



English language proficiency levels of limited English proficient students in Idaho





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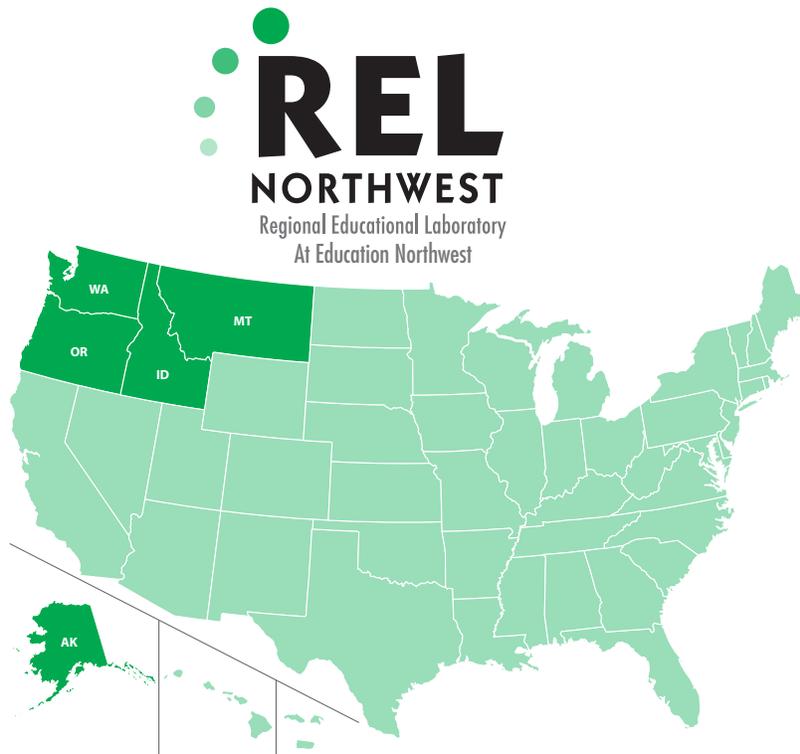
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January 2012

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English language proficiency levels of limited English proficient students in Idaho

This study describes the proficiency levels of limited English proficient (LEP) students and LEP student subgroups on the Idaho English Language Assessment.

For more than a decade, limited English proficient (LEP) students have been the fastest-growing student population in U.S. schools (Boyle et al. 2010; Capps et al. 2005). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires schools to ensure that highly qualified teachers provide effective instructional services that will result in measurable progress in both English language acquisition and academic progress for LEP students. To meet these requirements, state education agencies need focused and detailed data analyses of student performance to guide resource allocation, professional development, and instructional practices. The Idaho State Department of Education requested this study to learn more about the English proficiency of its population of LEP students by grade level and key LEP student subgroups.

The study examines the distribution of LEP students across five proficiency levels (beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, early fluent, and fluent) on the Idaho English Language Assessment (IELA), the state's test of language proficiency administered each year to all LEP students. The IELA provides a holistic estimate of each student's English language proficiency level that reflects the student's ability to participate in a mainstream English language classroom.

The study also describes the distribution of students across three proficiency levels (beginning, advanced beginning/intermediate, and early fluent/fluent) for the five domains measured on the IELA: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension. Results are reported for the five grade spans assessed by the IELA (kindergarten, grades 1–2, grades 3–5, grades 6–8, and grades 9–12) for the total LEP student population and for six LEP student subgroups based on gender, participation in the free or reduced-price lunch program, Spanish as the primary language, enrollment in a U.S. public school for the first time within the previous 12 months, migrant status, and enrollment in special education. Although the primary focus is on data for 2010 (the most recent year available), results for 2007 (the first year the assessment was administered in its current form) are included so that patterns over time can be identified.

In addition to showing whether LEP students' English proficiency has improved, IELA results can provide schools, districts, and the state with a picture of the distribution of students across proficiency levels. Understanding which students are at which level of English language proficiency can guide decisions about resource allocation, professional development, and instructional practice.

The report addresses two research questions:

- What is the distribution of LEP students across proficiency levels on the total IELA scale and its five domains?

- How does the distribution of proficiency levels differ across LEP student subgroups?

Key findings include the following:

- Most LEP students had an intermediate, early fluent, or fluent level of proficiency. Students at these levels can participate in classroom activities, although they still require support, particularly with the development of academic English.
- In both kindergarten and grades 1–12 in 2010, the proficiency levels with the smallest percentage of LEP students was at the beginning or advanced beginning levels of proficiency (16.4 percent in kindergarten and 7.6–9.3 percent of students in grades 1–12).
- In kindergarten, more than half (58 percent) of LEP students were at the early fluent or fluent proficiency level in 2010. More kindergarten LEP students were at the beginning level than at the advanced beginning level.
- In grades 1–12, the largest percentage of LEP students was at the early fluent or fluent proficiency level, the second largest percentage at the intermediate level, the third largest percentage at the advanced beginning level, and the smallest percentage at the beginning level.
- There were few differences in the proficiency levels of LEP students across the five IELA domains, with more than half of students at the early fluent/fluent level in each domain. In all grade spans except kindergarten (where the percentage was somewhat larger), fewer than 8 percent of students were at the beginning level in any domain. In elementary school, the writing domain had the largest percentage of students at the beginning level; in middle and high school, speaking had the largest percentage. The pattern of language proficiency for nearly all LEP student subgroups was similar to the pattern in the overall LEP population. Generally, the largest percentage of LEP students was at the early fluent or fluent proficiency level, and the smallest percentage was at the beginning level.
- Some LEP student subgroups had achievement patterns that differed from the pattern of the overall LEP student population. In each grade span, more female LEP students than male LEP students scored at the early fluent or fluent level. Except in kindergarten, students new to U.S. schools within the previous 12 months and students in special education had lower levels of English language proficiency than did other LEP student subgroups.

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This study describes the proficiency levels of limited English proficient (LEP) students and LEP student subgroups on the Idaho English Language Assessment.

WHY THIS STUDY?

The rapid growth and diversity of the limited English proficient (LEP) student population create challenges for states trying to address these students' English language and academic learning needs (August and Shanahan 2006; Boyle et al. 2010; Capps et al. 2005). Results of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress indicate that LEP students lag behind non-LEP students in reading and math—nationally, across the Northwest Region, and in Idaho (U.S. Department of Education 2009). To address the academic needs of LEP students, the Idaho State Department of Education requested more detailed and focused analyses of English proficiency assessment data to assist in making decisions that would improve LEP program services.

The growing number of students with limited English proficiency

Students classified as LEP are among the fastest-growing demographic groups of students in

the United States. Between 1995 and 2005, the number of LEP students increased more than 60 percent, while the total school population increased less than 3 percent (U.S. Department of Education 2008). The rapid growth in LEP student enrollment has also been visible in the Northwest Region states, which traditionally did not have high numbers of LEP students. The LEP student population in the region rose 51 percent during 1979–2008 (U.S. Department of Education n.d.). In 2008/09, the most recent year for which data are available, some 180,000 of the region's 2.1 million students enrolled in grades K–12—about 1 in 12 public school students—were LEP students.

In Idaho, the number of LEP students rose 75 percent in grades K–5 and 87 percent in grades 6–12 over 1990–2000 (Capps et al. 2005). In 2008/09, LEP students accounted for 6.4 percent of K–12 enrollment in Idaho (U.S. Department of Education n.d.).

Concern about the growing number of LEP students is motivated by the persistent achievement gap between LEP students and native English speakers (Capps et al. 2005; Gersten et al. 2007; Rolstad, Mahoney, and Glass 2005; Slavin and Cheung 2005). Nationally, in the Northwest Region, and in Idaho, the percentage of students scoring below the basic level in math and reading on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress is higher among LEP students than among non-LEP students (U.S. Department of Education 2009; table 1). In Idaho, for example, the proportion of grade 4 students who scored below the basic level was 61 percent in math and 73 percent in reading among LEP students and 13 percent in math and 20 percent in reading among non-LEP students. Results were similar in grade 8, where the proportion of students who scored below the basic level was 73 percent in math and 74 percent in reading among LEP students and 20 percent in math and 21 percent in reading among non-LEP students.

TABLE 1

Percentage of students in grades 4 and 8 scoring below the basic level in math and reading on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress, nationally, regionally, and in Idaho

Area	Grade 4				Grade 8			
	Math		Reading		Math		Reading	
	LEP students	Non-LEP students						
United States	43	16	71	30	72	26	75	24
Northwest Region states ^a	52	14	80	28	73	20	77	20
Idaho	61	13	73	20	73	20	74	21

LEP is limited English proficient.

a. Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from U.S. Department of Education (2009).

Federal accountability policy and the Idaho English Language Assessment

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states to establish English language proficiency standards that align with state academic content standards and to implement accountability systems that monitor achievement indicators for all LEP students and LEP student subgroups (Carr and Lagunoff 2006). States receiving federal funding for language instruction programs designed to increase the English proficiency of LEP students are also required to establish annual measurable objectives for improving students' English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Boyle et al. 2010). All districts that enroll LEP students are required to provide services to help these students achieve measurable growth in English language proficiency, as measured by a language proficiency assessment. In Idaho this growth is measured by the IELA (box 1).

In addition to showing whether LEP students' English proficiency improved, IELA results can provide schools, districts, and the state with a picture of the distribution of students across proficiency levels. Understanding which students are at which proficiency level can guide decisions about resource allocation, professional development, and instructional practices. The diversity within the LEP student population precludes a

one-size-fits-all approach to assessing and educating LEP students (Artiles et al. 2005; Capps et al. 2005; Gitomer, Andal, and Davison 2005). Policy-makers have therefore requested information on the background characteristics of LEP students in their district or state in order to make informed decisions that will improve English language instructional practices. Regional differences in the most common primary languages spoken, migrant status, and the proficiency distribution of students suggest that LEP student subgroup analysis may be needed at the state and local levels (Capps et al. 2005; de Cohen, Deterding, and Clewell 2005; Fortuny et al. 2009). Concern about the relationship between gender and English language learning outcomes is also an area of interest for researchers and practitioners (Norton and Pavlenko 2004).

Research questions

In light of Idaho's growing and diverse population of LEP students and the importance of understanding their language needs, the Idaho State Department of Education requested an analysis of IELA results for 2010 that would identify patterns of student proficiency on the total IELA scale and its five domain scales (see box 1). The Idaho State Department of Education also wanted to know whether the patterns observed in 2010 generally matched those observed in 2007 (the year the current test administration procedures

BOX 1

The Idaho English Language Assessment and proficiency levels

The Idaho English Language Assessment (IELA) is Idaho's version of the federally mandated annual assessment of all limited English proficient (LEP) students in the state. It is administered over six weeks each spring to all K–12 Idaho public school students classified as LEP (Idaho State Board of Education 2008; Idaho State Department of Education 2010). It is separate from the Idaho State Achievement Test, which LEP students also take each spring once they have been in the country for at least a year. Separate versions of the IELA exist for five grade spans (kindergarten, grades 1–2, grades 3–5, grades 6–8, and grades 9–12).

The IELA provides a holistic estimate of each student's English language proficiency level that reflects the student's ability to participate in a mainstream English language classroom (Idaho State Board of Education 2008; Idaho State Department of Education 2010). The five proficiency levels for the IELA total scale are as follows:

- *Beginning*: students begin to demonstrate basic

communication skills but exhibit frequent errors in pronunciation, grammar, and writing conventions that often impede meaning.

- *Advanced beginning*: students communicate with increasing ease in a great variety of social and academic situations but still exhibit frequent errors that often impede meaning.
- *Intermediate*: students begin to expand the complexity and variety of their communication skills but exhibit fairly frequent errors that may impede meaning.
- *Early fluent*: students communicate adequately in complex, cognitively demanding situations. They exhibit some errors that usually do not impede meaning.
- *Fluent*: students communicate effectively with various audiences on a wide range of topics, though they may need further enhancement of English language skills to reach the native level of their peers. They may exhibit a few errors that do not impede meaning.

In addition to a total IELA scale score, scale scores are calculated for

five domains: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension (a combination of items from listening and reading). Only three proficiency levels are reported for each domain—beginning, advanced beginning/intermediate, and early fluent/fluent—because there are not enough items within each domain to accurately distinguish five separate levels (Idaho State Board of Education 2009b). Students are classified as proficient in English and exit LEP status if they score at the early fluent/fluent level in all five domains (Idaho State Board of Education 2008; Idaho State Department of Education 2010).

The total and domain scale scores can be compared for students within each grade span but not across grade spans (Idaho State Board of Education 2009a; Idaho State Department of Education 2010). For this reason, the results in this study are broken out by grade span.

The 2007 IELA was the first to be aligned with standards adopted by the Idaho State Board of Education (Idaho State Board of Education 2008). It was checked again for alignment in 2010 (Idaho State Department of Education 2010).

were established and IELA was aligned with state standards; the IELA has been updated or revised every year since 2007, but scores are calibrated each year so that they are comparable over time; Idaho State Department of Education 2010). The Idaho State Department of Education was also interested in learning more about the proficiency distribution for key subgroups of LEP students—male and female students, students participating

in the free or reduced-price lunch program, Spanish speakers, students enrolled in a U.S. public school for the first time within the previous 12 months, migrant students, and students enrolled in special education. Understanding the proficiency rates of different subgroups could help school districts tailor their staffing, professional development, and support to the composition of their populations.

BOX 2

Study data

The Idaho State Department of Education transmitted the Idaho English Language Assessment (IELA) statewide datasets electronically to the study team. The datasets included the raw scores, standard scores, and proficiency-level results of the total scale and the five domains scales (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension). The datasets also included information on student characteristics for the six LEP student subgroups examined. Data on students who reached English proficiency as measured by the IELA and therefore no longer received services were not included in the analysis.

Based on these questions and concerns, this report addresses two research questions:

- What is the distribution of LEP students across proficiency levels on the total IELA scale and its five domains?
- How does the distribution of proficiency levels differ across LEP student subgroups?

To answer these questions, the study analyzed IELA cross-sectional data on LEP students in grades K–12 in 2010 (the most recent year available) and 2007 (the first year the assessment was administered in its current form), reporting on the percentages of LEP students and LEP student subgroups at each of five proficiency levels (see box 1). The study also details the percentage of students at each of three proficiency levels on the five IELA domain scales described in box 1. Box 2 and appendix A describe the study data and methodology.

FINDINGS

The study found that most LEP students were at the two highest proficiency levels (early fluent and fluent). Students at these levels can participate in mainstream classroom activities, although they still require support, particularly with the development

of academic English. In both kindergarten and grades 1–12 in 2010, the proficiency levels with the smallest percentage of LEP students were the beginning and advanced beginning levels (16.4 percent in kindergarten and 7.6–9.3 percent in grades 1–12).

There were few differences in the proficiency levels of LEP students across the five IELA domains, with more than half of students at the early fluent/fluent level in each domain. In all grade spans except kindergarten, fewer than 8 percent of students were at the beginning level in any domain; in kindergarten, 10–24 percent were at the beginning level, depending on the domain. In elementary school, the writing domain had the largest percentage of students at the beginning level; in middle and high school, speaking had the largest percentage. The pattern of language proficiency for nearly all LEP student subgroups was similar to the pattern in the overall LEP population. Generally, the largest percentage of LEP students was at the early fluent or fluent proficiency level, and the smallest percentage was at the beginning level.

Some LEP student subgroups had achievement patterns that differed from the pattern of the overall LEP student population. In each grade span, more female LEP students than male LEP students scored at the early fluent or fluent level. Except in kindergarten, students new to U.S. schools within the previous 12 months and students in special education had lower levels of English language proficiency than did other LEP student subgroups.

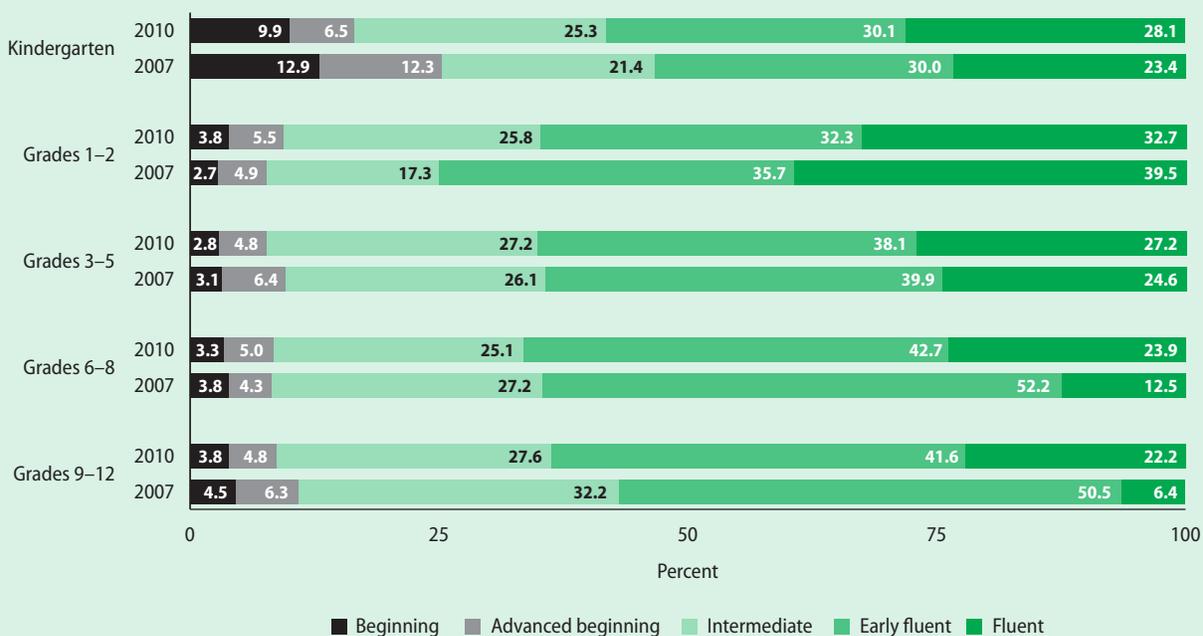
Distribution of LEP students across proficiency levels

This section reports on the percentage of LEP students in Idaho who scored at each proficiency level in 2010 and compares them with the 2007 scores.

IELA total scale. Across grade spans, a majority of LEP students were at the early fluent or fluent proficiency level on the IELA total scale (figure 1; see table B1 in appendix B). In 2010, the percentage of students at the early fluent or fluent level was 58.2 percent in kindergarten and ranged from 63.8 to 66.6 percent in grades 1–12. In 2007, the

FIGURE 1

Percentage of LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007



Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

percentage was smaller in both kindergarten and grades 9–12.

The smallest percentage of LEP students was at the beginning or advanced beginning level. In kindergarten, the percentage of students at these levels was 16.4 percent in 2010 and 25.2 percent in 2007. In grades 1–12, the percentage was smaller: fewer than 11 percent in both 2010 and 2007.

IELA domain scales. In 2010, about 60 percent of kindergarten LEP students scored at the highest proficiency level (early fluent/fluent) in all domains except writing, for which 54.3 percent did (figure 2). A larger percentage of kindergarten students scored at the lowest level (beginning) in writing than in any other domain. The pattern was the same in 2007, except that a larger percentage of students were at the early fluent/fluent level in writing than in reading and listening (figure 3).

Among grade 1 and 2 LEP students in 2010, a slightly larger percentage of students were at the

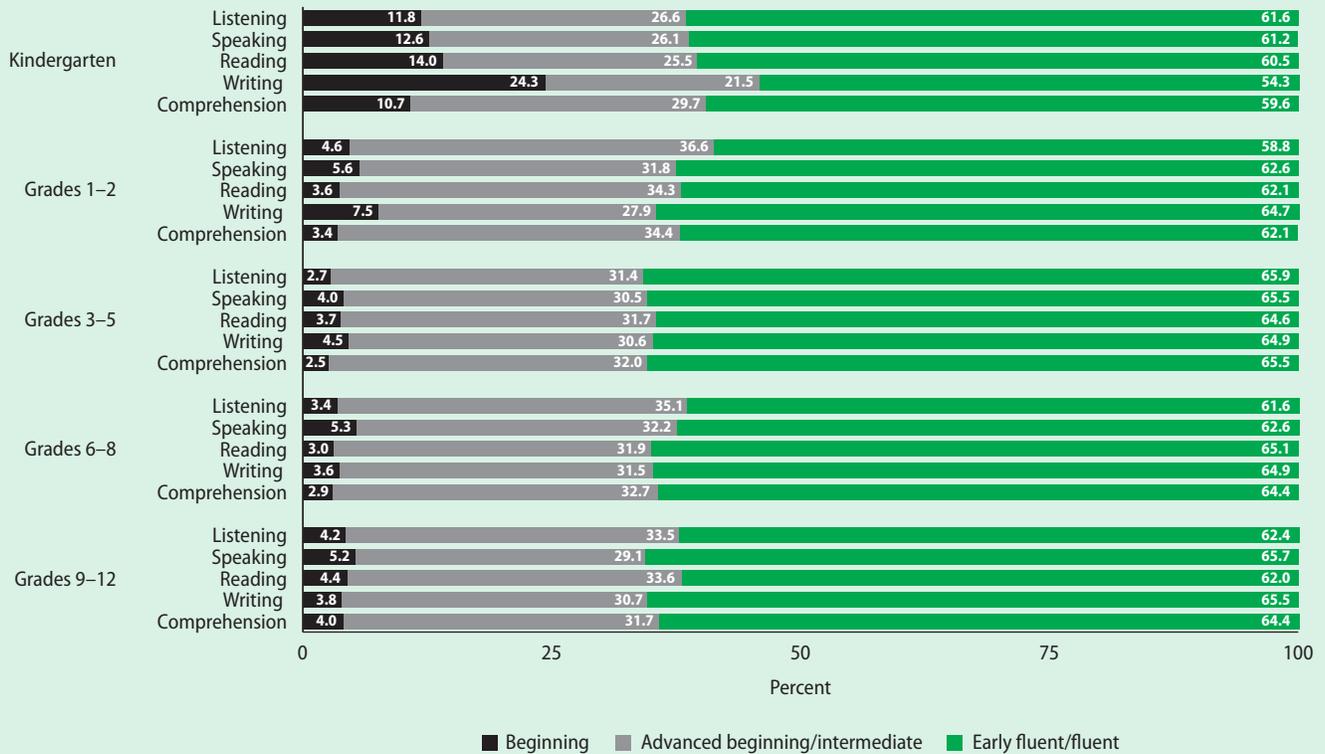
early fluent/fluent proficiency level in writing than in any other domain, although writing also had the largest percentage of students at the beginning level. Listening had the smallest percentage of students at the early fluent/fluent level. In 2007, writing had the largest percentage of students at the beginning level; listening had the largest percentage of students at the early fluent/fluent proficiency level.

In grades 3–5, results were consistent across domains: in every domain, 64.6–65.9 percent of LEP students were at the early fluent/fluent proficiency level in 2010. Although writing had the largest percentage of students at the beginning level (4.5 percent), the percentage was not much larger than the percentage of students at the beginning level in the other domains (2.5–4.0 percent). The results for 2007 were similar.

In grades 6–8, 61.6–65.1 percent of LEP students were at the early fluent/fluent proficiency level across all five domains in 2010; the largest percentage of

FIGURE 2

Percentage of LEP students at the three proficiency levels on the Idaho English Language Assessment domain scales, by grade span, 2010



Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

students at this level was in reading. Speaking had the largest percentage of students at the beginning level (5.3 percent in 2010 and 5.1 percent in 2007). In 2007, there was a wider range in the percentage of students at the early fluent/fluent proficiency level (60.6–68.5 percent) across domains, with the largest percentage of students at this level in listening.

In grades 9–12, 62.0–65.7 percent of LEP students were at the early fluent/fluent proficiency level across the five domains in 2010. Speaking had the largest percentage of students at that level; it also had the largest percentage of students at the beginning level (5.2 percent). In 2007, the percentage of students at the early fluent/fluent proficiency level in every domain was smaller than in 2010, but the same pattern prevailed: speaking had the largest percentage of students at both the early fluent/fluent (61.5 percent) and the beginning (6.6 percent) levels.

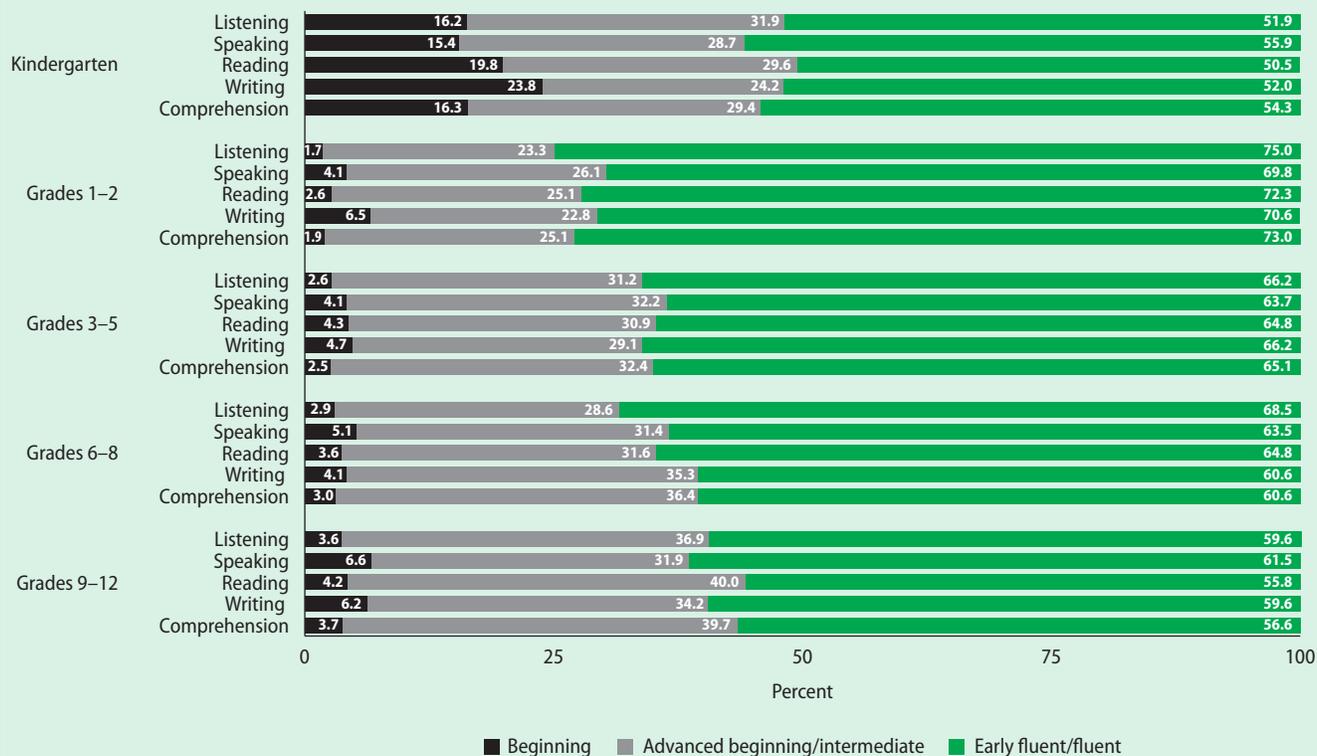
Distribution of proficiency levels across subgroups of LEP students

This section describes the distribution of students across proficiency levels for six LEP student subgroups, based on gender, participation in the free or reduced-price lunch program, Spanish as the primary language, enrollment in a U.S. public school for the first time in the previous 12 months, migrant status, and enrollment in special education.

Gender. At every grade level, a larger percentage of female LEP students than of male LEP students scored at the early fluent or fluent proficiency level in 2010 (figure 4). Although the distribution across proficiency levels among male and female LEP students differed in 2007, the pattern was similar, with more female LEP students than

FIGURE 3

Percentage of LEP students at the three proficiency levels on the Idaho English Language Assessment domain scales, by grade span, 2007



Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

male LEP students at higher proficiency levels (figure 5).

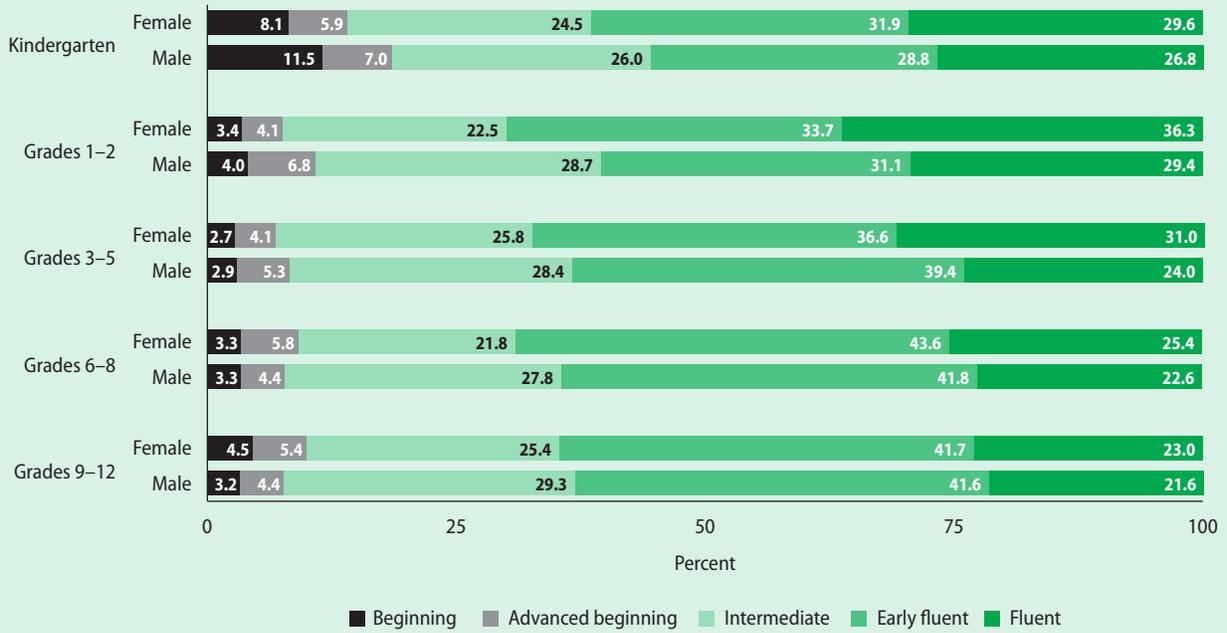
Participation in the free or reduced-price lunch program. The distribution of proficiency levels of LEP students participating in the free or reduced-price lunch program was similar to that among the overall LEP population (figure 6). The largest percentage of students scored at the early fluent or fluent level, and the smallest percentage scored at the beginning or advanced beginning level. Across grade spans, kindergarten had the largest percentage of students at the beginning proficiency level in 2010, although even there the percentage was less than 10 percent. The same patterns were observed in 2007, although a smaller percentage of students scored at the early fluent or fluent proficiency levels in 2007 than in 2010, except in grades 1–2.

Spanish as primary language. Most LEP students in Idaho (83 percent) speak Spanish as their primary language. The distribution of proficiency levels among LEP students who spoke Spanish as their primary language (figure 7) was similar to that among the overall LEP population across all grade spans (see figure 1).

Enrollment in a U.S. public school for the first time in the previous 12 months. The distribution of proficiency levels among LEP students enrolled in a U.S. public school for the first time in the previous 12 months (newcomer students) (figure 8) was very different from that among the overall LEP population (see figure 1). In grades 3–12, the largest percentage of newcomer students was at the beginning proficiency level, and the smallest percentage was at the early fluent or fluent level in both 2010 and 2007. This pattern was also

FIGURE 4

Percentage of LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by gender and grade span, 2010

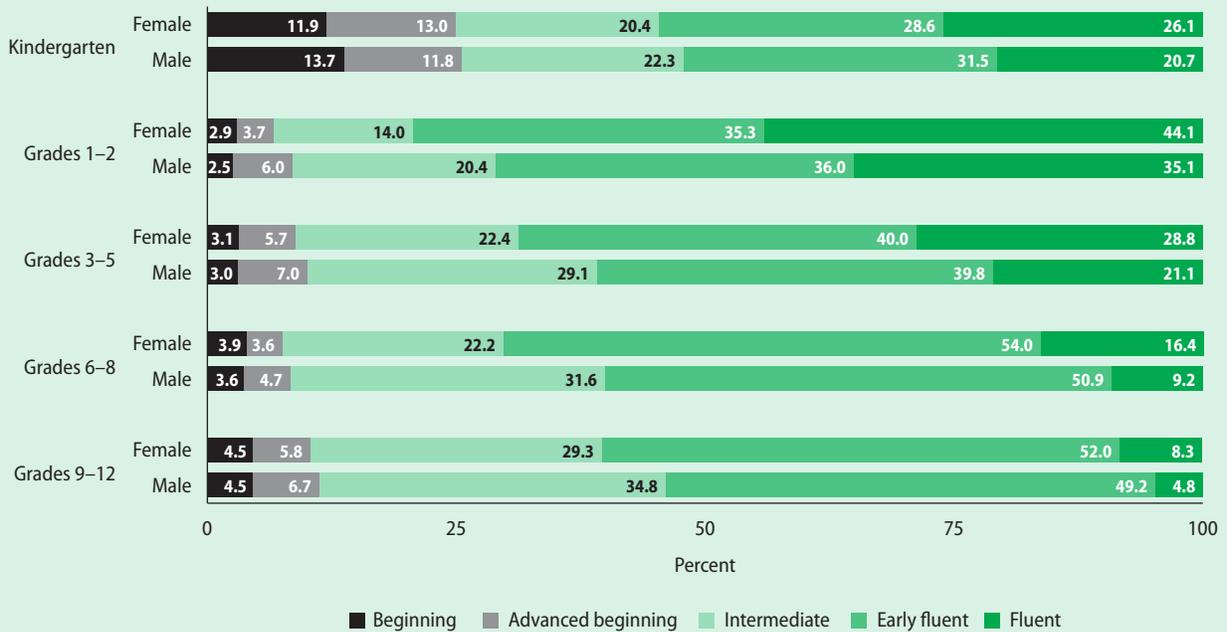


Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

FIGURE 5

Percentage of LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by gender and grade span, 2007

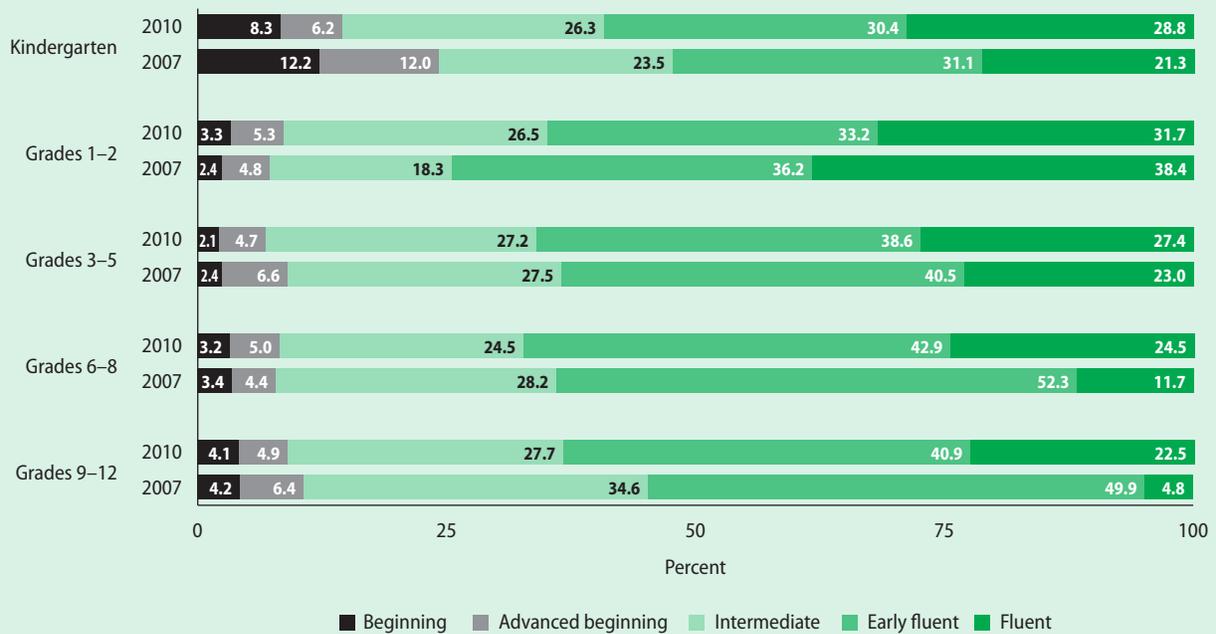


Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

FIGURE 6

Percentage of LEP students who participate in the free or reduced-price lunch program at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

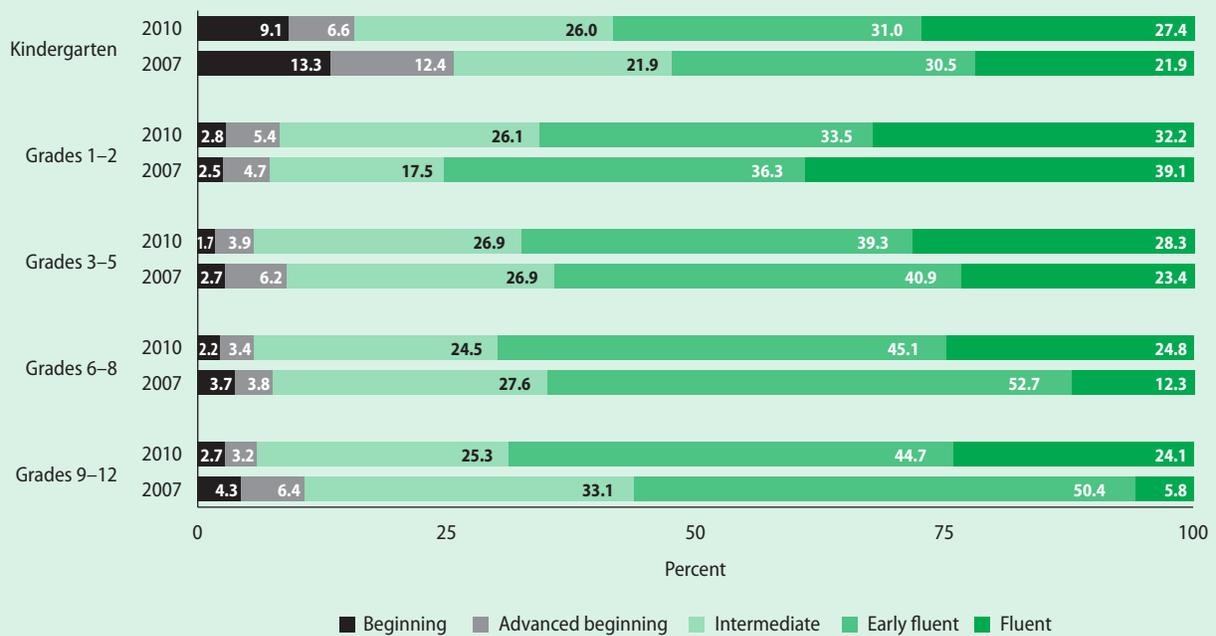


Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

FIGURE 7

Percentage of LEP students whose primary language is Spanish at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

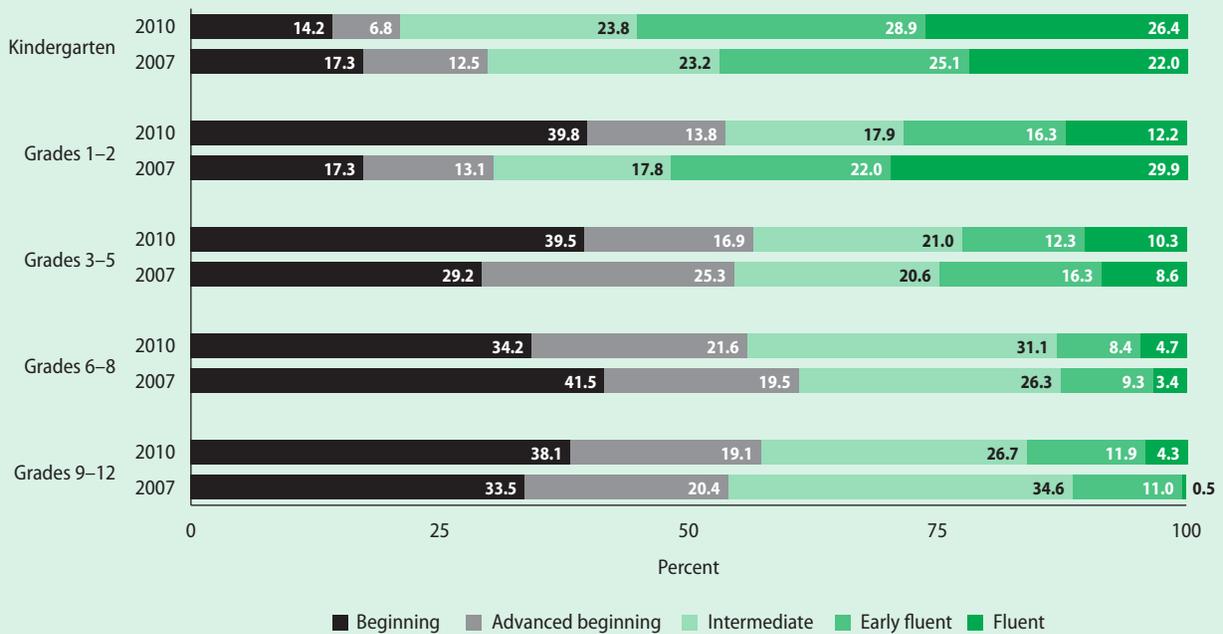


Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

FIGURE 8

Percentage of LEP students enrolled in a U.S. public school for first time in the previous 12 months at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

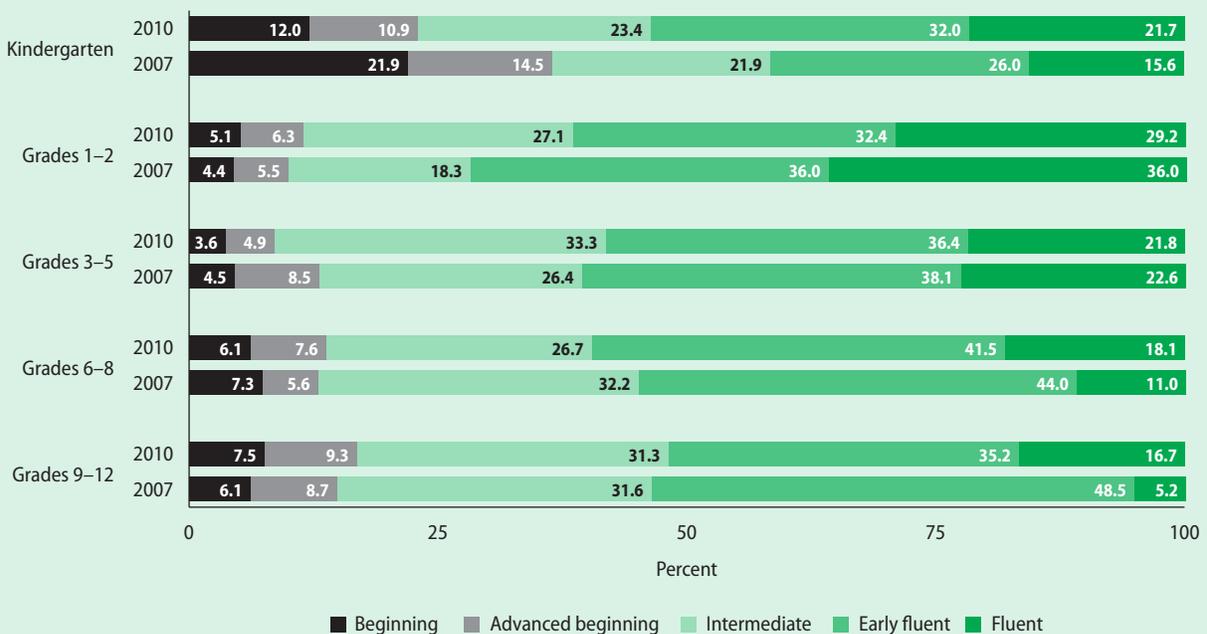


Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

FIGURE 9

Percentage of migrant LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

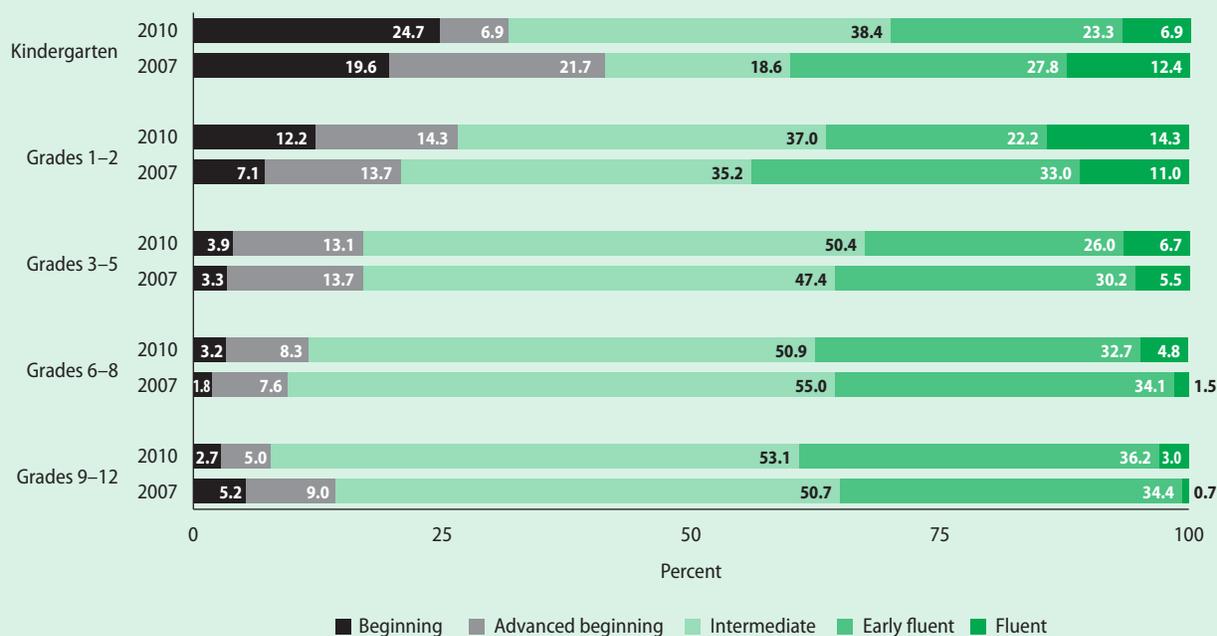


Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

FIGURE 10

Percentage of LEP students enrolled in special education at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007



Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

observed in grades 1-2 in 2010 but not in 2007. For both years, newcomer students in kindergarten were more likely to be at the early fluent or fluent level than at the beginning or advanced beginning level.

Migrant status. Students whose parent or guardian is a migratory agricultural worker or fisher and who has moved within the previous 36 months so that they or their parents or guardians can obtain work are eligible for the Migrant Education Program. In 2010, 8.5 percent of LEP students were in the program. The distribution of proficiency levels among migrant LEP students (figure 9) is similar to that among the overall LEP population (see figure 1), with more than half of students at the early fluent or fluent level across all grade spans. The same pattern was evident in 2007, except in kindergarten, where 41.6 percent of migrant students were at the early fluent or fluent level.

Enrollment in special education. The distribution of proficiency levels among LEP students enrolled

in special education (figure 10) differed substantially from that among the overall LEP population (see figure 1). In 2010, a majority of LEP special education students were at the intermediate level across all grade spans, rather than the early fluent or fluent level, as with the overall LEP student population. In 2007, this pattern was observed in grades 1-12 but not in kindergarten. In both 2010 and 2007, only newcomer students had a smaller percentage of students at the early fluent or fluent level.

CONCLUSIONS

Teachers often cite working with LEP students with a low level of English proficiency as a particular challenge, because these students must acquire English language skills and learn content at the same time (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll 2005; Short and Fitzsimmons 2007). In Idaho, however, fewer than 10 percent of students in grades 1-12 were at the beginning or advanced

In Idaho fewer than 10 percent of students in grades 1–12 were at the beginning or advanced beginning level of English proficiency in 2010

beginning level of English proficiency in 2010. A higher percentage of kindergarten LEP students (16.4 percent) were at the beginning or advanced beginning level. For nearly all LEP subgroups and domain scales, the largest percentage of students was at the highest proficiency levels (early

fluent and fluent), and the smallest percentage was at the beginning level. Most LEP students have an intermediate, early fluent, or fluent level of proficiency. Students at these levels can participate in classroom activities, although they still require support, particularly with the development of academic English (Scarcella 2003).

Differences in proficiency levels across IELA domains typically differed by fewer than 5 percentage points, but some general trends were evident. More than half of LEP students were at the early fluent or fluent level in all domains. However, a larger percentage of students in grades K–5 were at the beginning proficiency level in writing than in the other domains. In middle school and high school, speaking rather than writing had the largest percentage of students at the beginning proficiency level. Whether these differences reflect true differences in writing and speaking proficiency or the scoring of the assessments—that is, the cut points—cannot be discerned from these data. It might be helpful for schools and districts to examine the performance of LEP students on state or local English language arts assessments to learn more about their English skills.

The study identifies a few broad patterns in proficiency levels among some LEP student subgroups. For example, kindergarten had the largest percentage of students at the beginning proficiency level across all subgroups except LEP students enrolled in a U.S. public school for the first time in the previous 12 months (newcomer students). This information could be useful for districts as they plan their staffing to ensure that kindergarten teachers have expertise with LEP students at the beginning level.

In every grade span, the percentage of female LEP students at the early fluent or fluent proficiency level was larger than the percentage of male LEP students. Calling this pattern to the attention of administrators and teachers could help ensure that male LEP students are provided with opportunities to use their developing language skills and that instruction and tasks engage male LEP students as well as female LEP students.

The language difficulties of LEP students enrolled in special education suggest that collaboration between special education teachers and English language learner specialists, or professional development for individuals with expertise in both areas, might be helpful, particularly in the design of an appropriate Individualized Education Program.

For grades 1–12, newcomer students had the largest percentage of students at the beginning proficiency level and the smallest percentage of students at the early fluent or fluent proficiency level. This finding suggests that districts and schools with high newcomer student populations might benefit from programs that target these students' needs, as well as from staff members trained in dealing with the unique needs of this subgroup.

Differences in the distribution of proficiency levels across LEP student subgroups underscore the importance of regularly examining data to assess the strengths and needs of particular groups of LEP students rather than making assumptions that all LEP students need the same type of support.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study examined the English language proficiency (as measured by the IELA) of students from a single state, whose LEP population is 83 percent Hispanic. Findings about proficiency levels cannot be generalized to other states or other assessments.

Although the focus of the study is 2010, results from the 2007 assessment were included to

examine patterns over time. It can be helpful to know that general patterns show up in more than one year. However, the IELA results were from two different populations of students, which are not necessarily comparable; differences in the composition of the two populations can make it

challenging to interpret differences in proficiency levels across years. Readers should therefore not draw any conclusions about the causes of any observed differences between the two years. The study did not examine patterns of growth in proficiency between 2007 and 2010.

APPENDIX A METHODOLOGY

This study analyzed the results of the 2010 Idaho English Language Assessment (IELA), an assessment designed to measure the development of limited English proficient (LEP) students' English language proficiency as they progress across grades. The test, a modified version of an assessment developed for the Mountain West Consortium, is administered to all Idaho LEP students in grades K–12, in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The study analyzed the results by grade span for the total sample; for each of the IELA's five domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension); and for LEP student subgroups based on six characteristics: gender, participation in the free or reduced-price lunch program, Spanish as the primary language, enrollment in a U.S. public school for the first time in the previous 12 months, migrant status, and enrollment in special education. It then compared these data with data from 2007.

The IELA was first administered in spring 2006. The 2006 version of the assessment was significantly different from subsequent versions and used different test administration procedures (Idaho State Board of Education 2006). Thus, this study did not use the 2006 results. The 2007 version of the IELA reflected substantial changes made to align the test items to the Idaho Map of Standards for English Learners: K–12 English Language Development Standards. Adjustments to the IELA are reported in publicly available technical manuals (Idaho State Board of Education 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009; Idaho State Department of Education 2010). Since 2007, each year's unique form of the IELA has been designed to yield scores comparable to those of previous years, so score results can be reported on the same scale.

The IELA consists of five test forms, which are letter coded to correspond to the grade span in which they are used (table A1). There are two test forms at each level except kindergarten. The level 1 form

TABLE A1

Grade spans for Idaho English Language Assessment test forms

Test form	Grade span
A	K
B1, B2	1–2
C1, C2	3–5
D1, D2	6–8
E1, E2	9–12

Source: Idaho State Board of Education (2008).

(A1, B1, and so on) is administered to students who entered a U.S. school for the first time within 12 months of the assessment and are at the beginning level of English proficiency; the level 2 form is administered to all other LEP students.

The development of language proficiency can be described on a performance continuum characterized by levels that describe stages of development (Francis and Rivera 2007). The IELA assesses English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Standard scores are provided for each domain and for comprehension (a combination of select items from the listening and reading test); a total score (representing overall English proficiency) is also provided (Idaho State Board of Education 2008, 2009; Idaho State Department of Education 2010). The total scale reports English proficiency at one of five levels (beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, early fluent, and fluent) that reflect the student's ability to participate in a mainstream classroom taught in English. The IELA domain scale results are collapsed into three proficiency levels (beginning, advanced beginning/intermediate, and early fluent/fluent). Students are assessed as proficient in English if they score at the early fluent/fluent level in each of the five domains (Idaho State Board of Education 2008, 2009; Idaho State Department of Education 2010).

IELA total and domain scale results are reported as standard scores and as English language proficiency levels. Standard scores are derived from raw scores and equated to form a common scale across both forms within each grade span. IELA total and

domain standard scores can be compared for the same domain within the same grade span; standard scores cannot be compared across grade spans (Idaho State Board of Education 2009a; Idaho State Department of Education 2010). For example, IELA standard scores can be used to compare the achievement of students taking forms C1 and C2 across grades 3–5. They cannot be used to compare the achievement of students taking form C1 with the achievement of students taking form D1.

A set of reliability and validity analyses is reported by grade level for each year of the IELA; results are available on the Idaho State Department of Education website (Idaho State Board of Education 2007, 2008, 2009; Idaho State Department of Education 2010). The internal consistency for each domain, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, is .66–.95 for the 2010 and 2007 test forms across all grade spans. Criterion and construct-related validity results are also reported. The correlation among domains is .59–.72, which provides evidence that the domains are measuring related, but not identical, abilities (Idaho State Board of Education 2008; Idaho State Department of Education 2010).

The Idaho State Department of Education transmitted the IELA statewide datasets electronically to the study team. The datasets included the raw scores, standard scores, and proficiency-level results of the total scale and the domain scales. The datasets also included information on the student characteristics examined in this study. Data on students who reached English proficiency as measured by the IELA and therefore no longer received services were not included in the analysis. To protect student confidentiality, data supplied to the study team did not identify students by name. In addition, before sharing the data, the Idaho State Department of Education disguised the school codes. All data were received in electronic form and stored on a secure network directory accessible only to project staff. To further ensure confidentiality, no results are reported for demographic categories small enough (10 or fewer students) that individual students could potentially be identified.

Table A2 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. Tables B1–B13 in appendix B report the numbers of students by grade and subgroup.

TABLE A2

Demographic characteristics of students who took the Idaho English Language Assessment in 2010 and 2007 (percent)

Student characteristic	2010 (n = 15,830)	2007 (n = 16,698)
Gender		
Male	53.3	52.7
Female	46.5	47.1
Missing	0.2	0.2
Race/ethnicity^a		
American Indian/Alaska Native, not Hispanic	1.7	2.6
Asian, not Hispanic	4.6	2.5
Black/African American, not Hispanic	3.0	1.4
Hispanic, of any race	82.8	85.2
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.4	0.6
White, not Hispanic	6.7	6.2
Multiracial, not Hispanic	0.3	1.2
Missing/unknown	0	0.4
Eligibility for special services		
Free or reduced-price lunch	75.5	73.1
Special education	8.6	8.5
Immigrant status		
Enrolled in a U.S. public school for the first time in the previous 12 months	8.4	9.2
Migrant/Title I–C ^b	8.5	15.9
Native language		
Spanish	82.9	79.1
Other	17.1	20.9
Grade span		
Kindergarten	15.0	14.4
Grades 1–2	21.8	21.9
Grades 3–5	24.2	25.5
Grades 6–8	19.2	20.4
Grades 9–12	19.8	17.8

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

a. Components may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

b. The federal funding stream, under Title 1–C of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, that supports students from migrant households.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

APPENDIX B NUMBER OF LEP STUDENTS AT EACH PROFICIENCY LEVEL ON THE IDAHO ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT, 2010 AND 2007

This appendix reports on the number of limited English proficient (LEP) students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment (IELA) for the total scale and for each domain and student subgroup. Results for the total score are presented across five proficiency levels. Results for domain scores are presented across three proficiency levels.

TABLE B1

Number of LEP students at each student proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning	Intermediate	Early fluent	Fluent	Total
Kindergarten						
2010	235	155	601	715	667	2,373
2007	311	297	514	723	563	2,408
Grades 1–2						
2010	130	189	893	1,117	1,129	3,458
2007	99	178	631	1,304	1,446	3,658
Grades 3–5						
2010	107	182	1,042	1,460	1,042	3,833
2007	130	270	1,109	1,697	1,045	4,251
Grades 6–8						
2010	101	153	761	1,295	725	3,035
2007	128	145	930	1,783	428	3,414
Grades 9–12						
2010	120	151	863	1,303	694	3,131
2007	134	188	956	1,498	191	2,967

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B2

Number of LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment listening domain scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning/ intermediate	Early fluent/ fluent	Total
Kindergarten				
2010	279	631	1,459	2,369
2007	389	764	1,245	2,398
Grades 1–2				
2010	157	1,263	2,030	3,450
2007	62	847	2,732	3,641
Grades 3–5				
2010	104	1,201	2,520	3,825
2007	109	1,321	2,800	4,230
Grades 6–8				
2010	102	1,062	1,864	3,028
2007	99	972	2,332	3,403
Grades 9–12				
2010	129	1,041	1,941	3,111
2007	106	1,084	1,747	2,937

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B3

Number of LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment speaking domain scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning/ intermediate	Early fluent/ fluent	Total
Kindergarten				
2010	299	619	1,450	2,368
2007	368	684	1,333	2,385
Grades 1–2				
2010	194	1,096	2,156	3,446
2007	147	948	2,535	3,630
Grades 3–5				
2010	153	1,166	2,501	3,820
2007	174	1,360	2,689	4,223
Grades 6–8				
2010	159	974	1,897	3,030
2007	173	1,064	2,149	3,386
Grades 9–12				
2010	163	906	2,045	3,114
2007	194	937	1,803	2,934

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B4

Number of LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment reading domain scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning/ intermediate	Early fluent/ fluent	Total
Kindergarten				
2010	332	603	1,431	2,366
2007	475	709	1,210	2,394
Grades 1–2				
2010	124	1,185	2,146	3,455
2007	95	914	2,635	3,644
Grades 3–5				
2010	142	1,214	2,472	3,828
2007	182	1,313	2,751	4,246
Grades 6–8				
2010	91	967	1,976	3,034
2007	124	1,076	2,205	3,405
Grades 9–12				
2010	136	1,051	1,940	3,127
2007	123	1,177	1,644	2,944

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B5

Number of LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment writing domain scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning/ intermediate	Early fluent/ fluent	Total
Kindergarten				
2010	576	509	1,287	2,372
2007	555	565	1,212	2,332
Grades 1–2				
2010	258	961	2,231	3,450
2007	238	832	2,574	3,644
Grades 3–5				
2010	173	1,171	2,487	3,831
2007	197	1,235	2,809	4,241
Grades 6–8				
2010	109	955	1,966	3,030
2007	139	1,203	2,063	3,405
Grades 9–12				
2010	118	959	2,047	3,124
2007	181	1,004	1,749	2,934

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B6

Number of LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment comprehension domain scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning/ intermediate	Early fluent/ fluent	Total
Kindergarten				
2010	253	705	1,414	2,372
2007	392	706	1,305	2,403
Grades 1–2				
2010	119	1,190	2,148	3,457
2007	68	915	2,663	3,646
Grades 3–5				
2010	95	1,225	2,511	3,831
2007	107	1,377	2,765	4,249
Grades 6–8				
2010	87	993	1,954	3,034
2007	103	1,242	2,066	3,411
Grades 9–12				
2010	124	991	2,016	3,131
2007	110	1,173	1,674	2,957

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B7

Number of male LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning	Intermediate	Early fluent	Fluent	Total
Kindergarten						
2010	141	86	319	354	329	1,229
2007	168	145	273	386	254	1,226
Grades 1–2						
2010	73	123	523	566	536	1,821
2007	46	111	376	663	646	1,842
Grades 3–5						
2010	59	110	585	812	494	2,060
2007	69	160	670	916	484	2,299
Grades 6–8						
2010	55	73	459	691	374	1,652
2007	67	86	582	938	170	1,843
Grades 9–12						
2010	55	76	508	723	375	1,737
2007	71	107	552	781	76	1,587

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B8

Number of female LEP students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning	Intermediate	Early fluent	Fluent	Total
Kindergarten						
2010	92	67	277	361	335	1,132
2007	140	152	240	336	306	1,174
Grades 1–2						
2010	56	66	367	549	591	1,629
2007	53	67	253	638	799	1,810
Grades 3–5						
2010	47	72	455	646	547	1,767
2007	61	110	437	780	560	1,948
Grades 6–8						
2010	46	80	301	601	350	1,378
2007	60	56	347	842	255	1,560
Grades 9–12						
2010	63	75	353	579	319	1,389
2007	62	80	402	713	113	1,370

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B9

Number of LEP students participating in the free or reduced-price lunch program at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning	Intermediate	Early fluent	Fluent	Total
Kindergarten						
2010	112	84	355	411	389	1,351
2007	171	168	331	437	299	1,406
Grades 1–2						
2010	86	140	695	872	831	2,624
2007	65	128	493	975	1,036	2,697
Grades 3–5						
2010	64	148	851	1,208	857	3,128
2007	81	228	945	1,389	791	3,434
Grades 6–8						
2010	77	120	593	1,038	502	2,420
2007	91	116	748	1,387	309	2,651
Grades 9–12						
2010	98	118	670	990	545	2,421
2007	85	129	697	1,004	97	2,012

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B10

Number of LEP students whose primary language is Spanish at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning	Intermediate	Early fluent	Fluent	Total
Kindergarten						
2010	184	133	526	627	556	2,026
2007	265	247	435	607	436	1,990
Grades 1–2						
2010	83	162	777	997	960	2,979
2007	73	139	520	1,077	1,161	2,970
Grades 3–5						
2010	54	123	860	1,256	905	3,198
2007	90	204	891	1,358	776	3,319
Grades 6–8						
2010	53	83	598	1,101	604	2,439
2007	99	104	747	1,427	332	2,709
Grades 9–12						
2010	67	80	630	1,111	600	2,488
2007	96	143	735	1,121	129	2,224

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B11

Number of LEP students enrolled in a U.S. public school for the first time in the previous 12 months at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning	Intermediate	Early fluent	Fluent	Total
Kindergarten						
2010	86	41	144	175	160	606
2007	119	86	160	173	152	690
Grades 1–2						
2010	49	17	22	20	15	123
2007	37	28	38	47	64	214
Grades 3–5						
2010	77	33	41	24	20	195
2007	68	59	48	38	20	233
Grades 6–8						
2010	65	41	59	16	9	190
2007	85	40	54	19	7	205
Grades 9–12						
2010	80	40	56	25	9	210
2007	64	39	66	21	1	191

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B12

Number of LEP migrant students at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, by grade span, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning	Intermediate	Early fluent	Fluent	Total
Kindergarten						
2010	21	19	41	56	38	175
2007	59	39	59	70	42	269
Grades 1–2						
2010	17	21	91	109	98	336
2007	24	30	100	197	197	548
Grades 3–5						
2010	12	16	110	120	72	330
2007	31	58	181	261	155	686
Grades 6–8						
2010	17	21	74	115	50	277
2007	42	32	185	253	63	575
Grades 9–12						
2010	17	21	71	80	38	227
2007	28	40	146	224	24	462

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

TABLE B13

Number of LEP students enrolled in special education at each proficiency level on the Idaho English Language Assessment total scale, 2010 and 2007

Grade and year	Beginning	Advanced beginning	Intermediate	Early fluent	Fluent	Total
Kindergarten						
2010	18	5	28	17	5	73
2007	19	21	18	27	12	97
Grades 1–2						
2010	23	27	70	42	27	189
2007	13	25	64	60	20	182
Grades 3–5						
2010	15	51	196	101	26	389
2007	15	62	215	137	25	454
Grades 6–8						
2010	12	31	190	122	18	373
2007	7	30	216	134	6	393
Grades 9–12						
2010	9	17	179	122	10	337
2007	15	26	146	99	2	288

Note: Data do not include former LEP students who were no longer receiving services because they had reached proficiency.

Source: Authors' analysis of Idaho English Language Assessment data.

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