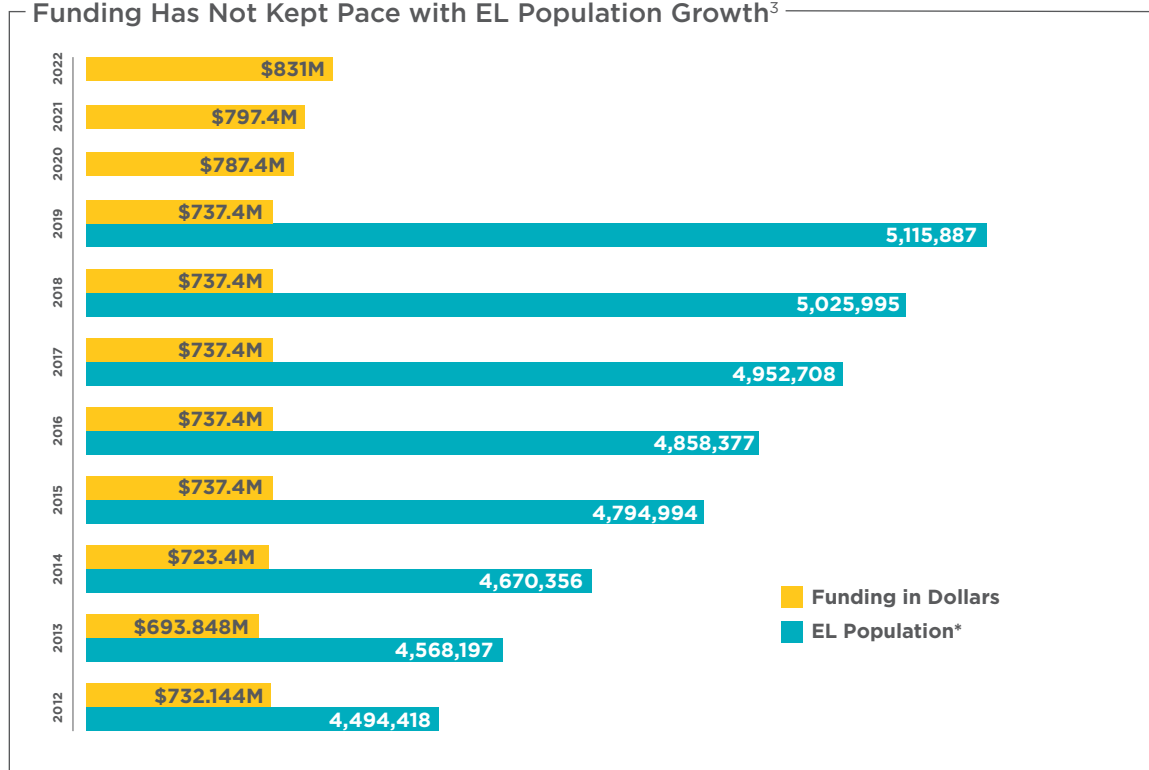


# Investing in English Learners: Federal Recommendations

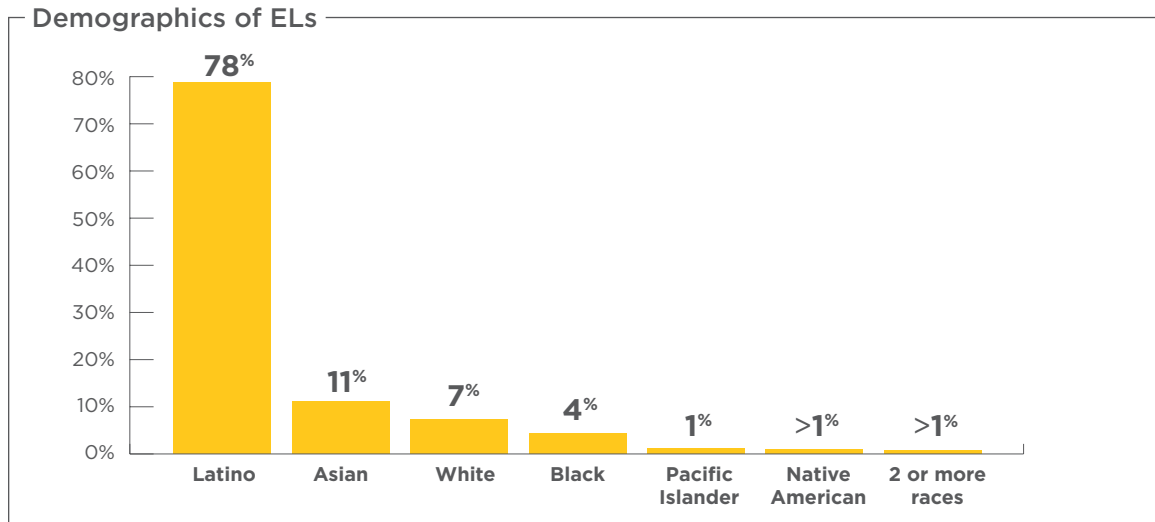
Bilingualism and biliteracy have grown increasingly important in the United States—multilingual speakers provide benefits to both the economy and national security interests. The U.S. has a rapidly growing population of multilingual students in schools across the country that, provided with a high-quality education, can help this country thrive. As of 2019, there were 5.1 million English learners (ELs) enrolled in the United States’ K-12 public schools, comprising 10% of the student population.<sup>1</sup> The EL population in the United States grew 35% between the 2000-01 school year [3,793,764] and 2018-19 school year [5,115,887], making ELs one of the fastest-growing student populations.<sup>2</sup> However, while the population has steadily increased, the federal formula grant program intended to support ELs in every state and territory—Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—has not kept up with the growth of ELs.

**Funding Has Not Kept Pace with EL Population Growth<sup>3</sup>**



\* SY 2018-19 is the latest data reported on English learner population.

Latinos\* make up the largest share of ELs (78%), nearly 4 million, but the EL population has continued to grow more linguistically and culturally diverse—11% are Asian and 7% are white and states list over 50 commonly spoken languages, including Chinese, Arabic, and Vietnamese.<sup>4</sup> And while increasing numbers of late entrant students—students with interrupted education—and refugee children are enrolling in schools, it is important to note that most EL students are U.S.-born citizens.



**Close Opportunity Gaps to Improve EL Student Outcomes**

Research consistently shows that ELs perform better when they have access to qualified teachers, high-quality learning materials (including digital curriculum), and schools with adequate levels of financial resources. Moreover, when ELs have access to these resources, evidence indicates that these factors contribute to reducing opportunity gaps (e.g., low enrollment in advanced placement classes, low graduation rates, low college attendance rates). Despite the evidence, however, these resources are drastically lacking for English learners. Title III is intended to provide supplemental targeted support to improve the education of ELs, yet we have only seen nominal increases over the years even as the EL population has grown significantly. Insufficient levels of investment affect their opportunity to achieve the same educational outcomes as their non-EL peers.

According to the 2019 National Assessment of Education Progress, only 16 percent of fourth grade ELs scored at or above the proficient level in math and only 10 percent were at or above proficient in reading.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, ELs at every level lagged far behind their non-EL peers on these measures of academic achievement.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) reports that while 85 percent of students nationwide graduated from high school on time in 2018, the rate was almost 20 percentage points less for ELs.<sup>7</sup> The COVID-19 crisis has and will only exacerbate these opportunity gaps further if not addressed.

\* The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout our materials to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race. Our materials may also refer to this population as “Latinx” to represent the diversity of gender identities and expressions that are present in the community.

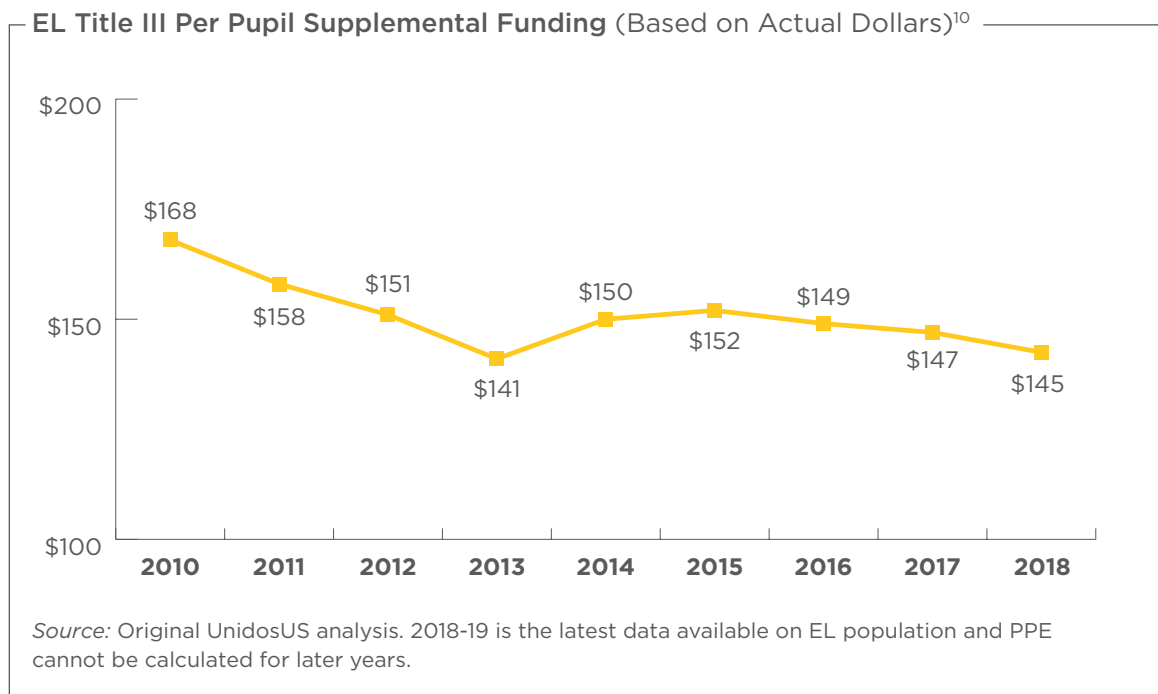
### Invest in a Diverse, Trained Educator Workforce

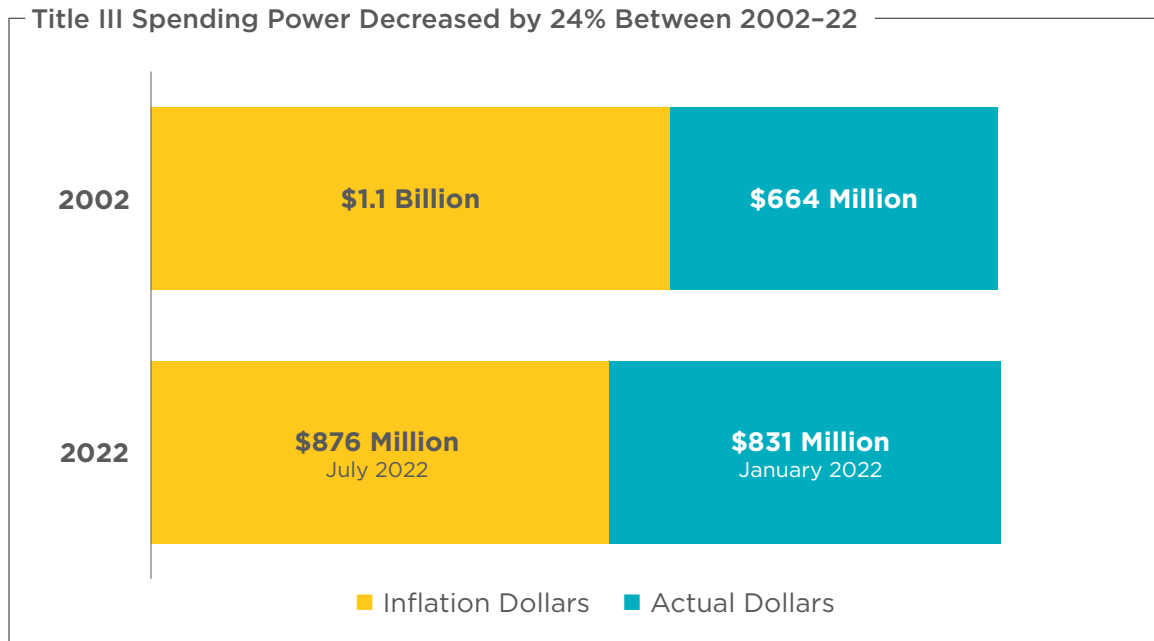
Compounding the issue, the nation’s growing English learner student population lacks a robust teacher workforce equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach them. Thirty-one states across the country are experiencing shortages of EL teachers, and while we know that 54% of students in public schools are students of color, only 21% of our teachers are teachers of color.<sup>8</sup>

Research has shown that Latino students and ELs perform better when they see themselves reflected in the classroom, but Black and Latino educators reported a higher likelihood of leaving the profession, at 62% and 59% respectively. Increasing funding for Title III can support more teachers attaining their English language development or bilingual certification.

### Inflation Exacerbates the Title III Funding Issue

Despite the growth in the EL population, Title III funding has been relatively flat since the inception of the program in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, increasing only 25% between FY2002 and FY2022 [from \$664 million to \$831 million]. Even more concerning is that when adjusting for inflation, Title III funding has decreased by 24% since 2002. In FY2002, Title III was funded at \$664 million—which is roughly \$1.1 billion in 2022.<sup>9</sup> The most recent FY22 Omnibus Appropriations Bill provided \$831 million for Title III, the highest funding level appropriated to date, but still short of the \$884 million the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 authorized Title III funding to increase to by 2020 and far short of keeping up with growth in the EL population. Even if Congress had funded Title III at its authorized level, this would provide schools with only \$173 per pupil in supplemental per pupil funding for the 5.1 million English learners enrolled in U.S. public schools.





**Expand Support for Family Engagement and Targeted Student Services**

It has been shown that parent involvement greatly benefits English learners across all grade levels. Programs that engage EL families in the educational process have been shown to have the greatest impact. However, due to the socioeconomic and educational attainment barriers faced by many EL families and insufficient outreach efforts by schools, it is more difficult for EL families to be active in the school community.<sup>11</sup> Title III funding allows for local education agencies to do parent outreach, family literacy, and training activities designed to aid parents in participating in their child’s education.<sup>12</sup>

English learner education should also be culturally competent and taught by teachers who are certified and invested in EL families and gaining insight into their cultural backgrounds. EL students should not be looked at through a deficit-based lens and instead should be celebrated for their strengths and multilingualism. Schools should also have counselors and teachers invested in college planning and ensuring EL students matriculate into postsecondary education. In addition, schools and districts should communicate with families and recognize the barriers to family engagement. However, a lack of funding has inhibited what an ideal EL education could look like.

**The Need for Increased Title III Funding**

Increasing Title III funding would help to rectify years of underinvestment and provide for more equitable funding for one of the highest-need student populations. Should Title III funding continue to fail to reflect the rate of EL growth, millions of students will continue to be denied a high-quality education and will be inhibited from reaching their potential and maximizing their contributions to themselves, their families, and to the United States’ economy. As noted in the congressionally requested report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences’ Commission on Language Learning—America’s Languages, Investing in Language Learning for the 21st Century—as a country the United States needs bilingual and biliterate citizens for national security, to promote economic growth, and to advance social justice.

In order to maximize support for ELs to reach their full potential and be successful contributors to the U.S. economy, English learners need additional targeted resources and supplemental supports, ranging from tutoring, high-quality teachers, summer and afterschool programs, and multilingual language development services to social and emotional support for challenges exacerbated by the pandemic.

## Recommendations

In order to improve the academic progress of EL students, increase graduation and college-going rates, and meet the social and emotional needs of EL students, UnidosUS urges Congress to consider the following:

- **Appropriate \$1 billion for Title III as proposed by the House in FY23**, with the goal of securing \$2 billion in FY24 to fully meet the needs of ELs. Funding Title III at this level would increase supplemental school funding for ELs to \$400/per pupil that would support key areas, including:
  - \$100 million to create a discretionary grant program for the development and adoption of native language assessments to leverage the full repertoire of linguistic, cultural and cognitive resources that English learners bring to school and to better inform equitable and higher-level instruction.
  - Support for more teachers to attain their English language development or bilingual certification and professional development for teachers of ELs through the National Professional Development program within Title III.
  - Supplemental culturally and linguistically responsive engagement and communication with EL families.
  - Community and family initiatives to support after-school academic and social programs for ELs.
  - Sustainable innovative programs that support bilingual and dual language education that leverage the unique linguistic, cultural, and cognitive capital of ELs to promote higher levels of academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

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## About UnidosUS

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an [Affiliate Network](#) of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit [www.unidosus.org](http://www.unidosus.org), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

## Appendix

State	# of ELs (Fall 2019)	% of ELs (2019)	% of Latino Students (2018)	Title III FY22 Allocation* (\$831,400,000)	Title III \$2B Allocation Projections <sup>1,†</sup>
Alabama	31,903	4.4%	8.4%	\$4,386,013	\$10,550,909
Alaska	15,346	12%	7.3%	\$1,435,379	\$3,452,920
Arizona	74,834	6.6%	45.6%	\$14,974,029	\$36,021,239
Arkansas	39,318	8.2%	13.2%	\$3,926,296	\$9,445,023
California	1,148,024	18.6%	54.6%	\$155,686,203	\$374,515,764
Colorado	96,490	11%	33.6%	\$10,742,497	\$25,841,946
Connecticut	41,973	8.3%	25.8%	\$7,070,811	\$17,009,408
Delaware	15,294	11.1%	17.7%	\$1,453,937	\$3,497,563
Florida	278,498	10%	33.9%	\$53,387,809	\$128,428,696
Georgia	128,502	7.5%	16.1%	\$19,286,687	\$46,395,687
Hawaii	17,737	9.9%	15.2%	\$3,696,771	\$8,892,882
Idaho	21,215	6.9%	18.3%	\$2,558,319	\$6,154,243
Illinois	229,180	12.3%	26.4%	\$26,577,264	\$63,933,760
Indiana	67,504	6.6%	12.3%	\$9,581,378	\$23,048,780
Iowa	31,509	6.5%	11%	\$4,634,968	\$11,149,791
Kansas	42,833	9%	20.1%	\$4,927,119	\$11,852,584
Kentucky	28,351	4.3%	7.1%	\$4,786,475	\$11,514,253
Louisiana	29,081	4.3%	7.4%	\$4,466,933	\$10,745,569
Maine	5,453	3.1%	2.3%	\$935,604	\$2,250,671
Maryland	93,249	10.6%	18.1%	\$13,929,067	\$33,507,498
Massachusetts	98,055	10.6%	20.7%	\$17,939,486	\$43,154,886
Michigan	93,889	6.5%	8.1%	\$13,432,090	\$32,311,980
Minnesota	75,018	8.6%	9.5%	\$11,348,085	\$27,298,737
Mississippi	11,614	2.5	4%	\$1,877,476	\$4,516,420
Missouri	34,219	3.9%	6.7%	\$5,945,169	\$14,301,585
Montana	3,555	2.4%	4.7%	\$500,000	\$1,202,790

State	# of ELs (Fall 2019)	% of ELs (2019)	% of Latino Students (2018)	Title III FY22 Allocation (\$831,400,000)*	Title III \$2B Allocation Projections <sup>†</sup>
Nebraska	23,035	7.4%	19.2%	\$4,089,834	\$9,838,427
Nevada	70,217	14.5%	42.5%	\$7,711,930	\$18,551,672
New Hampshire	4,911	2.8%	5.8%	\$1,105,059	\$2,658,309
New Jersey	98,748	7.3%	29.2%	\$22,766,289	\$54,766,151
New Mexico	52,898	16.5%	61.9%	\$5,117,581	\$12,310,755
New York	233,627	8.9%	27.4%	\$59,766,481	\$143,773,108
North Carolina	122,599	8%	18%	\$16,370,449	\$39,380,440
North Dakota	4,212	3.7%	5.4%	\$556,753	\$1,339,314
Ohio	60,049	3.6%	6%	\$12,126,053	\$29,170,202
Oklahoma	59,952	9.1%	17.7%	\$5,823,958	\$14,010,002
Oregon	53,127	9.1%	23.6%	\$7,683,094	\$18,482,305
Pennsylvania	72,200	4.2%	12.1%	\$17,215,284	\$41,412,759
Rhode Island	17,116	12.2%	26.1%	\$2,360,360	\$5,678,037
South Carolina	45,871	6%	10%	\$5,681,458	\$13,667,207
South Dakota	6,579	4.8%	6.5%	\$1,004,587	\$2,416,615
Tennessee	50,037	5.1%	10.8%	\$8,208,580	\$19,746,404
Texas	1,021,540	19.6%	52.5%	\$132,153,150	\$317,905,100
Utah	54,357	8.1%	17.4%	\$5,303,649	\$12,758,357
Vermont	1,683	2.2%	2.4%	\$500,000	\$1,202,790
Virginia	115,803	9.2%	16.2%	\$15,821,436	\$38,059,745
Washington	129,564	11.7%	23.7%	\$19,568,748	\$47,074,207
District of Columbia	9,440	12.3%	16.4%	\$1,524,899	\$3,668,268
West Virginia	2,040	0.8%	1.9%	\$582,666	\$1,401,650
Wisconsin	50,902	6.4%	12.3%	\$7,486,147	\$18,008,533
Wyoming	2,736	2.9%	13.8%	\$500,000	\$1,202,790

\* Does not total \$831,400,000 due to the exclusion of American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Indian Set-aside, and others.

† Title III \$2B Allocation Projections calculated using the proportion of funding states received in FY22.

‡ Does not total \$2B due to the exclusion of American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Indian Set-aside, and others.

## Endnotes

1. National Center for Education Statistics, Table 204.20, [English learner \(EL\) students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, fall 2000 through fall 2019](#) (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).
2. Ibid.
3. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), [Local Education Agency Universe Survey 2000-01 through 2015-16](#) (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), Table 204.20; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), [Local Education Agency Universe Survey 2000-01 through 2018-19](#) (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021), Table 204.20; and U.S. Department of Education, [Education Department Budget History Table: FY 1980—FY 2019 Congressional Appropriations](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2018).
4. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, English Learners in Public Schools: Condition of Education (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2022), <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf> (accessed June 1, 2022).
5. U.S. Department of Education, National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP Report Card: Mathematics (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021), <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/mathematics/nation/achievement?grade=8> (accessed June 1, 2022); and U.S. Department of Education, National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP Report Card: Reading (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021), <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/nation/achievement/?grade=8> (accessed June 1, 2022).
6. Ibid.
7. U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, High School Graduation Rates for English Learners (Washington, DC: OELA, 2020), [https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast\\_facts/20200916-ELGraduationRatesFactSheet-508.pdf](https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast_facts/20200916-ELGraduationRatesFactSheet-508.pdf).
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9. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Consumer Price Index (CPI) Inflation Calculator,” [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm) (accessed June 14, 2022).
10. Ibid.
11. Elizabeth M. Vera et al., “Exploring the Educational Involvement of Parents of English Learners,” *School Community Journal* 22, no. 2 (2012): 183–202.
12. Colorado Department of Education, [Title III Allowable Use of Funds](#) (Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education).
13. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, ED Facts file 046, Data Group 123, extracted October 25, 2017, from the ED Facts Data Warehouse.
14. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Local Education Agency Universe Survey,” 2000-01 through 2018-19, and “State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education,” 2019-20; and ED Facts file 141, Data Group 678, 2019-20.