

Barriers to English Language Learners in the Chicago Metropolitan Area

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July 2001

*This project is supported by a generous grant from
The Fund for Immigrants and Refugees.*

Introduction

Immigrants from all over the world are continuing to move to Illinois in large numbers. As they settle into an increasingly diverse range of communities within metropolitan Chicago, this expansion of ports of entry creates new challenges for the state and local communities in assessing and meeting their needs.

In 2000-2001 the Center for Impact Research (CIR) conducted research to address the following questions:

- Where are immigrants in northeastern Illinois moving and how does the migration pattern today differ from previous trends?
- How many immigrants are in need of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction? Where do these immigrants reside?
- What barriers can be identified that prevent or make it difficult for immigrants to learn English?
- What are the employment patterns of immigrants that might affect their ability to have time or access to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)?

Methodology

CIR analyzed demographic data, primarily to establish the communities in northeastern Illinois that needed to be targeted for further investigation. Material consisted of Census data from 1990 and 2000, Current Population Surveys from 1994-1998, as well as information from academics, demographers, and community leaders who were able to provide more accurate and up-to-date information about immigration patterns and trends.

To determine experiences with, and barriers to ESOL instruction, CIR conducted 76 interviews with immigrant service organizations and ESOL providers in the Chicago metropolitan area. In addition, CIR conducted 37 interviews with Mexican and Polish immigrants throughout the region and with Chinese immigrants in Chicago to confirm or validate information from social service providers and to further identify barriers and issues around ESOL instruction. Lastly, McHenry County College, at our request, administered a written survey in Spanish to 200 immigrants in ESOL classes at the college.

This report presents the findings from this research. As ESOL providers work to meet the needs of their students while maintaining the integrity and professionalism of their instruction, the thoughts and opinions of ESOL students and other immigrants in the Chicago metropolitan area enrich the discussion of issues under consideration by policy makers, funders, and ESOL learning centers.

I. Immigration to Illinois and the Chicago Metropolitan Area

Determining Immigration Patterns

At the time that this report was being prepared, a limited amount of data from the 2000 Census was available. Data from the 2000 Census of particular interest to this study—on the foreign-born population, English proficiency, and language spoken at home—will not be available until March 2002. Available 2000 Census data on total population, race, Latino (Hispanic) origin,¹ and household type is useful to the extent that growth in the total Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander population can serve as an indicator for growth in the Latino and Asian foreign-born population.

Estimating the current immigrant population of Illinois, Chicago, and suburban communities areas requires a research strategy that collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data. The 1990 Census provides a good overall picture for the state and various counties, but it is no longer current. Moreover it is difficult to make projections for subgroups of immigrants at the micro level, such as the subgroup that is the focus of this study—the foreign-born, English Language Learning (ELL) population in Illinois. Given the limitations of using 1990 Census data as the basis for projecting immigrant population figures for 2000, a compilation of the March Current Population Surveys from 1994-1998 was used to assess recent demographic trends in the state of Illinois.²

In arriving at estimates for the current foreign-born population in Illinois, we used 1990 Census data to supplement information obtained from the 1994-1998 Current Population Surveys (CPS). While the CPS is a useful tool for providing current population information, its smaller sample size does not allow for detailed data for small areas such as suburbs, neighborhoods, or census tracts for reasons of confidentiality. Thus, 1990 Census data is useful for providing more detailed information on specific communities, which aids in identifying community areas in greatest need of services. Other resources included two community area profiles using 1990 Census data distributed by the Department of Planning and Development of the City of Chicago³ and summary statistics from the 1990 Census for various suburban communities.

The Foreign-Born Population in Illinois

According to a compilation of the March CPS data, in the period from 1994-1998, 13% of Illinois' total population was born outside of the United States. Table 1 shows the

¹ The U.S. Census Bureau treats the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” as interchangeable. This report uses “Latino” because it is the term most widely used in Illinois by members of this community and its community based organizations.

² The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a sample survey of about 50,000 households that is conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Policymakers and legislators use CPS data to assess the state of the national economy, as well as to plan and evaluate government programs.

³ 1990 Census of Population and Housing, *Population By Race and Latino Origin for Census Tracts, Community Areas, and Wards, 1980, 1990 and Demographic Characteristics of Chicago's Population*. The City of Chicago, in pending litigation, is challenging these figures.

composition of the foreign born population in Illinois by national group. The largest group is Mexican, at 44.3% of the foreign born population in Illinois—a figure considerably higher than the national average of 27% in 1997. The second largest group is Polish, at 6.7% of the foreign born population in Illinois.

Table 1
Composition of Illinois Foreign-Born Population, March CPS, 1994-1998

Country of Origin	Percent of Illinois Foreign-Born Population
Mexico	44.3%
Poland	6.7%
Puerto Rico ⁴	5.1%
Philippines	3.5%
India	3.1%
Germany	2.8%
Italy	2.5%
England	1.5%
Canada	1.5%
Korea	1.4%
China	1.2%
Cuba	1.2%
Vietnam	1.1%
Peru	1.1%
Greece	1.0%
Ireland	1.0%
Yugoslavia	1.0%
Russia	1.0%
Ecuador	1.0%
All other countries	18.0%

Table 1 shows Western Europeans and Canadians to be 8.3% of the foreign-born population in Illinois; however, according to immigration experts, members of these groups generally have less need for ESOL classes than immigrants from the Philippines, India, Korea, and China (Paral, 2000b, 5). Similarly, experts told CIR that Cubans are less likely to need ESOL classes, as they are often already fluent in English.

⁴ Although Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, in order to ensure that the needs of this population are incorporated into needs assessment for ESOL services, they are included in our discussion of foreign-born immigrants.

Table 2
Estimated Number of Illinois Immigrants with English Language Learning Needs
Completing Five Years' Residence in Illinois, by Year

Country of Origin	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
Mexico	4,582	2,915	6,795	4,606	4,663	23,560
Poland	4,801	1,907	2,378	1,868	2,567	13,521
India	655	603	773	314	343	2,688
Korea	407	305	346	347	348	1,753
China	766	439	44	126	250	1,624
Philippines	216	216	214	210	210	1,067
Guatemala	167	127	165	148	149	756
Other	4,137	4,927	5,058	7,206	6,154	27,482
Total	15,730	11,439	15,774	14,823	14,685	72,452

Source: Paral, *Citizenship 2000: Illinois Immigrants and Naturalization*

Table 2 indicates that the need for English to Speakers of Other Languages classes among Mexican and Polish immigrants in Illinois will far exceed that of other immigrant subgroups in coming years. Immigrants from India, Korea, China, the Philippines, and Guatemala will also be in need of ESOL services.

Table 3
Estimated Number of Illinois Immigrants with English Language Learning Needs as
Percent of Total Number Completing Five Years' Residence

Country of Origin	Estimated Number Completing 5 Years Residence, 2000-2004	Estimated Limited English Proficient Population, 2000-2004	Percent Limited English Proficient by 2004
Mexico	41,067	23,560	57.4%
Korea	3,335	1,753	52.6%
Poland	35,218	13,521	38.4%
Guatemala	2,137	756	35.4%
China	5,165	1,624	31.4%
India	16,757	2,688	16.0%
Philippines	12,688	1,067	8.4%
Other	76,572	27,482	35.9%
Total	192,918	72,452	37.6%

Source: Paral, *Citizenship 2000: Illinois Immigrants and Naturalization*

In reviewing these immigrant population figures, it is also important to consider the projected percentage of immigrants within each subgroup who will not be proficient in English by 2004. In Table 3 we see that an estimated 52% of the Korean foreign-born population arriving between 2000 and 2004 will not speak English well. This high

proportion places Koreans second only to the Mexicans, for whom over one-half (57.4%) of the immigrant population will be in need of ESOL classes in 2004 after completing five years of residency. In terms of their numbers, however, Korean immigrants in need of ESOL services will be far fewer than Mexican and Polish immigrants.

Population Growth and Legal Status of Immigrant Groups in Illinois and Metropolitan Chicago

In his discussion of 2000 Census data for metropolitan Chicago, Max Dieber of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission noted that two-thirds of the overall population growth in the Chicago metropolitan area in the 2000 Census is attributable to growth in the Latino population.⁵ Moreover, the Latino growth rate between 1990 and 2000 doubled the rate of growth from 1980 to 1990. The 2000 Census shows that the Latino population comprises 17% of the total regional population and accounts for most of the population growth in all six counties of the Chicago metropolitan region. Mexicans constitute 75% of the region's Latino population and are responsible for 84% of its growth between 1980 and 1990 (U.S. Census, 2000).

Dieber noted that 2000 Census data shows that the rest of the region's growth in population between 1990 and 2000 is due to an increase in the Asian and African-American population. Asian Indians represent 30% of the Asian population, yet they account for 43% of the growth in the Asian population between 1990 and 2000. The non-Hispanic white population accounts for approximately one-third of Chicago's total population, and two-thirds of the suburban population. About two-thirds of the region's African-American and Latino population reside in Chicago (68% and 64% respectively), and one-third of the region's Asian population resides in Chicago. Residential segregation in the suburbs is greatest for African-Americans, with Asians and Latinos residing in larger numbers in a wider range of suburban communities. Settlement trends for foreign-born racial minorities in the 2000 Census are likely to resemble these patterns.

⁵ Presentation by Max Dieber at the Harris School of Public Policy, May 2001.

Table 4
Estimates of Illinois' Foreign-Born Population in 1997, by Legal Status⁶

Total Foreign Born	1,366,745 (100%)
Mexico	504,336 (36.9%)
Legal Permanent Resident Entrant	333,822 (24.4%)
Undocumented	170,513 (12.5%)
Poland	176,272 (12.9%)
Legal Permanent Resident Entrant	112,436 (8.2%)
Undocumented	57,739 (4.2%)
Asylee	6,098 (.4%)
All Other	686,138 (50.2%)
Legal Permanent Resident Entrant	560,523 (41.0%)
Undocumented	71,620 (5.2%)
Refugee/Asylee	53,994 (4.0%)

Source: Paral, <i>Citizenship 2000: Illinois Immigrants and Naturalization</i>
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Table 4 shows that in 1997 an estimated 21.9% of the total foreign-born population in Illinois was undocumented. An estimated 333,822 (24.4%) of the foreign-born population in Illinois were Mexican immigrants with legal status in March 1997. Approximately 170,513 (12.5%) of the state's foreign-born population were undocumented immigrants from Mexico. An estimated 112,436 (8.2%) of Illinois' foreign-born population were Polish immigrants with legal status in March 1997, while 57,739 (4.2%) of the Polish foreign-born were estimated to be undocumented and 6,098 (.4%) had emigrated from Poland to seek asylum. Figures in Table 4 indicate that undocumented immigrants represent a range of national groups.

Qualitative evidence suggests that there is a significant population of undocumented immigrants in Illinois among those who enroll in ESOL classes. For example, the ESOL staff at one Chicago community college told CIR that roughly half of their students are undocumented immigrants, basing this estimate on the large number of ESOL students for whom staff must create an identification number because they lack social security numbers.

⁶ The discrepancy between the percent of the foreign-born population represented by Polish and Mexican immigrants in Table 4 and the percentages found in Table 1 is most likely due to the fact that Table 4 takes a snapshot of the foreign-born in 1997, whereas Table 1 is based on a compilation of data from 1994-1998.

The Foreign-Born Population in the City of Chicago

Table 5
Top Ten Immigrant Neighborhoods in the City of Chicago by
Percentage Foreign-Born of Total, 1990 Census⁷

Chicago Community Area	% Foreign-Born of Total Population	Total Foreign-Born Population
1. Lower West Side (Pilsen)	96.6%	22,434
2. South Lawndale (Little Village)	88.3%	38,057
3. Albany Park	87.4%	23,083
4. Armour Square	80.6%	4,819
5. Avondale	65.1%	14,029
6. West Ridge	63.6%	25,405
7. Lincoln Square	60.4%	16,910
8. North Park	51.0%	5,483
9. Uptown	48.4%	20,809
10. Belmont Cragin	47.0%	18,169

Table 5 shows the ten community areas of Chicago with the highest proportion of foreign-born residents in 1990. In four of these communities—the Lower West Side (Pilsen),⁸ South Lawndale (Little Village),⁹ Albany Park, and Armour Square—over 80% of the population is foreign-born.

Major Immigrant Groups in Chicago

Immigrants from Mexico

According to CPS data for 1994-1998, Mexicans are the largest immigrant group in Illinois with 91.8% living in the six-county Chicago metropolitan area (2000 Census data for the number of foreign-born is not yet available). Mexican immigrants also have been moving to Joliet (1.3%) and Rockford (1.6%). Estimates by the City of Chicago Department of Development and Planning indicate that since the 1990 Census, the Latino population has expanded out from the central city to the northwest and southwest sides of the city.¹⁰

Given the requirements for citizenship, attaining citizenship status is an indicator of the degree to which an immigrant is able to function in English. The process of becoming a naturalized citizen can begin after a foreign born resident has lived in the U.S. legally for

⁷ Marc Thomas at the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) provided these 1990 Census figures.

⁸ The Lower West Side community area is also known as Pilsen.

⁹ The South Lawndale community area includes the Latino neighborhood of Little Village.

¹⁰ Marie Bousfield at the City of Chicago Department of Development and Planning provided this information in an interview

a minimum of five years. After applying, the immigrant attends an interview, at which time the candidate is required to demonstrate proficiency in oral and written English. In addition, the candidate must pass an examination in English that covers the Constitution, civics, and history of the United States. (Paral, 2000b, p.3). Almost 80% of Mexican immigrants in Illinois are not U.S. citizens and less than 20% are naturalized citizens.

Table 6
Twenty Chicago Community Areas with the Largest Latino Populations, 2000 Census

Community Area	Latino Pop. Growth 1990-2000¹¹	Total Latino Pop. 2000
South Lawndale (Little Village)	9.4%	75,613
Logan Square	-1.7%	53,833
Belmont Cragin	198.1%	50,881
West Town	-24.6%	40,966
Lower West Side (Pilsen)	-2.7%	39,144
Lincoln Park	185.7%	34,409
Humbolt Park	6.3%	31,607
Gage Park	193.9%	31,079
Norwood Park	69.9%	26,741
Avondale	99.9%	26,700
New City	24.1%	25,948
Irving Park	107.8%	25,401
Hermosa	42.0%	22,574
Chicago Lawn	48.0%	21,534
Rogers Park	46.9%	17,639
East Side	97.1%	16,113
West Lawn	502.6%	15,179
Portage Park	239.9%	15,022
Uptown	-12.0%	12,674
Edison Park	113.4%	12,176

Table 6 identifies the community areas in the City of Chicago with the largest Latino populations in 2000 as well as the rate of growth in the Latino population of these communities between 1990 and 2000. Although Mexicans make up the majority of the Latino population in Chicago, in many of these communities identified, Puerto Ricans comprise a significant percentage of the Latino population, particularly in Belmont Cragin, Portage Park, Hermosa, and Avondale (U.S. Census, 1990).

¹¹ Marie Bousfield, demographer in the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development provided the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census figures for Chicago community areas.

Table 6A
Twenty Chicago Community Areas with the Highest Rate of Growth in Latino Population, 1990-2000

Community	Latino Pop. Growth 1990-2000	Total Latino Pop. 2000
Archer Heights	604.1%	5,485
West Elsdon	593.8%	7,875
West Lawn	502.6%	15,179
Montclare	305.8%	4,865
Near South Side	249.1%	377
Portage Park	239.9%	15,022
Belmont Cragin	198.1%	50,881
Gage Park	193.9%	31,079
Clearing	190.3%	4,688
Dunning	189.1%	5,441
Ashburn	186.3%	6,674
Brighton Park	185.7%	34,409
Fuller Park	183.0%	116
Washington Park	179.2%	134
Jefferson Park	176.8%	2,881
Norwood Park	139.7%	2,409
Forest Glen	138.3%	1,389
Garfield Ridge	137.1%	5,948
Hegewisch	118.6%	2,820
Edison Park	113.4%	463

Table 6A identifies the community areas in the City of Chicago that have had the largest increases in Latino population between 1990 and 2000. The high growth rate of the Latino population in many Chicago communities is indicative of the increasingly dispersed pattern of Latino residence throughout the city. As it is reasonable to correlate growth in the total Latino population with a concomitant growth in the number of Latino immigrants, Table 6A data confirm reports by immigrant service providers to CIR about the expansion in the number of communities serving as ports of entry for immigrants.

Figure 1
Twenty Largest Latino Neighborhoods in Chicago and
Number of People Who Speak Spanish at Home, 1990 Census

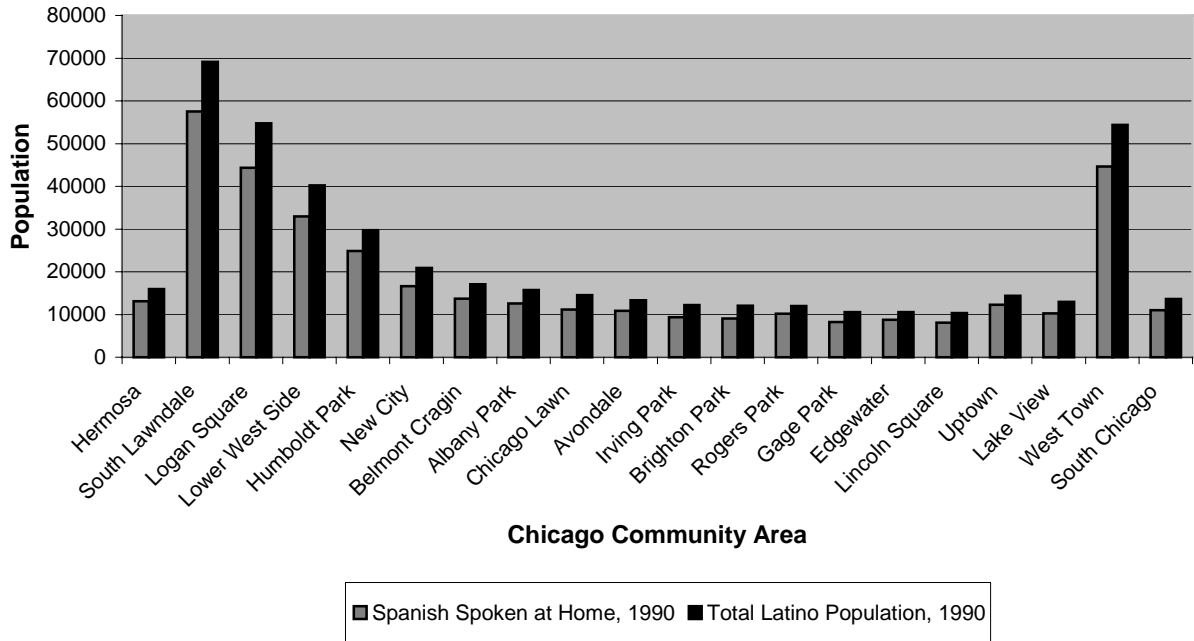


Figure 1 shows 1990 Census data for the number people who speak Spanish at home in Chicago’s most populous Latino neighborhoods. The predominantly Latino communities of South Lawndale and the Lower West Side have served as ports of entry for Latino immigrants for many years. However, between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population in South Lawndale increased by only 9.4% while in the Lower West Side it declined by 2.5%. These data are consistent with claims by immigrant groups and service providers that immigrants are bypassing traditional inner city ports of entry.

Immigrants from Poland in Chicago

According to the Current Population Survey (CPS), between 1994 and 1998, Polish immigrants accounted for 6.7% of the foreign-born population in Illinois and .9% of the state’s total population. Over 50% of Polish immigrants in Illinois are not U.S. citizens; approximately 40% are naturalized citizens (CPS 1994-98). Most Polish immigrants (93.9%) in Illinois reside in the six-county Chicago metropolitan area; 2.4% live in Rockford; and .4% live in non-metropolitan areas in Illinois (CPS 1994-98).

In the early 1900s, Polish immigrants in Chicago settled in the Logan Square area, in a neighborhood known to the Polish community as Jackosowo. Later they would move away from the central city to Jefferson Park on the northwest side. Service providers told CIR that a new pattern is emerging with neighborhoods on northwest and southwest sides of Chicago acting as ports of entry for Polish immigrants in addition to Logan Square.

Polish immigrants also are moving to northwest and southwest suburban communities adjacent to the city.

*Other Immigrant and Refugee Groups*¹²

A wide spectrum of national groups comprises the remainder of the immigrant and refugee population in Chicago, including those from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. According to CPS data compiled from 1994-1998, 96.9% of all other immigrants in Illinois reside in metropolitan areas, although a smaller proportion (88.5%) live in the Chicago metropolitan area compared to Mexican and Polish immigrants. In addition, 2.1% live in Rockford and 1.3% in Peoria-Pekin vicinity. Small proportions of all other immigrants live in the Quad Cities area (.3%), Kankakee (.3%), and St. Louis (.8%). The remaining 3.1% of other immigrant groups live in non-metropolitan communities throughout the state.

Table 7
The Ten Most Common Languages in Bilingual Education Programs in Illinois Schools, FY 1999

Language	State		City of Chicago	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Spanish	106,555	77.37	58,318	80.45
Polish	6,620	4.81	4,108	5.67
Urdu	2,259	1.64	1,230	1.70
Arabic	2,210	1.60	1,012	1.40
Serbian/Croatian/ Bosnian	1,921	1.39	1,275	1.76
Korean	1,793	1.30	243	0.34
Gujarati	1,761	1.28	264	0.36
Cantonese	1,507	1.09	1,159	1.60
Russian	1,337	0.97	413	0.57
Vietnamese	1,260	0.91	690	0.95
Others	10,494	7.63	3,420	4.73

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Research, FY 1999 Evaluation Report

Table 7 presents the most common languages in bilingual education programs in Illinois. The figures are indicative of the relative size and distribution of leading immigrant groups in Illinois. Spanish is by far the most common language statewide, followed by Polish, Urdu, Arabic, and Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian. In addition to Spanish and Polish, students in bilingual programs in Illinois commonly speak Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, Urdu and Cantonese, while students in downstate Illinois programs frequently speak Korean, Gujarati, and Arabic.

¹² These subgroups consist of all foreign-born persons not born in Poland or Mexico, and they will be referred to as “all other immigrants.”

Types of Employment Among Chicago Immigrants

Immigrants in the city of Chicago are employed in a wide range of settings, with some differences by ethnicity. For example, immigrant service providers in Chicago reported to CIR that a large number of Latino immigrants are working in factories and restaurants, while many Polish immigrants are employed in fields such as hotel housekeeping, janitorial services, home health care, and child care. Many immigrants work several jobs, including one full-time and one or more part-time jobs, making free time a scarce resource.

ESOL Needs Among Immigrants in Chicago

Although the Current Population Survey does not include a direct question about English proficiency, the 1990 Census has a response category, “Speaks English not very well,” which we used to estimate the number of residents in various communities who were English Language Learners in 1990.

Table 8
Estimated English Language Learning (ELL) Population in
25 Targeted Communities in the City of Chicago for 2000

Chicago Community Area¹³	1990 Total Pop.	1990 Adult ELL Pop. (Age ≥18)¹⁴	1990 % ELL	2000 Total Pop.	2000 Estimated Adult ELL Pop. (Age ≥18)¹⁵
<i>South Lawndale (Little Village)</i>	81,155	18,435	22.7	91,071	20,687
West Town	87,703	14,263	16.3	87,435	14,219
Logan Square	82,605	11,747	14.2	82,715	11,762
<i>Lower West Side (Pilsen)</i>	45,654	10,822	23.7	44,031	10,437
<i>Belmont Cragin</i>	56,787	6,791	12.0	78,144	9,345
<i>Avondale</i>	35,579	6,958	20.0	43,083	8,426
<i>Albany Park</i>	49,501	7,112	14.4	57,655	8,284
<i>Uptown</i>	63,839	6,774	10.6	63,551	6,743
Humboldt Park	67,573	6,226	9.2	65,836	6,065
<i>West Ridge</i>	65,374	4,997	7.6	73,199	5,595
Brighton Park	32,207	3,783	11.7	44,912	5,275
Rogers Park	60,378	4,867	8.0	63,484	5,117
New City	53,226	5,118	9.6	51,721	4,973
Edgewater	60,703	4,210	6.9	62,198	4,313
<i>Lincoln Square</i>	44,891	4,286	9.5	44,574	4,255
Hermosa	23,131	3,615	15.6	26,908	4,205
Irving Park	50,159	3,591	7.1	58,643	4,198
Portage Park	56,513	3,591	6.3	65,340	4,151
Chicago Lawn	51,243	3,335	6.5	61,412	3,997
Lake View	91,031	3,302	3.6	94,817	3,439
Bridgeport	29,877	2,919	9.8	33,694	3,292
Gage Park	26,957	2,245	8.3	39,193	3,264
<i>Armour Square</i>	10,801	2,447	22.7	12,032	2,726
South Chicago	40,776	2,348	5.8	38,596	2,222
<i>North Park</i>	16,236	982	6.0	18,514	1,119
Total	1,283,899	144,764	11.3	525,854	158,112

Table 8 presents CIR’s estimates the number of English Language Learning (ELL) immigrants in twenty-five Chicago community areas in 2000. These communities were targeted for one or more of the following reasons:

- They were among the ten neighborhoods with the largest percentage of foreign-born population.
- They had over 2,000 English Language Learning (ELL) persons in 1990.

¹³ The ten Chicago Community Areas in italics are those with the largest percentage of foreign-born residents in their populations in 1990 Census (see Table 5 above).

¹⁴ ELL population for 1990 is based on 1990 Census data for category, “Speaks English not very well.”

¹⁵ The estimate for the English Language Learning (ELL) population for 2000 here is based on the 2000 Census figures for each community area and the percentage of ELL population in each community area in the 1990 Census. The current percentage of the population that is ELL is probably higher, which indicates that these estimates may be on the low or conservative side.

- A significantly large proportion of their total population consisted of English Language Learners in 1990.

In determining the number of immigrants with ESOL needs, an estimate of the English Language Learning (ELL) population is particularly informative. It suggests a broad picture of the pattern of immigrant residence within Chicago, indicating where this population is most concentrated and the corresponding geographic distribution of need for services. Although traditional ports of entry such as Pilsin, Logan Square, and Little Village continue to have the largest ELL populations, the ELL population is increasingly dispersed in communities throughout the city.

Immigrants in Chicago Suburban Communities

Immigrants living in the six-county Chicago metropolitan region are diverse in their national origins and dispersed throughout the region. For example, DuPage County has a particularly large number of Asian immigrants, while Russian and Eastern European immigrants are settling in Lake County, and Latinos are moving to communities throughout the six-county region.

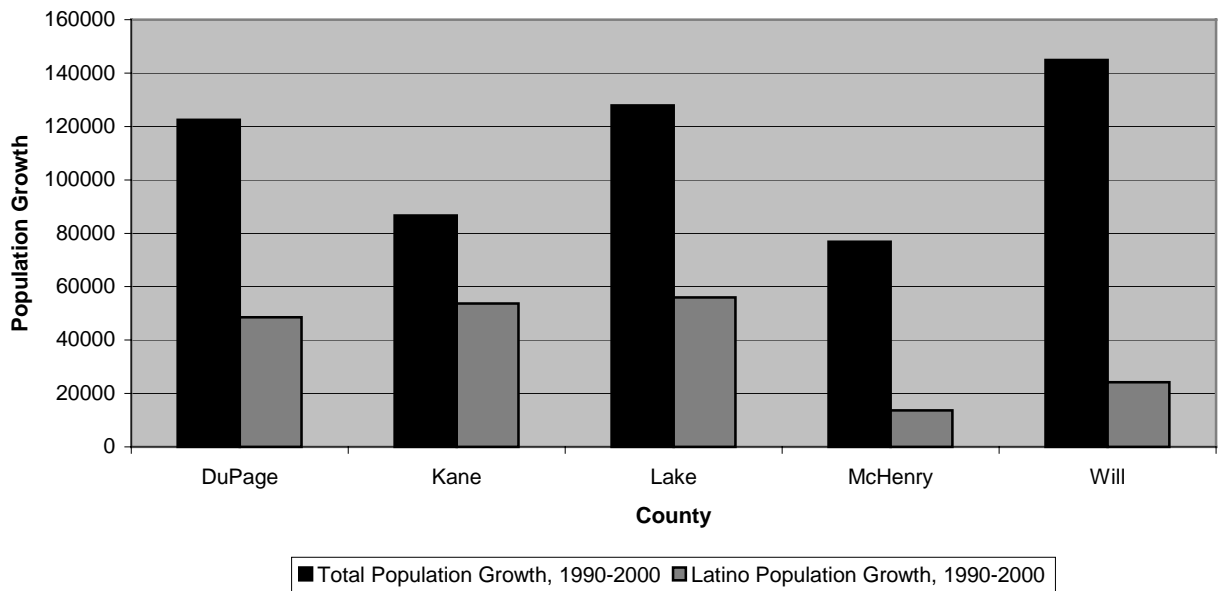
Suburban Cook County

Immigrant service providers informed CIR that there is a tremendous need for ESOL classes in suburban Cook County. According to 2000 Census data, large Latino populations—many of whom are ELL immigrants—live in Cook County suburbs. Latinos represent 79% of the total population in Stone Park; 77% in Cicero; 54% in Melrose Park; and 49% in Summit.

Immigrant service providers told CIR that many Polish immigrants are moving out to the northwest and southwest suburbs, such as Niles, Des Plaines, Mt. Prospect, Arlington Heights, Norridge, Park Ridge, Morton Grove, Lemont, and Prospect Heights. A spokeswoman from a Bensenville church stated that large numbers of Polish speakers from Itasca, Elk Grove Village, and Roselle travel to Bensenville for church.

Immigrant service providers in suburban Cook County most frequently told CIR that immigrants are employed in factories. Other types of employment include construction, trucking, and the service sector (including hotels, restaurants, and supermarkets).

Figure 2
U.S. Census Figures for Population Growth in Collar Counties, 1990 to 2000



DuPage County

According to the 2000 Census, the Latino population in DuPage County grew by 48, 571 (135%) between 1990 and 2000, to a total of 81,366 Latinos. This growth in the Latino population accounts for 39.6% of the total growth in the county.

The increasingly diverse population in DuPage County includes many Asian immigrants as well, in particular immigrants from China, South Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Pakistan, India, and the Philippines. The Asian population in DuPage County increased by 80% between 1990 and 2000 (U.S. Census, 2000). Immigrant service providers frequently reported to CIR that a growing number of immigrants from Russia as well as Middle Eastern, North African, and Eastern European countries are settling in DuPage County.

Community spokespersons reported to CIR that the DuPage suburbs of Villa Park, Lombard, West Chicago, Wood Dale, Darien, and Woodridge have underserved immigrant communities, and that the increase in the number of Latino immigrants is particularly high in Bensenville.

Immigrant service providers told CIR that employment for immigrants living in DuPage County ranges from landscaping and factory work to construction and restaurants. An ESOL teacher in DuPage County noted that immigrants with advanced degrees who have limited English skills find work in fields such as janitorial services and home care for elderly.

Kane County

In Kane County, the total Latino population is 404,119 in 2000, an increase of 53,690 between 1990 and 2000 (U.S. Census, 2000). The growth among Latinos accounted for 62% of the overall population growth in Kane County. Immigrants enrolled in ESOL classes at the Literacy Connection in Elgin represent twenty-eight different nationalities; at least 85% are from Mexico with a growing proportion from India and Yugoslavia.

A substantial proportion of immigrants in Kane County find employment in the area's many factories; they also work in restaurants and find seasonal employment in landscaping. ESOL service providers told CIR that changing work schedules—particularly for those employed in factories—make it difficult for many immigrants to attend classes regularly.

Lake County

The current Lake County Latino population is 92,716 (U.S. Census, 2000). The Latino population grew by 55,981 between the 1990 and 2000, which accounts for nearly 44% of the total population growth in Lake County. The communities where the Latino population is rapidly expanding include Highwood, Highland Park, and Waukegan.

McHenry County

Between 1990 and 2000 the Latino population in McHenry County increased by 13,702 to 19,602, which represents 17.8% of the county's total population growth (U.S. Census, 2000). Crystal Lake, McHenry, Harvard, and Woodstock have the highest proportions of Latino residents among communities in McHenry County. School districts in the county offer bilingual education in Spanish to meet the needs of the sizeable number of English Language Learning (ELL) students.

Immigrant service organizations told CIR that many of the Latino immigrants in McHenry County are former or current migrant workers employed in landscaping, nurseries, or agricultural work; some leave in the off-season while others stay to work in factories. They report that although the majority of immigrants in McHenry County continue to come from Mexico, the number coming as migrant agricultural workers has declined significantly in recent years because the county has been changing from an agricultural to a more industrial economy. Other Latino immigrants also work full time in factories, hotels, hospitals, and O'Hare airport.

Will County

The Latino population in Will County grew by 24,244 between 1990 and 2000 to 43,768, accounting for nearly 17% of the county's total population growth, with growth particularly strong in Joliet (U.S. Census, 2000). As in other counties, organizations reported to CIR that Latino immigrants in Will County find employment in landscaping, restaurants, and factories.

Immigrants in Metropolitan Chicago with English Language Learning Needs (ELL)

In formulating a picture of the distribution of the English Language Learning (ELL) population in the Chicago metropolitan area, CIR utilized data on bilingual education programs from the Illinois Board of Education and projections for the current ELL adult population based on 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census figures.

Table 9
Students in Bilingual Programs in Six-County Chicago Metropolitan Region, 1999

Location	Total Number of Students in Bilingual Programs	Percentage of Total Students in Bilingual Programs in IL
City of Chicago	72,490	52.64
Suburban Cook County	29,009	21.06
DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, Will Counties	29,720	21.58
TOTAL for Chicago and 6-county metropolitan area	131,219	95.28

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Research, FY 1999 Evaluation Report

Table 9 shows that over 95% of the total number students enrolled in bilingual programs in Illinois reside in school districts in the six-county Chicago metropolitan region. Chicago District #299 enrolls 10% more students in bilingual programs than all of the districts in suburban Cook County, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties combined.

Table 9A
Top 25 School Districts in Illinois with the Largest Bilingual Education Programs:
English Language Learning (ELL) Students Identified and Served in Bilingual Education
Programs in Illinois Schools, 1998-1999

Illinois School District	Number Identified	Number Served* ¹⁶	Percent Served
City of Chicago School District #299	67,179	72,490	107.91
Cicero School District #99	5,259	5,501	104.60
Elgin School District #46	6,355	4,438	69.83
Waukegan Community Unit School District #60	3,119	3,782	121.26
Aurora East Unit School District #131	3,266	3,087	94.52
Palatine Community Consolidated School District #15	1,899	2,050	107.95
Rockford School District #205	1,827	1,782	97.54
Carpentersville Community Unit School District #300	1,772	1,759	99.27
Arlington Heights Community Consolidated School District #59	1,254	1,711	136.44
Wheeling Community Consolidated School District #21	1,379	1,435	104.06
Round Lake Area Schools - District #116	1,048	1,153	110.02
West Chicago School District #33	1,064	1,084	101.88
Schaumburg Community Consolidated School District #54	791	1,068	135.02
Arlington Heights Township High School District #214	781	982	125.74
Joliet School District #86	897	816	90.97
Des Plaines Community Consolidated School District #62	634	797	125.71
Addison School District #4	662	745	112.54
Bensenville School District #2	359	595	165.74
Indian Prairie CUSD #204	475	580	122.11
Maywood-Melrose Park-Broadview #89	603	576	95.52
Marquardt School District #15	422	545	129.15
Glenview Community Consolidated School District #34	363	512	141.05
Blue Island - Cook County School District #130	401	497	123.94
Palatine Township High School District #211	457	471	103.06
Berwyn South School District #100	309	465	150.49
All Other Districts	24,615 ¹⁷	28,796	29.27
State Totals	127,190	137,717	108.28

*FY99 Annual Student Report

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Research, FY 1999 Evaluation Report

Table 9A shows the Illinois School Districts with the largest bilingual education programs in 1998-1999. The figures indicate that the majority of these programs are

¹⁶ “The data show that over 100% of the students identified as eligible for bilingual education programs in the Public School Fall Enrollment/Housing Report were served, with 19 school districts reported serving more than 100% of the eligible students in their areas. Those numbers may be skewed by student migration into and between schools and the fact that data collected on students served the entire school year, while the Fall Enrollment/Housing Report includes only students enrolled as of the reporting date” (Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Research, FY 1999 Evaluation Report, p.4).

¹⁷ In the table appearing in the Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Research, FY 1999 Evaluation Report, the total for Number Identified in All Other Districts is misstated as 98,398.

located in school districts in the six-county Chicago metropolitan area and 52% of students in bilingual programs in Illinois live in the City of Chicago school district.

Table 10
Actual/Estimated Number of Foreign-Born English Language Learners in the Chicago Metropolitan Region by County in 1990/2000

County	1990 Total Pop.	1990 Adult ELL Pop. (Age ≥18)	2000 Total Pop.	Est 2000 ELL Pop (Age ≥18)¹⁸	Est % ELL Pop. of Total County Pop. 2000	Est % County ELL Pop. of Total Metro ELL Pop. 2000
Cook	5,105,067	217,185	5,376,741	228,742	4.2%	82.4%
Kane	371,471	9,278	404,119	16,093	3.9%	5.8%
DuPage	781,666	11,765	904,161	13,608	1.5%	4.9%
Lake	516,418	9,440	644,356	11,778	1.8%	4.2%
Will	357,313	3,586	502,266	5,040	1.0%	1.8%
McHenry	183,241	1,717	260,077	2,436	.9%	.9%
Total	7,315,176	252,971	8,091,720	277,697		

Table 10 presents estimated total numbers of immigrants who have limited English proficiency for by county; the estimated proportion of the total county populations that they represent; and the proportion of each county’s ELL population to the total ELL population of the six-county metropolitan region. Approximately 82% of the estimated Chicago metropolitan 2000 ELL population reside in Cook County, with the second highest number and proportion of ELL population in Kane County.

¹⁸ As in Table 8 above, the estimate for the English Language Learning (ELL) population for 2000 here is based on the 2000 Census figures for each county and the percentage of ELL population in each county in the 1990 Census. The current percentage of the population that is ELL is probably higher, which indicates that these estimates may be on the low or conservative side.

Table 11
Estimated English Language Learning (ELL) Population for 2000 in
20 Targeted Suburban Communities

Municipality	1990 Total Pop	1990 ELL Pop¹⁹	1990 % ELL	2000 Total Pop	2000 Est ELL Pop
Cicero	67,436	13,184	19.6	85,616	16,738
Aurora	99,556	9,397	9.4	142,990	13,496
Waukegan	69,392	8,706	12.5	87,901	11,028
Elgin	77,010	8,317	10.8	94,487	10,204
Des Plaines	53,414	9,144	17.1	58,720	10,052
Joliet	77,217	4,570	5.9	106,221	6,287
Mount Prospect	53,168	5,207	9.8	56,265	5,510
Addison	32,053	4,069	12.7	35,914	4,559
Melrose Park	20,859	3,940	18.9	23,171	4,376
Berwyn	45,426	3,545	7.8	54,016	4,215
West Chicago	14,808	2,511	17.0	23,469	3,979
Arlington Heights	75,463	3,210	4.3	76,031	3,234
Franklin Park	18,485	2,692	14.6	19,434	2,830
Blue Island	23,030	2,704	11.7	23,463	2,754
Bensenville	17,767	2,295	12.9	20,703	2,674
Palatine	38,894	1,536	3.9	65,479	2,585
Summit	9,971	1,778	17.8	10,637	1,897
Harwood Heights	7,680	1,273	16.6	8,297	1,375
Stone Park	4,383	1,156	26.4	5,127	1,352
Round Lake	3,549	280	7.9	5,842	460
Totals	809,561	89,514		1,003,783	109,605

Table 11 estimates the need for ESOL in 2000 in twenty suburban communities that were targeted for one or more of the following reasons:

- They were cited in CIR interviews as having a large foreign-born population and a need for ESOL classes.
- They experienced a large population growth between the 1990 and 2000 Census, which experts told CIR is largely attributable to immigration.
- A large percentage of their total population was English Language Learning (ELL) in the 1990 Census.

Using the percentage of the ELL population for 1990 with 2000 Census data to calculate the 2000 ELL population figures, we conservatively estimate an increase of 22.4% or 20,091 in the ELL population for these twenty suburbs. The five suburbs with the largest ELL populations— Cicero, Aurora, Des Plaines, Waukegan, and Elgin—together account for 56% of the estimated total ELL population of 109,605 in these twenty communities.

¹⁹ Data was not available at the community level for the “ability to speak English” variable by age in the 1990 Census. Consequently, the ELL population in Table 11 includes persons ages 5 and above, while Tables 8 and 10 include adults over the age of 18 only, as indicated.

Estimates of the English Language Learning (ELL) Population in the City of Chicago and the Six-County Chicago Metropolitan Region

The information on the distribution of bilingual educational programs (Tables 9, 9A) and English Language Learning (ELL) populations (Tables 8, 10, and 11) taken together presents the larger picture of the geographical distribution of need for ESOL services in metropolitan Chicago. We are acutely aware that these figures may significantly underestimate the numbers of ELL individuals, given the increases in percentage of population represented by Latinos as documented by the 2000 Census data and the increase in other immigrant populations as documented through CIR's interviews with service providers and other experts. However, until further 2000 Census data details become available, we choose to make a conservative estimate.

- Estimated total ELL population (age ≥ 18) in Chicago and six-county metropolitan area, 2000 **277,700**
- Estimated students (K-12) in bilingual programs in Chicago and the six-county metropolitan area, 1999 **125,000**
- Estimated total ELL population (age ≥ 18) in 25 major immigrant community areas in City of Chicago, 2000 **158,112**
- Estimated students (K-12) in bilingual programs in the City of Chicago School District **79,490**

While the demographic data and estimates are useful for identifying the largest ELL populations—the City of Chicago and some of its suburbs— it is important not to limit ourselves to a focus on communities that are known to have large immigrant populations. The need for ESOL services in the immigrant communities of McHenry County and Lake County, as well as other communities with growing immigrant populations also should be assessed and addressed carefully, keeping in mind that these populations often reside far from major ESOL service providers.

II. Barriers to Accessing ESOL Services

Methodology

To better understand how English-as-a-Second Language (ESOL) services could be configured to meet the needs of immigrant households in the Chicago metropolitan area, CIR conducted 76 interviews with service providers, clergy, community leaders, and academic experts in the winter and spring of 2001. CIR also conducted 37 interviews with immigrants in the Chicago region in the spring of 2001. In addition, McHenry County College administered a written CIR survey in Spanish to approximately 200 individuals enrolled in ESOL classes at the college.

A total of 25 Mexican immigrants were interviewed in Spanish in Des Plaines, Aurora, Berwyn, Northlake, and Elgin. Seven of these immigrants were currently enrolled in ESOL classes; one had completed a program; seven in Des Plaines participated in a focus group; and ten were interviewed in laundromats in Berwyn and Aurora. In Chicago's Uptown neighborhood, CIR conducted six interviews with Chinese immigrants who were enrolled in a beginning level ESOL class. A Polish immigrant conducted five interviews in Polish for CIR with Polish immigrants in Niles, Schaumburg, Vernon Hills, Elk Grove Village, and Palatine. McHenry County College administered a formal written CIR survey in Spanish to approximately 200 individuals enrolled in ESOL classes at the college.

The majority of the immigrants interviewed were employed. With only a few exceptions, all of these immigrants expressed the strong need and desire to learn English. Many mentioned someone they knew who had learned English and obtained a better-paying job with opportunities for future advancement.

CIR has learned much from these interviews that can inform the provision of ESOL services for working immigrant households. Although sweeping generalizations cannot be made because of the limited number of communities and individuals that we have surveyed, we believe that the barriers identified by immigrant service agencies and the households themselves are similar to those in other communities.

We have identified six major barriers to accessing ESOL instruction:

- *Onerous work schedules and/or schedule mismatches*
Many immigrants work two jobs or obtain as much overtime as they can, making attendance at ESOL classes difficult. Often the ESOL program that is closest to home or work offers classes only at times that conflict with work schedules.
- *Changing work schedules*
The schedules of some immigrants change from week to week, making consistent attendance in class difficult.
- *Child care*
In many cases, one parent works while the other takes care of the children; then the other parent goes to work, leaving the first to take care of the children. Neither parent is free to attend ESOL classes without child care. Many non-working immigrant women are also not able to attend ESOL classes without child care.
- *Transportation*
For those without cars, public transportation may be unavailable or unavailable in the evenings.
- *Mobility*

Due to housing difficulties and lack of job stability or seasonal jobs, many immigrant families change their residence frequently, causing high attrition rates in ESOL programs.

- *Difficulties with ESOL Instruction*

Many of the immigrants that were interviewed said that they had trouble understanding or following the English instruction when their own language was not spoken. Almost unanimously, immigrants wanted opportunities for shorter classes, held on a daily basis, during which they could practice English conversation. Many immigrants said that they had no one in their family or neighborhood with whom they could practice English.

I would like now to discuss further what immigrants, ESOL instructors, and immigrant service providers told CIR about these six points.

Onerous Work Schedules and/or Schedule Mismatches

Many immigrants spoke about how tired they were from their work schedules. Even though they are interested in learning English, their first priority is to work as much as possible. Some stated that they could not commit to classes because they are so tired from their long hours at work. For example, employment in nurseries and landscaping are among the most prevalent jobs in the suburbs; typically this work has very long hours during spring and summer and requires considerable physical exertion.

Social service providers told us that Polish immigrants are often employed in hotel housekeeping, private homes, janitorial services, and factory/industrial work; they commonly work two to three jobs, one of which is full-time. For this reason, classes need to be offered continuously throughout the day and evening and on Saturdays and Sundays to accommodate employment schedules. Providers told us that the lack of affordable housing in many suburban areas leads to immigrants working extended hours. As one provider said, “Their priorities are to have food, clothing, and shelter for their children, as well as a little sleep, so they just don’t have time to learn English.”

One social services provider, who offers ESOL classes for Chinese and other Asian immigrants, stated that younger restaurant workers take afternoon classes, and relatively young full-time workers enroll in evening classes. She said that evening classes were the most difficult to teach because the immigrants are so tired after working all day. She told CIR that there is a big demand for Saturday classes, but lack of staff prohibits her from scheduling them. One Latino immigrant interviewed in a suburban laundromat stated that the best hours for him would be between seven and nine in the morning before work, when he would be fresher.

A Polish immigrant stated that her husband works hard during the week doing manual labor. She knows that he would advance and if he spoke English better, but due to the rigors of his job, he only would be able to attend weekend classes.

Another Polish woman, who arrived six months ago and is staying with her family, takes care of her grandson during the day. She would have to be driven to evening classes by her daughter or son-in-law; she also feels that weekend classes would be good for her.

A Polish woman from Niles works as a babysitter in Deerfield for 10 to 12 hours a day, Monday through Friday. She is very interested in ESOL classes, but with her work schedule, it is almost impossible to find time for classes during the week.

One man stated that he works during the day and needs evening classes. He drives 25 minutes each way to for evening classes because the program close to him does not offer them.

Changing Work Schedules

Irregular work schedules appear to be as great a problem as onerous schedules. Many ESOL and social services providers stated that immigrants are called into work even if they were not previously scheduled. Others have schedules that change by the week. ESOL providers cited changes in work schedules as one of the main reasons for attrition. One ESOL provider explained that she writes letters to the employers of her students, asking them not to schedule the student on the night that she or he has English class. She noted that employers generally cooperate.

One Latino who moves furniture has been in the U.S. for ten years and has never taken an English class. His hours fluctuate and he does not have a set day off. He works Saturdays and Sundays as well. He stated that it would be very difficult for him to attend ESOL classes with his schedule. He works with native English speakers, so there would be good opportunities for him to practice English conversation if he could figure out a way fit ESOL classes into his work schedule.

Social service providers explained that most of the jobs with changing schedules require minimal or no English proficiency, like those in dry cleaners, hotels, landscaping, stocking, and housekeeping. Over time, the combination of changing work schedules and the lack of a need to speak English on the job may reduce motivation and interest in learning English.

Child Care

Many immigrants stated that they need on-site child care in order to attend ESOL classes, and many ESOL providers are unable to supply it. Many of the immigrants interviewed cited the lack of a babysitter as the reason they were not currently in an ESOL class, and believed that after work their next responsibility was to be with and interact with their children.

According to ESOL providers who do offer child care, they have difficulty in meeting the demand for morning classes because “one person can only take care of so many babies at one time.” Lack of resources means there is often a waiting list of mothers trying to get into these popular morning classes.

Some organizations providing ESOL instruction told us that they lack space for child care. McHenry County College, which does provide some child care, explained that the biggest difficulty with providing child care services is finding people who are willing to provide the care. The college pays only \$7 an hour and can only offer a limited number of hours per week of employment. It can sometimes take a few months to find a part-time child care worker to fill a vacancy.

Another suburban ESOL provider told CIR that providing child care is a large problem during the summer when the children are out of school and demand increases dramatically. The provider explained that an ESOL class ideally should be held between 3 and 5 p.m. when there is a youth program on site, but this does not appear to be a good time for adult ESOL classes.

Providers in Elgin told us that with manufacturing jobs, mothers and fathers usually alternate shifts so that someone is always available to take care of the children, eliminating the need for child care. Therefore, if the father or mother is to take an ESOL class, on-site child care needs to be available.

On-site child care also is necessary to enable the immigrant women whom we interviewed who are taking care of their grandchildren to attend ESOL classes during the day.

Transportation

Most of the immigrants interviewed wanted ESOL classes closer to their homes and some stated that they were not taking classes because they were simply too far from their homes. Many reported that transportation problems make attending ESOL classes difficult. Transportation difficulties, when compounded by onerous work schedules and long travel times to and from work, make it difficult to find time to attend ESOL classes.

Problems obtaining a driver's license, the expense of automobiles and insurance leave many immigrants without access to automobiles. Immigrants interviewed in Des Plaines stated that they have to rely on the bus because they do not drive. Buses stop running at 6:30 p.m., requiring them to return from evening ESOL classes by taxi, which costs seven to eight dollars per ride. Immigrants from Elgin also stated that bus schedules are inconvenient.

In McHenry County, the ESOL provider explained that many of the students carpool to classes. However, when the driver is unavailable, four to five people that come together do not attend class. Some immigrants from Harvard carpool 30 minutes to the ESOL class, but when the car breaks down no one can come to class.

Mobility

Due to temporary and seasonal jobs and the lack of affordable housing, many immigrants frequently change their place of residence. In DuPage County, a major ESOL provider stated that the ESOL attrition rate was partially attributable to the fact that immigrants

may move after the start of classes and sometimes move to another town altogether. Providers serving immigrants in Cicero, Berwyn, and Stickney noted the same problem.

Difficulties with ESOL Instruction

A number of ESOL providers mentioned that many immigrants from rural Mexico have low educational levels and are not literate in Spanish, which presents considerable challenges. Teachers in south Lake County, Kankakee, and Summit stated they have found that many of the Latino immigrants in their areas come from rural areas of Mexico where educational opportunities were lacking. In DuPage County there are ESOL students from Africa and the Middle East who have never been in school before and staff has to teach those students how to hold a pencil. Many providers also discussed the problems with teaching multiple levels of students simultaneously, making it hard to address adequately the needs of those with the lowest literacy skills.

The barrier most frequently cited by immigrants was the nature of the ESOL instruction. We offer their comments because they provide insight into immigrants' opinions of ESOL pedagogy, and they can serve as points for discussion by ESOL providers and community groups.

A number of immigrants told us that some community college ESOL programs are closed during the summer. They said the lack of classes over the summer months interrupts their progress in learning English.

Many immigrants who attended classes in the past or were currently in classes were distressed by the lack of a teacher, tutor, or materials that offered instruction in their native language. Students are discontent with total English immersion and report their inability to practice or review at home when "all the words are in English." An immigrant in Chicago explained that she thought it would be much easier to learn English if she had a bilingual tutor because "it does not help to continue repeating phrases in English when I don't understand the meaning of the words."

The specific problem most frequently cited by immigrants is insufficient opportunities to attend classes in English conversation. They stated that they wanted to practice everyday kinds of conversations, for example, talking on the telephone or interviewing for a job. Many stated they had no one at home with whom they could practice. One Chinese woman and many of the McHenry County ESOL students completing the questionnaires, wanted more opportunities to watch videos and listen to tapes in English so that they could practice listening to spoken English. Many of the immigrants surveyed in McHenry College indicated a need for videos to watch at home.

If opportunities for conversation could not occur in class, students wanted to be able to practice conversational English at locations closer to home. Thirty-six percent of the students surveyed in McHenry County College indicated that they wanted daily classes, or classes at least four times a week. Eleven percent indicated a strong interest in

weekend classes. Some wanted shorter ESOL classes and the opportunity for half-hour or one-hour conversation sessions with tutors close to home or in their own homes. Immigrants frequently expressed that they would be better off with opportunities for daily practice as opposed to two- to three-hour ESOL classes held once or twice a week. One Polish woman thought that ESOL conversation classes should be incorporated into church events on Sundays, because she and others spend a lot of time on church-related activities.

Specific comments by immigrants on this issue include:

”If we were able to go every day during hours we could attend, we could learn more quickly and be able to solve many problems.”

“Can we have more classes please!”

“We need to hear more English daily to be able to speak it. If we can’t speak then we can’t do anything.”

“More days and more hours to practice so that we don’t forget.”

“I want to practice speaking more, because it’s more difficult to speak than understand.”

“Every day for one hour from 6-7 p.m.”

Recommendations

Onerous work schedules, overtime hours, long travel times to work, irregular work schedules, and need for child care mean that it is difficult for many immigrant families to sustain attendance at conventionally scheduled ESOL classes. We have also found that many of these households lack opportunities to practice English conversation or what they have learned in ESOL class because they do not have access to English speakers who are willing to assist them in practicing English.

We need to learn more about what other localities are doing to make ESOL instruction more accessible to immigrant households. What best practices and model programs have been tried, and what can we learn from these efforts? Research and demonstration projects are needed to develop ESOL practices that would increase access to ESOL services for immigrants in the Chicago metropolitan area without compromising the integrity and professionalism of ESOL instruction.

The information in this report indicates that research on the following points would advance discussion of how to remove barriers and increase access to ESOL instruction:

- Weekend classes
- Classes combined with conversational sessions with tutors in immigrant homes or nearby locations
- Availability of daily, short (half-hour to one hour) conversational groups in locations close to home such as churches, elementary schools

- Lending libraries of videotapes and audiotapes, along with the necessary viewing equipment, for home practice
- Greater availability of bilingual teaching and practice materials
- Recruitment of a large ESOL volunteer teaching corps to provide tailored conversational practice in accessible locations on a daily basis
- Greater availability of child care
- Combination of ESOL instruction with child care that is educational, developmental, and that contains family literacy, or joint parent-child English activities

Community Contacts Interviewed by CIR

1. Joanna Borowiec, Polish American Association,
2. David Badillo, Professor of Latin American Studies, University of Illinois-Chicago
3. Marie Bousfield, City of Chicago, Department of Development and Planning, Demographer,
4. Pastora Cafferty, Professor, School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago
5. Tony Orum, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois-Chicago
6. Nancy Uczen, St. Constance Church
7. Rev. Peter Kreis, St. Ladislaus Church
8. Polish Priest, St. Ferdinand Church
9. Ron Jasinski-Herbert, Polish National Alliance (PNA), Public Relations/Internet,
10. Bozena Nowicka McLees
11. Marianna Lach, PNA Polish Information Center
12. Veronica Gonzalez, CANDO
13. Betty Goetz, Director of ESOL program Wilbur Wright College
14. Dolores Zawadzki, Records and Statistics, Wilbur Wright College
15. Joanna Borowiec and Grazyna Zajaczkowska, Polish American Association
16. Dolores Ponce de Leon, Interfaith Leadership Project of Cicero, Berwyn and Stickney
17. Andrea Fiebig, Director of ESOL and Literacy, YWCA of Greater Elgin Area, Chair of
Area Planning Council
18. Carol Garcia, Coordinator of Literacy and ESOL, College of DuPage
19. Oscar Tellez, Executive Director, United Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
20. Dolores Castles, Adult Education Program, Truman College
21. Armando Mata, Dean of Adult Education Program, Truman College
22. Father Fred, Spanish-speaking priest at St. Joseph parish in Wheeling
23. Karen Oswald, Literacy Connection, Elgin
24. Sandra Morales, ICIRR, Chicago
25. Father Mike, St. Hyacinth Church
26. Sister Kathy McNulty, Aquinas Literacy Center, Chicago
27. Rhonda Serafin, District 214, Arlington Heights
28. Sister Marybeth McDermott, Sisters of St. Joseph, School on Wheels, La Grange Park
29. Peggy Dean, Adult Learning Resource Center
30. Rachel Weiss, Highwood Resource Center
31. Jose Ares, Centro de Informacion y Progreso
32. Jacqueline Peterson, Literacy Volunteers of America, DuPage, Inc.
33. Dominic Marella, St. Charles Boremeo Church
34. Sister Laurina Kahno, St. Alexis Church
35. Anita Garcia, Member of the ICIRR Suburban Immigrants and Refugees Committee
36. Carlos Acosta, founding member of McHenry Latino Coalition
37. Ramon Sanchez, Genesis Center, Des Plaines
38. Marcia Brown, Hispanic Ministry, Archdiocese of Joliet (in Catholic Charities office, Kankakee County)

39. Elsa Figueroa, Nuevos Horizontes (Triton College), Melrose Park
40. Pedro Enriquez, Illinois Migrant Council
41. Monica Vasquez, Spanish Center, Inc.
42. Rev. Romanski, St. John the Baptist, Harvey
43. Chris Pluta, District 217, Argo High School, ESOL teacher
44. Rev. Antoni Kretowicz, Immaculate Conception Church, Waukegan
45. Father Frank, Polish priest, St. Blasé
46. Fred Tsao, ICIRR
47. Rev. Charles Fanelli, St. John Vianney Church, Northlake
48. Matt Huseby, McHenry County College, ESOL Coordinator
49. Sarah Councell, Chinese Mutual Aid Association
50. JoEllen McCue, Community Health Partnership, Momence
51. Anita Gustafson, Highland Park High School Adult Education/ESOL
52. May Campbell, Interchurch Refugee and Immigration Ministries
53. Sister Kathleen Ryan, Dominican Literacy Center, Aurora
54. Phil Stauffer, Exodus World Service, Itasca
55. David Wu, Pui Tak Center, Chinatown
56. Ruth Sutton, Highland Park High School Adult Education/ESOL, Highland Park
57. Marylou Kessler, Jewish Vocational Service, Chicago
58. Maureen Philbin, Chicago Club of the Deaf – Deaf Adults Education Access Program
59. Dawn Erickson, SER – Jobs for Progress, Waukegan
60. Susan Wezler, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
61. Maru Tomusiak, Mano a Mano, Round Lake Park
62. Florentina Rendon, Hope Fair Housing Center, Wheaton
63. Ed Silverman, Bureau of Refugees and Immigrant Services, DHHS, Chicago
64. Nawal Abuasabeh, Arab American Action Network
65. Aliza Becker, national expert on ESOL
66. Jay Meyer, Omni Youth Services, Buffalo Grove
67. Horacio Espasa, Progress Center, Forest Park
68. Maria Elena Jonas, ChildServ – Siga Center, Waukegan
69. Dale Afif, Coalition of African, Asian, and Latino Immigrants of Illinois
70. Bob Baker, Harper College, Prospect Heights
71. Pamela Meadows, World Relief-DuPage, Wheaton
72. Martha Zurita, El Valor Corporation, Chicago
73. Rob Paral, independent consultant, Chicago
74. Max Dieber, Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission
75. Marc Thomas, Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission
76. Peggy Cole, Literacy Works, Chicago

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