

# Limited English Proficient (LEP) Student Population in the Boise Schools - Opportunities and Challenges

The narrative and charts in this "white paper" provide information about the Boise District's Limited English Proficient (LEP) population. LEP students are, by definition, students whose native language is one other than English, and have not mastered the spoken and/or written English.

There are three categories of Limited English students.

Students who are in their first year in an English-speaking school are known as LEP1 students.

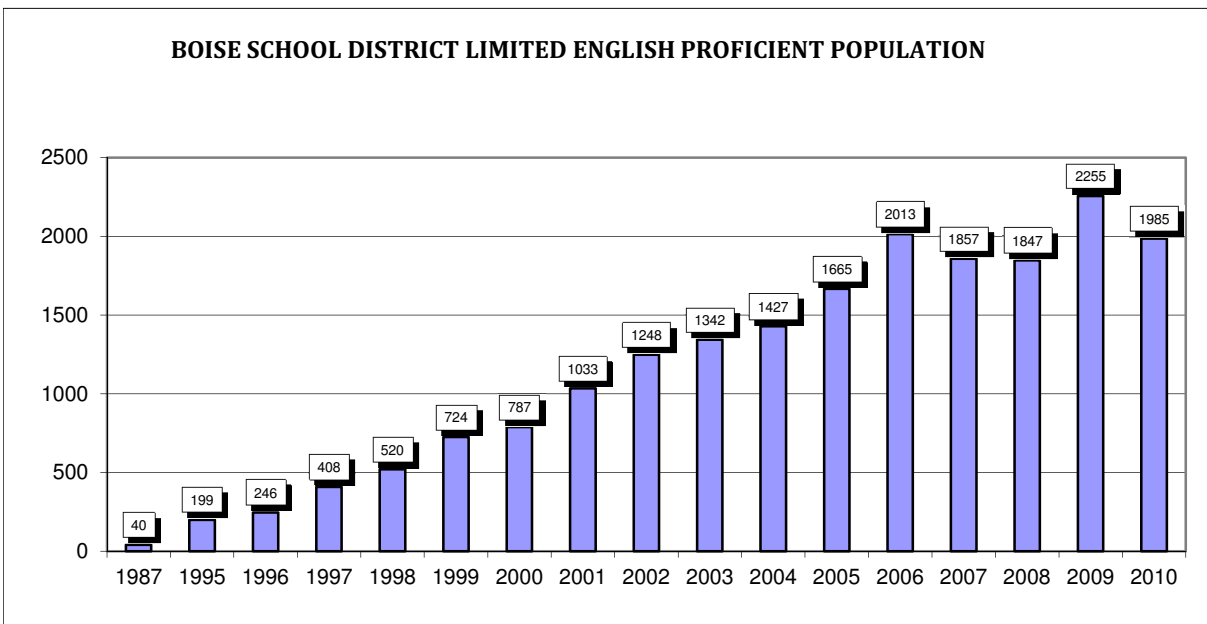
Students who are beyond their first year but have not demonstrated mastery of the spoken and/or written English language are called LEP.

Students who have demonstrated mastery of the English language are known as LEPX for their first (LEPX1) and second (LEPX2) year after exiting the LEP program.

According to federal guidelines under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as No Child Left Behind, LEP1 students' scores on tests of reading and language **do not** count for school and district performance indicators, but scores on math assessments **do**. The scores of all LEP students count in school and district subgroup and total group test scores.

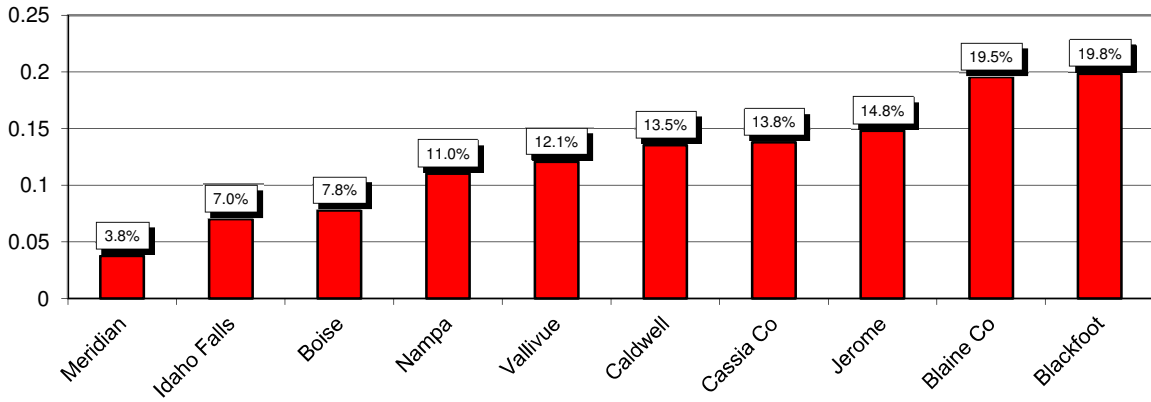
## Demographics

The Boise District's LEP population makes up about 8% of the District's total student population. This LEP group has grown dramatically since the mid 90's, and especially since Boise was designated as a refugee relocation center. Most recently, LEP definition changes at the state level in 2007 and a decline in refugee numbers have impacted District LEP numbers.

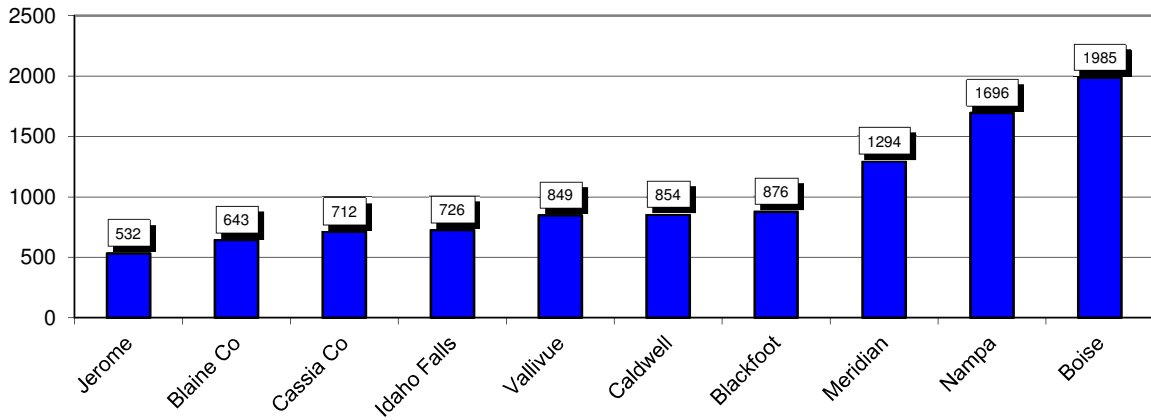


The District's LEP population, in terms of percentages, is far from the largest in the state. However, the composition of the Boise LEP group is different from other Districts (except Twin Falls and Meridian), in that such a substantial portion of the group is made up of refugee students. The Boise District does have the largest number of LEP students in the state of Idaho, and by far the largest number of LEP students in their first year in the United States.

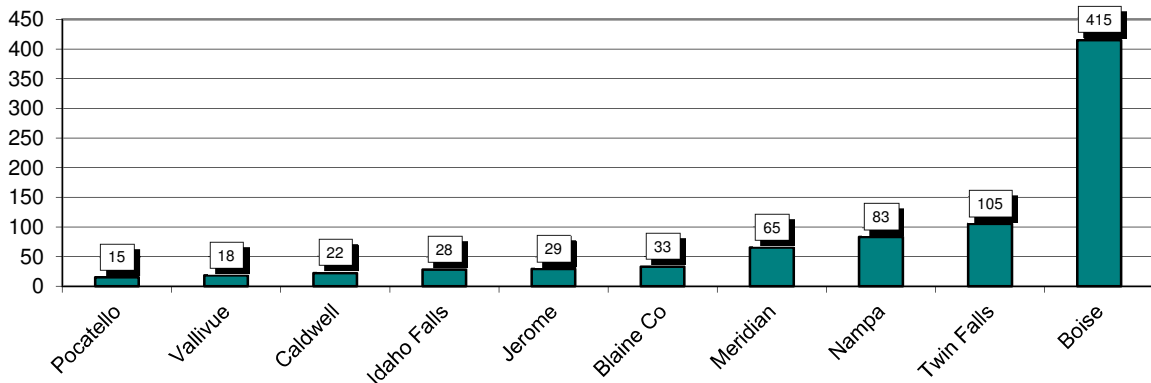
**Limited English Population as Percentage of Total Enrollment**



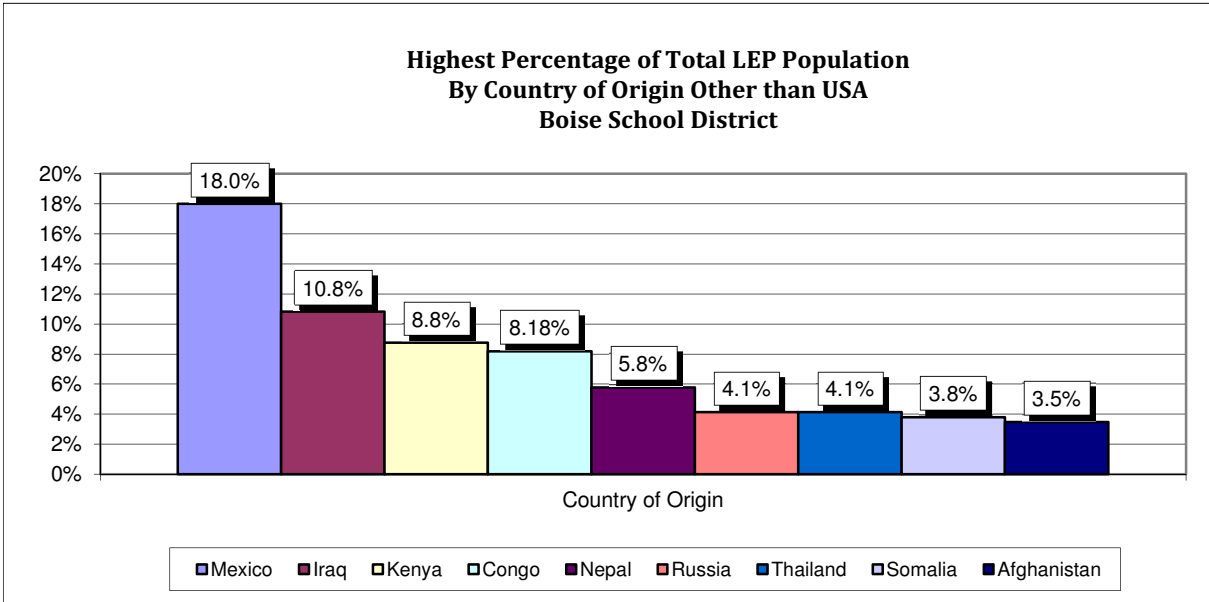
**Limited English Students By Idaho District**



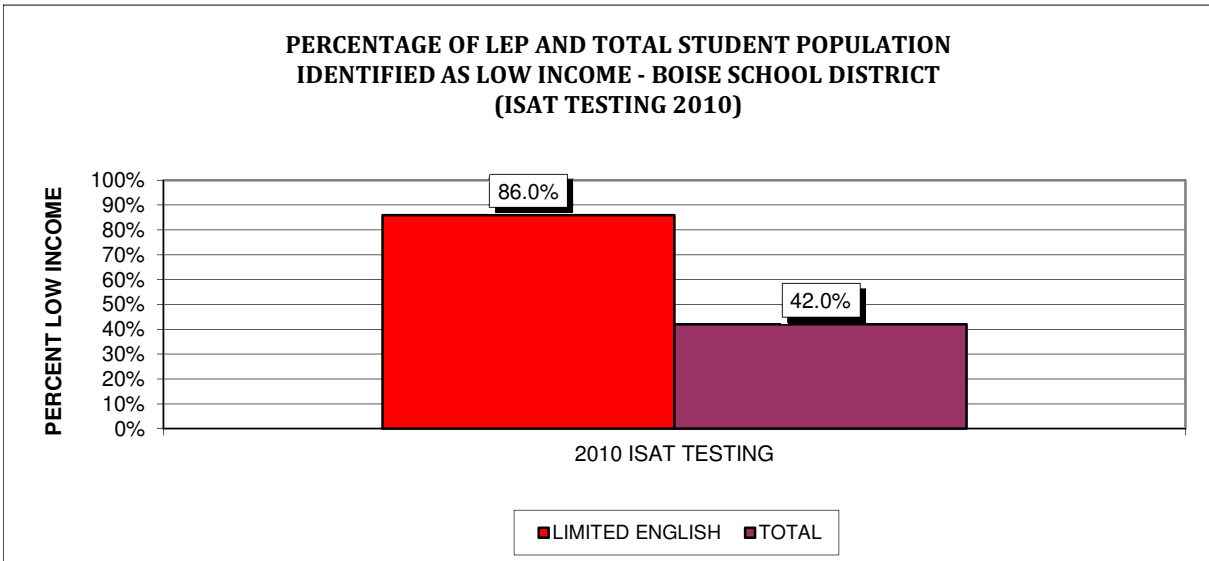
**LEP1 Students - First Year In English Speaking School  
2009-10**



District LEP students hail from 74 different countries, and speak almost a hundred languages.



District Limited English students qualify for free/reduced price lunches at over twice the rate of the total District population - almost 9 in 10 LEP students come from poverty.



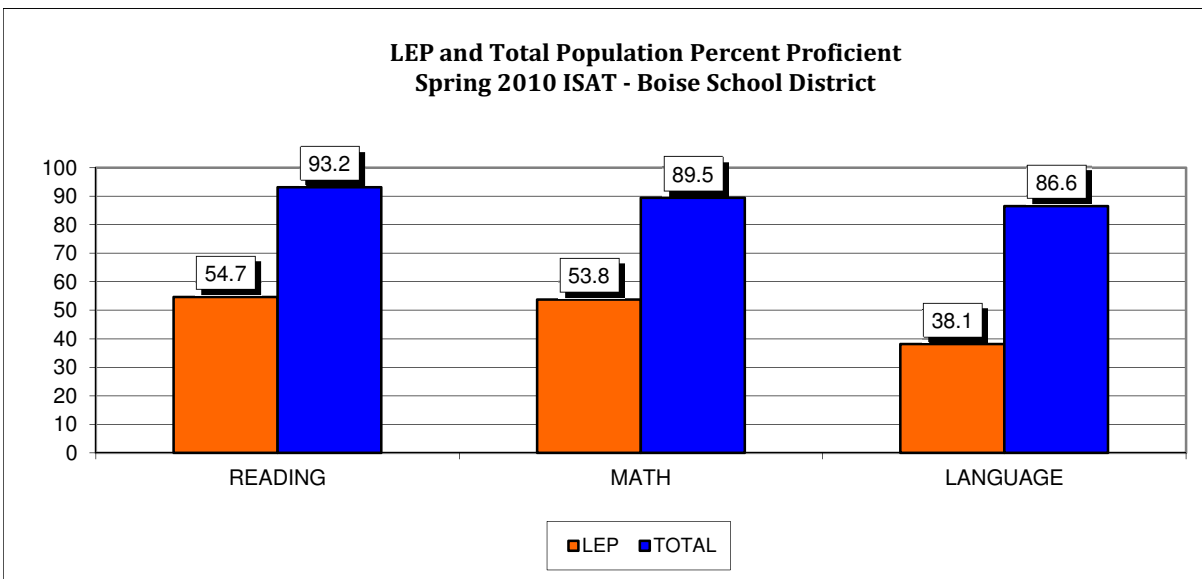
## ACHIEVEMENT

Understandably, many Boise District limited English proficient (LEP) students do not meet Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) benchmarks as they are developing English skills. The ISAT is a multiple-choice, computer administered examination.

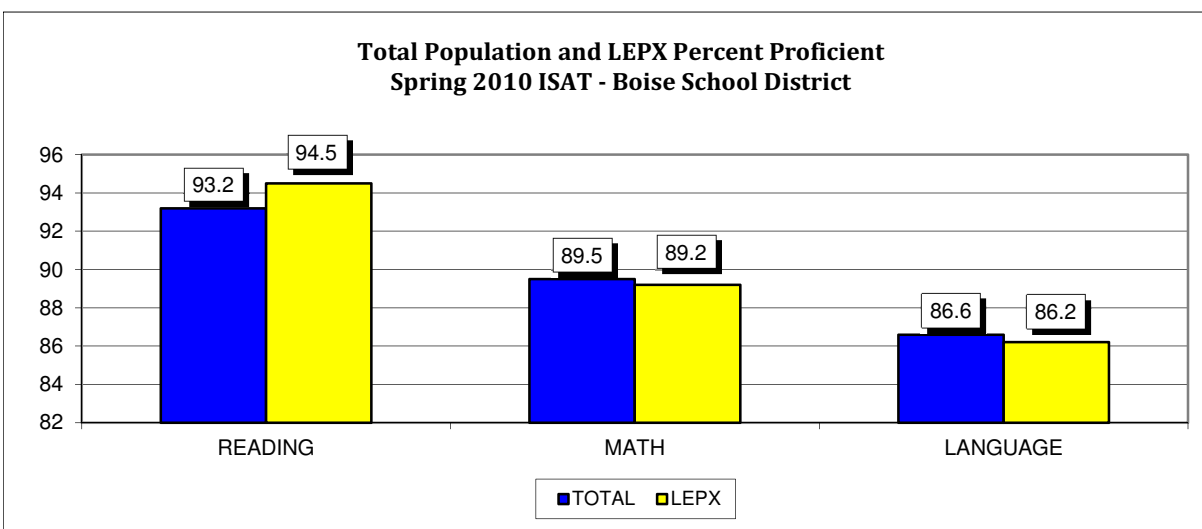
The ISAT Language test is the most challenging for our LEP students. Considering it is a grammar and usage based assessment this is not surprising, since English grammar is abstract even for many native English-speaking students.

Though mathematics is sometimes thought of as the “universal language”, LEP students struggle in this area as well. For example, some students are used to calculating from right to left and/or bottom to top. This subtest also includes many “story problems” which creates a reading (rather than math) test for LEP students.

While the District acknowledges these challenges, LEP students are still expected to perform at the same level as their peers. Our staff assists LEP students in meeting or exceeding State and District academic goals (see LEPX data below). However, as LEP students are learning English, their scores will likely impact multiple subgroups that may miss ISAT goals. If you notice that a school has missed one or more subgroup benchmarks, please feel free to contact the building principal to find out how the school is doing when LEP student scores are pulled out of the data. You may be surprised at the new picture this presents as you gain a more accurate idea of student progress.



However, the District's Limited English program has great success in teaching the oral and written English language to our LEP students. When those students learn the language sufficiently, they are recategorized as LEPX students. LEPX students show tremendous success on the ISAT in all areas, even outpacing the general population in some cases.



Even though LEP students struggle with the ISAT, we know that, once they learn the English language, they typically achieve successfully. The District regards the LEP population as a cultural asset, and looks forward to their future progress.