



Viewpoints

Positive Impacts of Newcomer English Learner Students



A recent **RAND study** concluded that influxes of new English Learner (EL) students in schools result in “sizable academic gains” of students in English Learner programs and of students who have graduated from such programs. Further, the increase in newcomers did not depress the academic achievement of non-EL students.

The study examined the years 2015-16 and 2018-19 in Delaware, where the number of EL students had increased seven-fold in the past twenty years. The RAND study examined the effects of the newcomer EL students on the performance of students in the fourth through eighth grades and concluded that there was a “positive spillover” effect that was especially pronounced during the first year of attendance particularly in the subject of reading.

The researchers suggested three reasons for this phenomenon: first, an increase in EL students can result in increased funding; second, teachers may use more effective instructional strategies, including more



explicit language acquisition lessons; third, existing EL students might benefit from the newcomers' arrival because newcomers tend to be more academically motivated and also may reduce the social isolation felt by existing EL students. The researchers further reported that while new EL students initially may require additional educational resources, these students do not detract from resources for existing students at least in the short term.

In light of budget constraints facing school districts, it is vital that educational decisions concerning EL students be data-driven and take into account the positive impacts of the newcomers.

The arrival of new immigrant students in schools boosts the academic performance of English learners and doesn't diminish the academic standing of their English-speaking peers.

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