

Talking Points: High Language-Diverse American School Districts

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① *Looking at diversity in schools as measured specifically according to the number of languages spoken* (as opposed to considering other measures of diversity: ethnicity, socio-economic status, race, gender, disability, age, etc.), *within the U.S., there are five local education agencies which enroll students speaking over 100 languages. They are:

• New York City, NY	140
• Prince George's County, MD	128
• Montgomery County, MD	119
• District of Columbia	116
• Fairfax County, VA	over 100.

*This information was retrieved as of June 16, 1997, as reported directly by each district's Board of Education. Note that 4-out-of-5 of these examples are clustered in a single metropolitan area. Because of the large presence of diplomatic staff and international organizations, the D.C. area may have higher numbers of language groups than most metropolitan areas.

② Several other metropolitan areas also serve large numbers of languages (but fewer than 100). These include:

• Chicago	96
• San Francisco	79
• Los Angeles	79
• Miami	74
• Detroit	68
• Philadelphia	66
• Milwaukee	37
• Boston	35

③ Understanding these figures in their correct context, it is important to note that:

- Nearly 75% (3 out of 4) of students that are limited in English proficiency speak Spanish.
- Also, language groups tend to be tightly clustered among neighborhoods.

The result is that even if there is a huge number of languages in a large school district such as New York City, the actual number of students speaking those languages are small. There are typically high concentrations of students who speak one or two languages in individual schools that enroll such students.

④ Of those schools that enroll any students that are limited in their English proficiency:

- Only 2% serve 16 or more language groups.
- 66% serve 4 or less language groups.
- 33% serve only 1 language group.