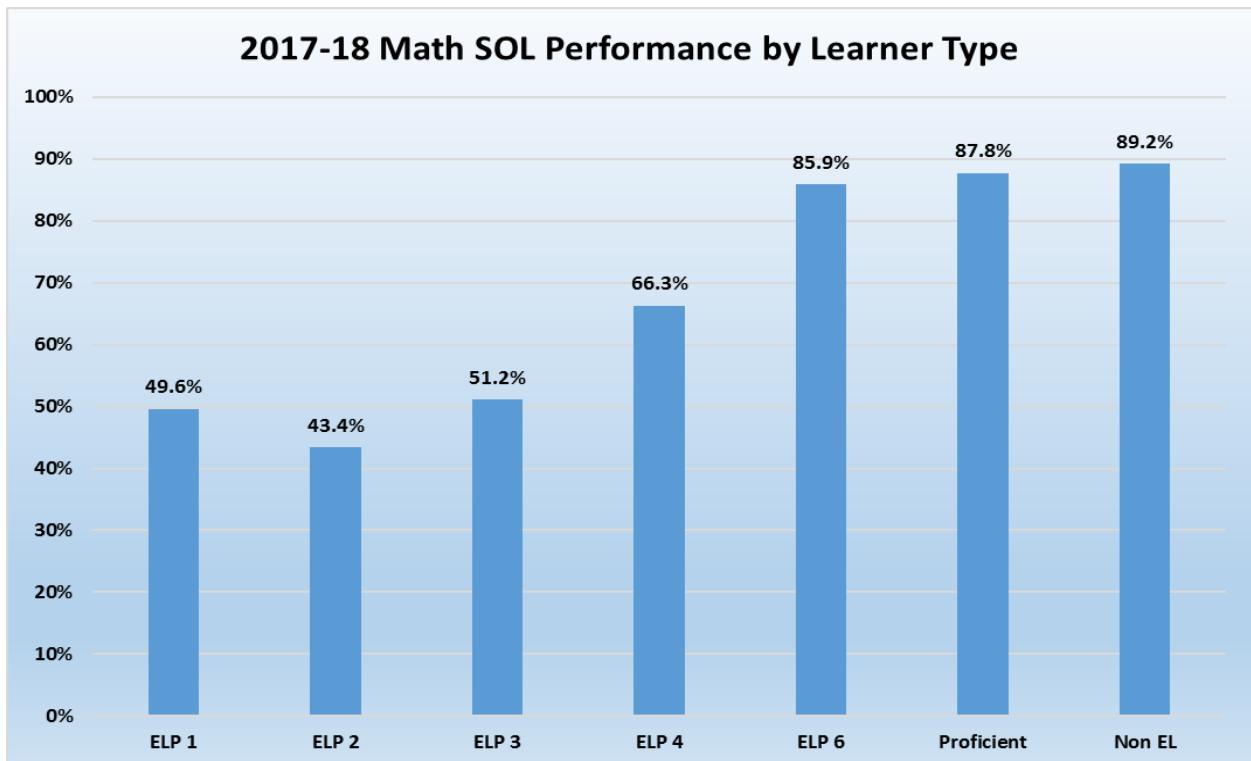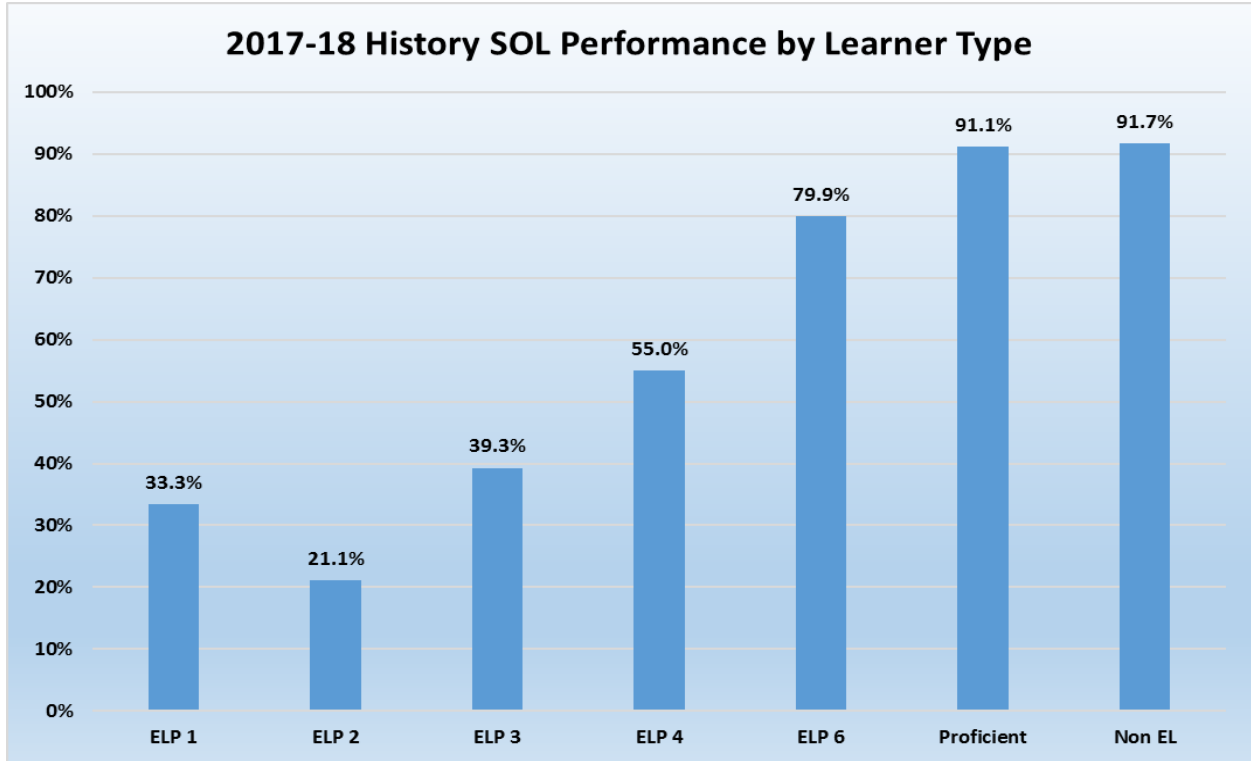**2017-18 Reading SOL Performance by Learner Type**

Learner Type	Percentage
ELP 1	10.0%
ELP 2	17.3%
ELP 3	34.3%
ELP 4	56.4%
ELP 6	87.0%
Proficient	94.0%
Non EL	92.5%

Exhibit C.

2017-18 Math SOL Performance by Learner Type

Learner Type	Percentage
ELP 1	49.6%
ELP 2	43.4%
ELP 3	51.2%
ELP 4	66.3%
ELP 6	85.9%
Proficient	87.8%
Non EL	89.2%

Exhibit D.

2017-18 History SOL Performance by Learner Type

Learner Type	Performance
ELP 1	33.3%
ELP 2	21.1%
ELP 3	39.3%
ELP 4	55.0%
ELP 6	79.9%
Proficient	91.1%
Non EL	91.7%

Exhibit E.

2017-18 Science SOL Performance by Learner Type

Learner Type	Performance
ELP 1	7.2%
ELP 2	20.2%
ELP 3	29.3%
ELP 4	54.2%
ELP 6	84.9%
Proficient	89.7%
Non EL	91.3%

Exhibit F.

2017-18 Writing SOL Performance by Learner Type

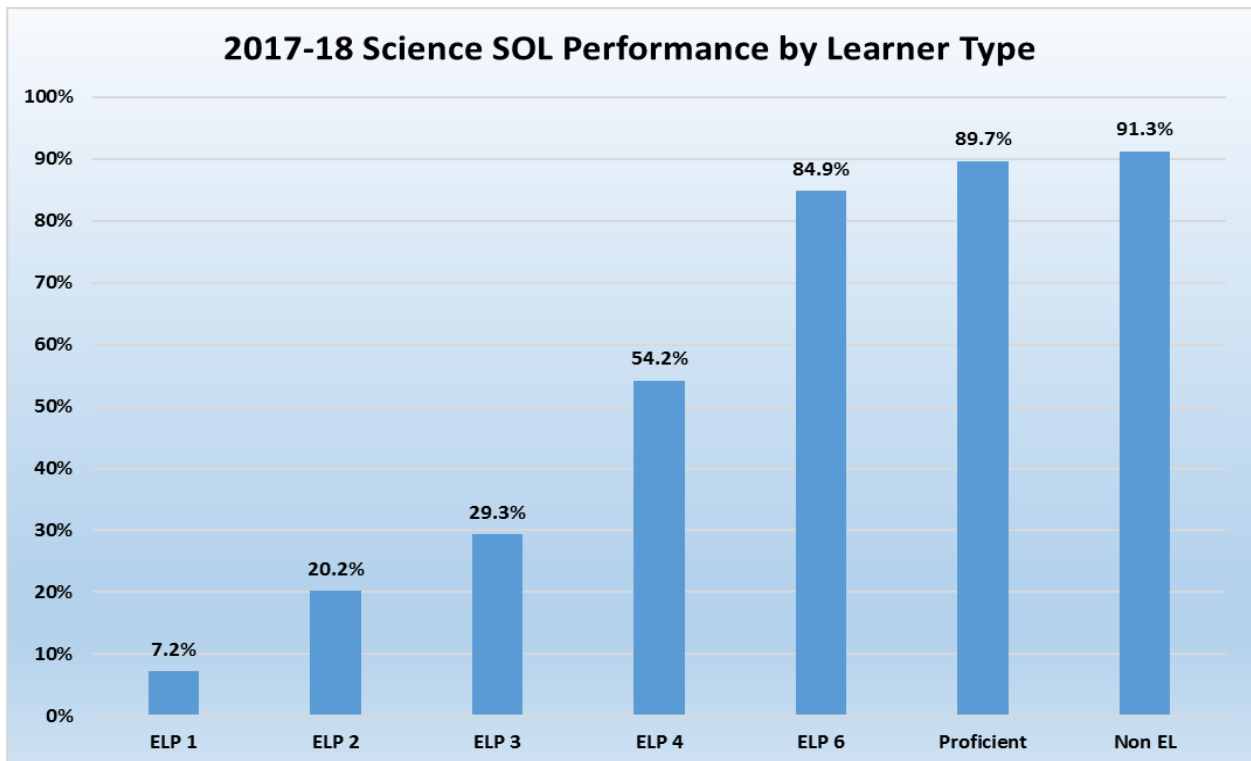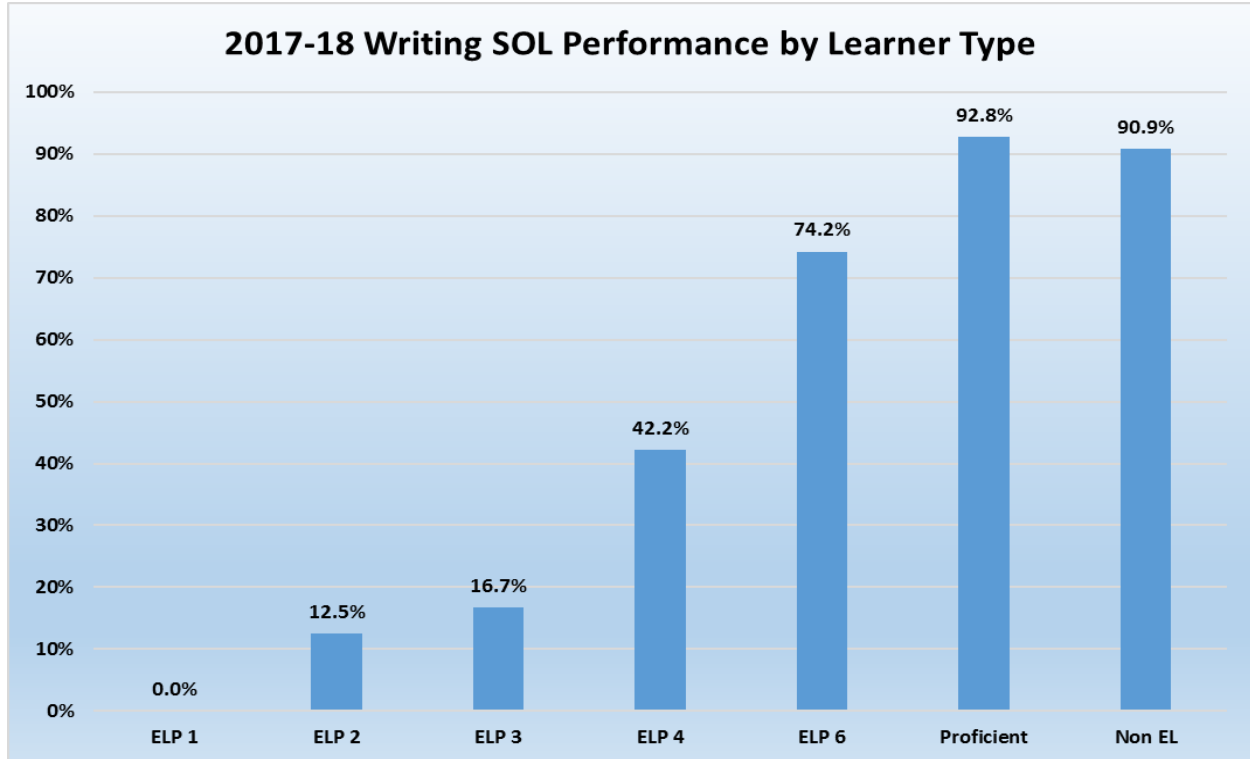| Learner Type	Pass Rate
ELP 1	0.0%
ELP 2	12.5%
ELP 3	16.7%
ELP 4	42.2%
ELP 6	74.2%
Proficient	92.8%
Non EL	90.9%

These content area pass rates broadly show increasing results by ELs as ELP level increases. The exceptions are in Math and History, in which the ELP 1 group scores slightly higher than the ELP 2 group. In Math, the ELP 1 pass rate was 49.6% versus ELP 2 pass rate of 43.4%. In History, ELP 1s passed at a rate of 33.3%, while 21.1% of ELP 2s passed. In both of these content areas, the increasing pass rate continues from ELP 3 up to English Proficient students.

The English Proficient student pass rates are comparable to those of the Non-ELs. In Reading and Writing, the English Proficient students who completed the ESOL/HILT program show a higher pass rate percentage than the Non-ELs. In Reading, English Proficient students passed with a 94% rate; 92.5% of Non-ELs passed. On the Writing SOL, 92.8% of English Proficient students passed, while 90.9% of Non-ELs passed.

Continued Areas of Concern

The Committee has identified concerns in past years that will continue to be monitored, as well as a few new concerns that need to be further investigated. These include:

- Exploring other options of credit-bearing classes in which ELs can be successful, including online options, especially for beginner/intermediate ELP levels for ELs in secondary in order to improve graduation rates;
- Ensuring that all principals support result-based best practices for students in all schools in the county through targeted instruction and interventions;

- Cross-endorsing ESOL/HILT teachers and General Education teachers, which will help content teachers to teach ELs in inclusion-based classrooms and will allow EL teachers to improve quality of content instruction at all levels of English Language development;
- Adopting and acquiring appropriate instructional materials that attend to the needs of ELs to ensure access to grade level content;
- Analyzing EL enrollment and participation in advanced classes;
- Ensuring that ELs are able to take the PSAT and other standardized tests, regardless of ELP.

Program Evaluation

The ESOL/HILT program will begin its program evaluation cycle this year. WestEd has been identified as the company that will research and evaluate the program.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Make student English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels and corresponding coursework and sequencing more clear and accessible to parents. We propose to include the ELP level of each student in ParentVUE. Also, we recommend that the acronym "HILT" be eliminated from all course labeling in favor of using WIDA levels, which are the levels that the state of Virginia uses for ELP.

Rationale

Earlier this year, we held several of our committee meetings in the schools in order to gather feedback about the ESOL/HILT program and to form relationships with the ESOL community. Two of the meetings were with school parent groups. In January, we met with a Barrett Elementary School parent group, Las Voluntarias del Viernes. In March, we met with the Kenmore Middle School Hispanic Parents group. At each session, we divided the group into several small groups to determine what was going well in their child's school or class, and what they had questions about. The responses were very informative, as many parents had similar comments and questions.

Many parents did not understand if and when their child was receiving ESOL services, and when the program ended. Most of them did not know the WIDA level of their child, or how many WIDA levels exist. Most either did not understand the importance of the WIDA ACCESS test score report or did not understand how to interpret it. At the secondary level, parents were confused about what courses their children needed to take.

Parents reported that they use ParentVUE and that it would be helpful to have their child's WIDA level listed there. We propose that each child's WIDA level is included on ParentVUE, along with a clear and concise definition of what that level means, translated into various languages. (See Appendices 2 and 3 for detailed WIDA Performance Definitions.)

Courses for ESOL at the secondary level are currently coded HILT A, HILT B, HILTEX A, and HILTEX B. HILT stands for "High Intensity Language Training," and this naming convention was used to describe the levels of ELP in APS for many years. Although WIDA was adopted in 2008, courses are still coded using these HILT titles, which further confuses parents. Changing the name of the system to align it with the state would help to eliminate this confusion and improve parent understanding. These HILT levels are generally the same as WIDA levels 1, 2, 3, and 4.

These seemingly small changes would allow parents to be more involved in the academic lives of their children, which could, in turn, improve student success. "Research supports the importance of parental involvement for improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates regardless of socioeconomic background or ethnicity. Accordingly, and given the achievement gap between ELLs and English proficient students, it is very important to identify practices that may improve ELL parental involvement and thus student achievement" (Arias 2008). In 2014, APS created FACE, Family and Community Engagement, which is a strategy that encourages collaboration and "recognizes that effective communication with staff, students, families, the Arlington community and Arlington County Board are essential to the success of our students" (APS). These changes would improve communication with parents and thus support this initiative. Parents would be more aware of the ELP of their child and the courses that they need to take that correspond to this level.

Strategic Plan Alignment
Excellence – Improves parent understanding, which meets social needs of EL students.
Equity – Provides access to information for EL parents that, in turn, can increase opportunity for parent advocacy.
Inclusivity – Nurtures diverse EL community by valuing family participation in student academics.
Integrity – Builds trust with families by providing more open communication.
Collaboration – Fosters relationships with families to improve student success.
Innovation – Responds to a need voiced by the EL parent community.

Budgetary Implications
None

Recommendation #2: Add a full-time Early Childhood Specialist to the ESOL/HILT Office in the Department of Teaching and Learning. While there is currently a part-time employee in this position, there is a strong need for a full-time employee to coach and educate all early childhood teachers on effective and appropriate instructional strategies for Dual Language Learners (DLLs).

Rationale

APS enrolls a high number of Dual Language Learners (DLLs) at the Pre-K level and ELs at the Kindergarten level. Because students are not identified as ELs until

Kindergarten, there is no official data on the number of ELs at the Pre-K level. However, 48.7% of Pre-K students, or 513 students out of 1,054 total in the APS Pre-K program, speak a language other than English at home, and while these students are not all ELs, this is a solid indication that there are many students learning English as a second language. Further, 29.5% of Kindergarten students, or 676 students, are ELs, which supports this statement.

APS has a large Pre-K program; 1,054 students are served. The Virginia Preschool Initiative has 35 classrooms at 15 school sites. Primary Montessori has 19 classrooms at 6 schools. Early Childhood Special Education students are served through Integration Station at non-APS sites.

ELs will learn more if they are in an Early Childhood literacy program that includes approaches that are proven to benefit a young child that is still developing literacy in their first language while beginning to learn a second one. While most Early Childhood education teacher preparation and licensure programs include a course about working with diverse students and/or reading and literacy for all young learners, it is not evident that a second language acquisition course is required. These DLLs need specific instruction that takes their language development into account. There is "an emerging consensus on effective teaching of DLLs. An underlying principle is that they need both systematic exposure to English and ongoing support for home language maintenance and development" (Espinosa 2017). These students need "thoughtful, intentional teaching strategies and classroom environments that are designed specifically to meet their needs. Simply offering a high quality, English-only program won't be sufficient for DLLs. The early education they do receive must be part of a seamless, coordinated system that extends from preschool through at least third grade" (Nemeth, 2013).

Since "ECE teachers must learn specific instructional strategies that will help DLLs comprehend lessons in English, develop advanced oral language skills, and progress in their English language development" (Espinosa 2017), a full-time ESOL Early Childhood Specialist is needed to coach teachers on these strategies. Aside from the Pre-K students, the ESOL Early Childhood Specialist would also support ELs in the other lower elementary grades. In Kindergarten, 29.5% of students are ELP 1-4, and these high numbers are consistent in Grades 1 and 2.

A joint policy released by The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services states that "The lack of proven instructional practices and evidence-based models that effectively support the development and learning of children who are DLLs is also a contributor to the achievement gap" (U.S. Department of Education 2016-17). A full-time ESOL/HILT Early Childhood Specialist would help to close this gap.

The Committee has asked for this position before and it was not funded in the past. However, the ESOL/HILT office saw this position as imperative and reorganized their structure to ensure that a 0.5 staff member could work as an ESOL Early Childhood Specialist. She has met with preschool teachers at numerous schools to determine

what coaching is needed to support them, and she will continue to meet with teachers at all schools for further analysis. The goal is for this specialist to model how to create the most supportive learning environment for ELs, which affects learning of ELs of all ages and in all courses. The Committee will continue to work to obtain a full-time staff member for this valuable position; there are 96 Pre-K teachers at 21 APS school sites that would be positively affected. DLLs, ELs and all students would benefit from increased support in this area.

Strategic Plan Alignment
Excellence – Meets academic needs to ensure high quality education.
Equity – Eliminates possible achievement gap by taking first language of DLLs and ELs into account when instructing them in English at a young age; views first language skills as an asset.
Inclusivity – Values young DLLs and ELs and their families and celebrates their linguistic and cultural differences.
Collaboration – Supports home language of families and encourages collaboration of APS ECE teachers, as well as collaboration of APS staff with families.
Innovation – Implements new strategies for teachers to connect with DLLs and ELs and their families.

Budgetary Implications
It costs approximately $50,000 to hire a 0.5 time part-time employee with benefits.

Committee members:
Luisa Concepcion
Bob Garcia
Anne Zebra, Chair

Past Member and Current Guest:
Gabriela Uro

Staff Liaison:
Sam Klein

Appendices

Appendix 1   **APS ELs by Grade Band**

Appendix 2   **WIDA Performance Definitions – Speaking and Writing Grades K-12**

Appendix 3   **WIDA Performance Definitions – Listening and Reading Grades K-12**

Appendix 4   **References**

Appendix 1. APS ELs by Grade Band

Grade Band	ELP 1-4	ELP 6	Non-EL
Elementary	3,158	799	9,297
Middle	599	1,004	4,366
High	1,173	481	5,676

Appendix 2. WIDA Performance Definitions - Speaking and Writing Grades K-12

WIDA Performance Definitions - Speaking and Writing Grades K–12

Within sociocultural contexts for language use...

	Discourse Dimension	Sentence Dimension	Word/Phrase Dimension
	Linguistic Complexity	Language Forms and Conventions	Vocabulary Usage

Level 6 - Reaching

English language learners will use a range of grade-appropriate language for a variety of academic purposes and audiences. Agility in academic language use is reflected in oral fluency and automaticity in response, flexibility in adjusting to different registers and skillfulness in interpersonal interaction. English language learners' strategic competence in academic language use facilitates their ability to relate information and ideas with precision and sophistication for each content area.

At each grade, toward the end of a given level of English language proficiency, and with instructional support, English language learners will produce...

	Linguistic Complexity	Language Forms and Conventions	Vocabulary Usage
Level 5 Bridging	• Multiple, complex sentences • Organized, cohesive, and coherent expression of ideas characteristic of particular content areas	• A variety of complex grammatical structures matched to purpose • A broad range of sentence patterns characteristic of particular content areas	• Technical and abstract content-area language, including content-specific collocations • Words and expressions with precise meaning across content areas
Level 4 Expanding	• Short, expanded, and some complex sentences • Organized expression of ideas with emerging cohesion characteristic of particular content areas	• Compound and complex grammatical structures • Sentence patterns characteristic of particular content areas	• Specific and some technical content-area language • Words and expressions with expressive meaning through use of collocations and idioms across content areas
Level 3 Developing	• Short and some expanded sentences with emerging complexity • Expanded expression of one idea or emerging expression of multiple related ideas across content areas	• Simple and compound grammatical structures with occasional variation • Sentence patterns across content areas	• Specific content language, including cognates and expressions • Words or expressions with multiple meanings used across content areas
Level 2 Emerging	• Phrases or short sentences • Emerging expression of ideas	• Formulaic grammatical structures • Repetitive phrasal and sentence patterns across content areas	• General content words and expressions • Social and instructional words and expressions across content areas
Level 1 Entering	• Words, phrases, or chunks of language • Single words used to represent ideas	• Phrase-level grammatical structures • Phrasal patterns associated with familiar social and instructional situations	• General content-related words • Everyday social and instructional words and expressions

WIDA

Appendix 3. WIDA Performance Definitions – Listening and Reading Grades K-12

WIDA Performance Definitions - Listening and Reading Grades K–12

Within sociocultural contexts for processing language...

	Discourse Dimension	Sentence Dimension	Word/Phrase Dimension
	Linguistic Complexity	**Language Forms and Conventions**	**Vocabulary Usage**

Level 6 - Reaching

English language learners will process a range of grade-appropriate oral or written language for a variety of academic purposes and audiences. Automaticity in language processing is reflected in the ability to identify and act on significant information from a variety of genres and registers. English language learners' strategic competence in processing academic language facilitates their access to content area concepts and ideas.

At each grade, toward the end of a given level of English language proficiency, and with instructional support, English language learners will process...

Level 5 Bridging	• Rich descriptive discourse with complex sentences • Cohesive and organized, related ideas across content areas	• A variety of complex grammatical structures • Sentence patterns characteristic of particular content areas	• Technical and abstract content-area language • Words and expressions with shades of meaning across content areas
Level 4 Expanding	• Connected discourse with a variety of sentences • Expanded related ideas characteristic of particular content areas	• Complex grammatical structures • A broad range of sentence patterns characteristic of particular content areas	• Specific and some technical content-area language • Words or expressions with multiple meanings across content areas
Level 3 Developing	• Discourse with a series of extended sentences • Related ideas specific to particular content areas	• Compound and some complex grammatical constructions • Sentence patterns across content areas	• Specific content-area language and expressions • Words and expressions with common collocations and idioms across content areas
Level 2 Emerging	• Multiple related simple sentences • An idea with details	• Compound grammatical structures • Repetitive phrasal and sentence patterns across content areas	• General content words and expressions, including cognates • Social and instructional words and expressions across content areas
Level 1 Entering	• Single statements or questions • An idea within words, phrases, or chunks of language	• Simple grammatical constructions (e.g., commands, Wh- questions, declaratives) • Common social and instructional forms and patterns	• General content-related words • Everyday social, instructional and some content-related words and phrases

WIDA

Appendix 4. References

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