

Attached please find a 2012 report on the HCPSS Newcomer Program. This report was based on the Newcomer Assessment, which was a teacher-created assessment of English grammar, used only at the Newcomer Program. This assessment is not aligned with the WIDA Standards, which were adopted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in school year 2011-2012. That year, the ACCESS assessment replaced the LAS Links assessment as Maryland's accountability assessment of language progress and attainment. In 2011 MSDE determined that LAS Links lacked the rigor to measure academic language proficiency, and was therefore not effective in predicting the ability of English Learners to access content instruction. The assessments referenced are no longer used in HCPSS.

## **The HCPSS Newcomer Program**

### **Overview**

The Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) Newcomer Program, housed at River Hill High School, is an intensive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program serving high school aged students who have recently immigrated to the United States. Approximately 40 to 70 students participate in the program each year as freshmen. The number of students fluctuates during the school year as students enter or withdraw from the HCPSS. Many Newcomer students received very little educational training in their country of origin and are also in need of basic instruction on general academic skills and behaviors. In the program, students work toward mastery of communicative English while building the academic skills and vocabulary necessary to be successful in high school level Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, and Language Arts courses. The overall goals of the Newcomer Program are to provide students with an orientation to the United States and the HCPSS educational structure as well as providing them with the language and literacy skills to survive and thrive in the United States. Newcomer Program faculty strive to create a safe, welcoming learning community and to differentiate instruction to meet the social, cultural, academic, and developmental needs of each student. Program success is measured by the extent to which students acquire English language and literary skills as well as the ability of students to successfully transition out of the Newcomer Program to their home schools. However, when a student does transition to their home school they do not have enough credits to move on to the next grade level, therefore they remain in Grade 9 for another year.

Newcomer students are from many countries. In 2011-2012, Newcomer students came from Burma (Myanmar), China, Congo, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea, and Vietnam. The age range of the students was 13-21. There were 28 males and 18 females. The Newcomer students begin their day at their home schools where they take a bus to the Applications and Research Lab (ARL), and then are transported by bus to River Hill.

The students attend English and Mathematics classes based on their proficiency level. Each student will have one 50-minute period of Reading, a 70-minute period of Mathematics, and a 50-minute period of an elective course, which might include Physical Education, Spanish for Native Speakers, Art 1, or Computer. Every student ends the day with a 90-minute period of English class. Students are dismissed at 1:35 p.m. to begin their trip back to ARL and eventually their home high school.

### **Charge and Purpose**

During the 2011-2012 School Year, Student Assessment and Program Evaluation (SAPE) was assigned the task of performing a program evaluation of the Newcomer Program. It was decided that due to inconsistencies of participation and record keeping in years prior to 2009-2010, this program evaluation would begin with the 2009-2010 school year. One of the goals of this evaluation is to gauge the amount of progress students make on the Newcomer Assessment during the school year(s) in which they are enrolled in the Newcomer Program. In addition two research question were created that guided this study.

**Research Question 1:** Do Newcomer students gain language acquisition as demonstrated on the LAS Links?

LAS Links is a language proficiency test that determines a student's abilities in English when their primary language is other than English. This test measures student proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension. In order to answer this question, academic progress would include language acquisition skills obtained by Newcomer students over two years (2009-2010 and 2010-2011) using a pre-post method for analysis.

Accurately assessing a student's language proficiency is essential in determining the success of the program. Once a student has reached a certain level of English proficiency, as well as being highly rated on a number of other constructs, they are transitioned from the Newcomer Program to his or her home school.

**Research Question 2:** What is the withdraw rate of students participating in the Newcomer Program?

In order to determine this, Newcomer student withdraw data was collected for school year 2009-2010 (the initial year of the study) through and including school year 2011-2012. Specifically, the data was used to determine the sustainability of the participating students either while participating in the program or transitioning to their home high school. It should be noted that many of these students enter the program at ages much higher than the normal entry level of a high school student.

## **Methodology**

To answer the research questions, quantitative analysis methods have been used. Research question 1 uses an Analysis of Variation (ANOVA) statistical method. ANOVA is a statistical tool designed to compare performances and to test whether the differences are statistically significant. ANOVA can also be used to determine effect size, the proportion of the differences in students' performance attributable to the effect of instructional method. Effect sizes that are less than .25 are considered small, even if ANOVA finds them statistically significant (i.e., the observed effect did not occur by chance alone). For this reason, this evaluation interprets small effect sizes with caution, even if they are statistically significant. When statistical significance is found, the result is footnoted in the report. Research question 2 analyzes the number and percentage of Newcomer students who either withdrew (dropped out) while attending the Newcomer Program or after transitioning to their home school. In addition, results provide a summary of reasons why a student withdrew from HCPSS.

## **Findings**

In the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, The Newcomer Program used LAS Links to demonstrate English proficiency of enrolled students. As stated, a measure of success for the Newcomer Program is to help students make gains in terms of English language acquisition. In the two years analyzed, the LAS Links was administered to all Newcomer students in the Fall (September) and Spring (May). The Newcomer assessment measures English proficiency across

a number of subscales; an overall score on the assessment was also derived from combining the subscales.

It is important to note that each student is administered the Newcomer Assessment when they enroll in the Newcomer Program. In order to be part of this analysis all participants needed to have both a pre (Fall) and post (Spring) test score. Overall changes in scores on the Newcomer Assessment for students enrolled in the Newcomer Program during the 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 school years are presented in Table 1.

To provide a descriptive account of progress made by students enrolled in the Newcomer Program, the change in scores on the Newcomer Assessment were analyzed based on Fall and Spring test administrations. An analysis was conducted to determine if the change in scores across the school year were statistically significant.

Each student’s overall score on the Newcomer Assessment is divided into scores for each specific subscale. The results of the analyses of scores on the Newcomer Assessment for those students taking these assessments in School Year 2009-2010 are presented in the Table 1, below. Results are based on student performance on the LAS Links, the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) which was administered in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. Scores presented are the overall score on LAS Links as well as the subscale scores. Also presented is the estimate of the effect which provides an indicator as to the strength of the observed change.

**Table 1: Newcomer Assessment Results, 2009 –2010**

Newcomer Assessment Subscale	Average Score Administration		Observed Measure of Change	Estimate of Effect
	Fall	Spring		
	Overall	35.72		
Listening	11.81	12.74	+ 0.93**	.250
Question Words	5.02	7.94	+ 2.92**	.690
Verbs (Recognition)	6.45	11.32	+ 4.87**	.624
Reading	4.23	6.49	+ 2.26**	.541
Short Response	1.93	3.00	+ 1.07**	.454
Verbs (Production)	2.77	6.94	+ 4.17**	.461
Writing	3.79	7.88	+ 4.09**	.662

\*\* - significant at .001 level

The data presented in Table 1 shows that students enrolled in the Newcomer Program during the 2009–2010 academic year made significant gains on the Newcomer Assessment<sup>1</sup> as demonstrated by their performance overall and on each of the subscales. The average score for the test increased by almost twenty score points on the test overall. The greatest increase on the subscale was on the Verbs (Recognition). The effect sizes for the subscales range from .250 to .690, indicating a large proportion of change on each of the subscales. These gains by Newcomer students are statistically significant.

The results of the analyses of scores on the Newcomer Assessment for those students taking the assessments in School Year 2010-2011 are presented in the Table 2, below.

**Table 2: Newcomer Assessment Results, 2010–2011**

Newcomer Assessment Subscale	Average Score		Observed Measure of Change	Estimate of Effect
	Administration			
	Fall	Spring		
Overall	25.85	52.58	+26.73**	.763
Listening	5.73	12.30	+ 6.57**	.577
Question Words	3.73	8.06	+ 4.33**	.625
Verbs (Recognition)	5.91	11.58	+ 5.67**	.698
Reading	4.06	5.85	+ 1.79**	.339
Short Response	1.55	2.67	+ 1.12**	.381
Verbs (Production)	2.23	6.33	+ 4.10**	.424
Writing	3.92	6.50	+ 2.58**	.466

*\*\* - significant at .001 level*

Consistent with findings from the previous year, Newcomer students experienced significant gains as indicated by improved performance on the Newcomer Assessment<sup>ii</sup> from Fall to Spring. As with the 2009-2010 results, Newcomer students made significant gains across all subscales of the Newcomer Assessment 2010-2011. The greatest gain was experienced on the Listening subscale, the least on the Writing subscale. The effect sizes for the subscales range from .339 to .698. While there may be other explanations that can be considered for these gains, participation in the Newcomer Program is one of the attributing factors.

### **Withdraw Rates**

One aspect of this study was to determine how many of the Newcomer students withdraw from HCPSS either during their involvement in the program or upon transitioning to their home high school. Table 3 provides an overview of the Newcomer Program withdraw rate from 2009-2010 through 2011-2012. When a student withdraws from an HCPSS school or program, the reason for withdrawing is recorded in ASPEN. Each reason is given a code, so that school officials can easily see the reason for a student's withdraw. In order to gain a better insight to the reasons Newcomer students withdrew, withdraw codes were also examined. The majority of withdraws (15 out of 26) was based on lack of interest or academic reasons. The remaining withdraws were based on need for employment or other economic reasons (4), aged out or over 21 years old (3), whereabouts unknown (2), medical condition (1) and special cases (1).

Table 3 provides information on the percentage of all HCPSS students and ESOL students for the same three year period. This data is presented for comparative reasons.

**Table 3: Newcomer Withdraw Rates, 2009-2010 through 2011-2012**

School Year	Newcomer Students Enrolled in Program	Newcomer Students Withdraw from Program	Newcomer Students Withdraw from Transition Home School	Newcomer Withdraw	HCPSS ESOL Withdraw	HCPSS Withdraw (All Students)
	N	N %	N %	N %	%	%
2009-10	71	9 56%	7 44%	16 23%	7.2%	1.4%
2010-11	51	2 25%	6 75%	8 16%	8.5%	1.6%
2011-12	40	2 100%	NA*	2 0.5%	7.3%	1.2%
All Yrs	162	13 50%	13 50%	26 6%	7.6%	1.4%

\* High School Withdraws for School Year 2011-2012 is available for only those students who withdrew from the Newcomer Program during the 2011-2012 school year. Additional withdraw data from these students will be available at the end of the 2012-2013 school year.

In the 2009-2010 school year, the Newcomer withdraw rate represented 23% of the population. The ESOL withdraw rate was 7.2% while the HCPSS withdraw rate was 1.4%. In 2010-2011, withdraw rates show Newcomer withdraw at 16%, ESOL at 8.5%, and the HCPSS withdraw rate at 1.6%. The withdraw data for 2011-2012 only shows withdraws of students participating in the Newcomer Program during 2011-2012. It does not include the potential withdraws of Newcomer participants who transitioned to their home school during this current school year. Therefore, final analysis for School Year 2011-2012 will need to be finished at the end of this current school year when end of year withdraws is calculated.

Based on withdraw data, over the three years 16% of students participating in the Newcomer Program have withdrawn from HCPSS. Withdraws from the ESOL are 7.6% for the three years, 1.4% from HCPSS.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:**

Based on the evidence found on LAS Links pre and post testing (Fall and Spring), the Newcomer Program is meeting one of its goals of providing Newcomer students with obtaining language acquisition skills. While overall withdraw of Newcomer students is higher than that of all ESOL withdraws and that of all student withdraws, it should be viewed with caution. The type of students participating in the Newcomer Program is not typical of other high school entry level students. Newcomer participant language deficits and age of entry may play a role in the number of students who eventually withdraw from the HCPSS. Also it must be noted that the Newcomer total population is much smaller than the total HCPSS and ESOL population in which they are a part. Newcomer participants also enter school much later in life than the typical student and in some cases at a much older age.

It is recommended that the Newcomer Program be monitored for the next couple of years as students who enrolled in HCPSS during 2009-2010 get closer to graduation. An analysis of the graduation rate from the Newcomer Program will provide a better understanding of the

program's overall success and help to suggest what supports may need to be initiated to ensure participants successful transition to home high school as well as their success in the educational process.

---

<sup>i</sup>  $F(1, 46) = 165.54, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.783$

<sup>ii</sup>  $F(1, 32) = 102.93, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.763$