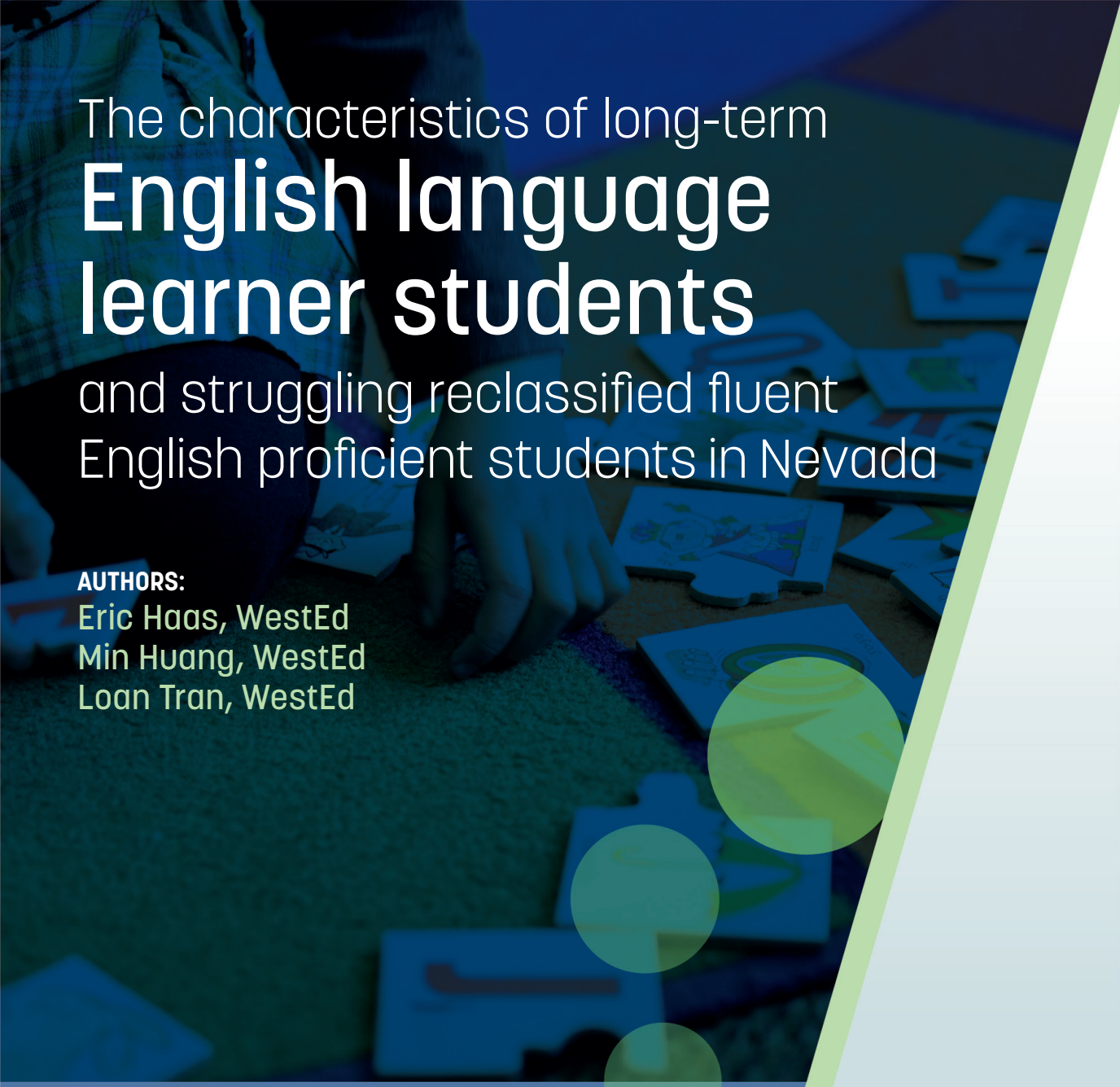




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The characteristics of long-term English language learner students and struggling reclassified fluent English proficient students in Nevada

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This report, and the research on which it is based, were produced on behalf of REL West's English Learner Alliance, whose membership consists of the Arizona State Department of Education, the Nevada State Department of Education, the Utah State Office of Education, and the West Comprehensive Center.



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Summary

Across the United States, and in the states served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) in particular, there is widespread concern about how to successfully educate the growing number of English language learner (ELL) students, especially those identified as long-term ELL students and those identified as reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students who struggle to score at passing levels on state English language arts (ELA)/reading content tests (Horwitz et al., 2009; Olsen, 2010; Quality Counts, 2009).

This study, which focuses on ELL students in Nevada, is one of a series of three companion studies that seek to help Arizona, Nevada, and Utah identify the characteristics of long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students. For this study, we defined *long-term English language learner students* as students who, during the six school years of the study, never scored at or above the levels required on Nevada’s English language proficiency (ELP) test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient. We compared these long-term ELL students to their ELL peers who did score at or above the levels required on Nevada’s ELP test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient, whom we refer to as *Reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students*. *Struggling RFEP students* were defined as ELL students who met the state’s ELP requirements for RFEP but did not pass the state ELA or reading content test by the end of year 6 of the study. We compared these Struggling RFEP students to their RFEP peers who did pass the state ELA or reading content test, whom we refer to as *Transitioned RFEP students*.

The study examined student data from 2006/07–2011/12 to address three research questions:

- » What proportion of ELL students fit the study’s definition of long-term ELL students by the end of the six years? What proportion of ELL students fit the study’s definition of Struggling RFEP students by the end of the six years?
- » What are the characteristics of long-term ELL students? How are these characteristics different from those of RFEP students?
- » What are the characteristics of Struggling RFEP students? How are these characteristics different from those of the RFEP students who passed their ELA content test at least once by the end of the six years?

The study followed three cohorts of ELL students in Nevada’s two largest school districts, Clark County (CCSD) and Washoe County (WCSD): a grade K cohort, who started kindergarten in 2006/07; a grade 3 cohort, who started grade 3 in 2006/07; and a grade 6 cohort, who started grade 6 in 2006/07. By examining these three cohorts in Nevada over six years (2006/07–2011/12), this study found the following:



Subgroup proportions

Across the K, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD,

- » Between 50 and 83 percent of the ELL students scored at or above Nevada’s required ELP level to meet RFEP criteria.
- » Among RFEP students, between 48 and 88 percent passed their ELA content test at least once (thereby becoming Transitioned RFEP students).
- » Among long-term ELL students, between 6 and 32 percent passed the ELA content test at least once.
- » In general, the grade 6 cohort had the lowest percentage of RFEP students, Transitioned RFEP students, and long-term ELL students who passed the ELA content test at least once.

Subgroup characteristics

- » In general, long-term ELL students, when compared to their more successful RFEP peers, had higher percentages of eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), eligibility for individualized education program (IEP) services, and male students.
- » In general across the student characteristics, Struggling RFEP students, when compared to their more successful Transitioned RFEP peers, had higher percentages of eligibility for FRL, eligibility for IEP services, and male students.
- » In general, compared to their more successful RFEP and Transitioned RFEP peers, long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students had higher percentages of students with lower ELP levels during the first study year.

This report’s findings on Nevada ELL students suggest several additional questions worth further investigation. For example, why did this study see patterns that differ from other research regarding the achievement of reclassification as fluent English proficient by grade levels? Findings from the research literature generally show that it is harder for older students to progress to English proficiency and to pass content tests than for younger students to do so. Yet, the kindergarten cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD had the highest percentages of long-term ELL students among the three grade-level cohorts in their districts. Another question is what can be done, or what has been found effective, in assisting the lower-achieving ELL student subgroups to close the achievement gaps? Further exploration of these questions would help identify which groups of ELL students take longer than expected to reach English language proficiency and how interventions could be targeted to assist them.



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Why this study?

Across the United States, and in the states served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) in particular, there is widespread concern about how to successfully educate the growing number of English language learner (ELL) students, especially those identified as long-term ELL students and those identified as reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students who struggle to score at passing levels on state English language arts (ELA)/reading content tests (Horwitz et al., 2009; Olsen, 2010; Quality Counts, 2009). The members of REL West’s English Learner Alliance—the state departments of education from Arizona, Nevada, and Utah—requested a study of the characteristics of long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students in each alliance state (resulting in a series of three companion state reports) in order to better understand how these two groups of low-performing ELL students may differ from the ELL student population as a whole in each state. In this study, *Struggling RFEP students* are defined as ELL students who met the state’s English language proficiency (ELP) requirements for RFEP, but who did not pass the state ELA or reading content test during the course of the study.

Currently, the English Learner Alliance states of Arizona, Nevada, and Utah have not analyzed the characteristics of their long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students, but they are eager to do so. Specific requests have come from staff in each of the three state departments of education, who, individually and as a group, developed this research agenda with REL West.

The English Learner Alliance members intend to use the study’s findings to inform early interventions targeted at ELL students whose characteristics fit patterns of ELL students who are more likely to become long-term ELL students or remain Struggling RFEP students. Further, they would like to develop a shared understanding of their long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students, in order to promote cross-state collaboration in developing effective interventions and programs. The English Learner Alliance would also like to use this project as an initial model for similar follow-up projects, including longitudinal analyses of ELL student progress in ELP tests and academic subject-matter tests.

While there is widespread concern about how to successfully educate the growing number of ELL students, especially those identified as long-term ELL students and/or Struggling RFEP students, there do not appear to be any studies of the characteristics of these two groups of students that might enable states to better target existing programs and interventions (see, e.g., Burr, Haas, & Geary, 2013) by basing them on the particular needs of those two groups. This Nevada study, and the two companion state reports, will provide this needed information, based on data from Arizona, Nevada’s two largest school districts,¹ and Utah.

Box 1. Defining categories of English language learner students for this study

Long-term English language learner students

Students who never scored at or above the required levels on their state English language proficiency (ELP) test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient during the six years of the study.

Reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students

Students who scored at or above the required levels on their state ELP test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient during the six years of the study.

Struggling RFEP students

RFEP students who met the ELP classification requirements as fluent English proficient, but did not pass their state's English language arts (ELA) or reading content test during the six years of the study.

Transitioned RFEP students

RFEP students who passed their state's ELA or reading content test at least once during the six years of the study.

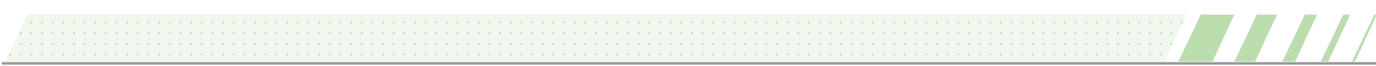
ELL achievement and student characteristics

ELL students, as a group, tend to lag behind native English speakers in their rates of academic achievement (Kindler, 2002; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012; Olsen, 2010; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

This is due, in large part, to the need of ELL students to simultaneously learn English and content knowledge (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). However, both ELL students and former ELL students (i.e., RFEP students) are diverse groups with different strengths and needs, depending on a number of characteristics (Kindler, 2002).

Most states and districts collect data on several characteristics that appear to be related to academic achievement for ELL students specifically and students generally. These characteristics include

- » poverty status (Goldenberg, 2008; Mulligan, Halle, & Kinukawa, 2012; Rathbun & West, 2004; Roberts & Bryant, 2011);
- » disability status (Liasidou, 2013; McCardle, McCarthy-Mele, Cutting, Leos, & D'Emilio, 2005; Nguyen, 2012);
- » gender (Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005);
- » initial ELP when ELL students first enroll in school (Cook, Linqunti, Chinen, & Jung, 2012; Collier, 1989, 1992; Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012); and
- » grade level (Genesee et al., 2005).



At present, the research literature describes the impact of each of these student characteristics in the following ways.

Poverty status


Research on ELL students generally shows that their socioeconomic status (SES) has an impact on academic achievement. For instance, ELL students from homes with lower SES generally score lower on academic content tests and are less likely to score proficient on ELP tests than their higher-SES peers. Two analyses of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey from the kindergarten class of 1998/99 support these conclusions about the impact of SES on ELL students' academic achievement. A greater percentage of kindergarten students whose primary language was not English than of students who entered kindergarten as English proficient came from families whose incomes were below the federal poverty threshold; in addition, ELL students who came from families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold scored lower on reading, mathematics, and science tests than ELL students whose families had incomes above the federal poverty threshold (Mulligan et al., 2012). A similar conclusion was reached by Roberts and Bryant (2011), who found that SES was more salient than primary language in explaining the mathematics achievement of ELL students; they found that ELL students with higher SES scored higher on mathematics assessments than ELL students with lower SES.

ELL students with disabilities

There do not appear to be any studies that address the impact of specific disabilities on an ELL student's academic progress in the United States. However, one meta-analysis review describes the likely impact in Canada (Lipka, Siegel, & Vukovic, 2005). The authors of this meta-analysis reviewed published studies of ELL students in Canada, with the goal of understanding the reading development of ELL students and characteristics of reading disabilities in this population. Phonological processing, syntactic awareness, and working memory of ELL students with and without reading disabilities were compared to those of native English-speaking students with and without reading disabilities. For each of the three ELL native language-specific (Portuguese, Italian, and Arabic) studies, students (ages 9–14) with and without reading disabilities were compared within their native-language groups and to their native English-speaking peers (AbuRabia & Siegel, 2002; Da Fontoura & Siegel, 1995; D'Angiulli, Siegel, & Serra, 2001). The findings were consistent across the three studies: Within each native-language group, ELL students with reading disabilities had much lower scores than ELL students without reading disabilities, while ELL students with reading disabilities had similar levels of performance to native English-speaking students with reading disabilities.

Gender

There do not appear to be any studies that examine the impact of gender on an ELL student's academic progress. However, there are studies that describe differences in academic achievement by gender among the K–12 general population. Over the past decade, results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have shown small but persistent mathematics gender disparities favoring males at grades 4, 8, and 12, with gaps of roughly 0.1 standard deviations, or the equivalent of a few months of schooling (McGraw,



Lubienski, & Strutchens, 2006; Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005); in contrast, reading achievement data from the 2005 and 2007 NAEPs reveal that females outscored males by less than 0.2 standard deviations at grade 4 but more than 0.3 standard deviations at grades 8 and 12 (Perie et al., 2005). A more recent study (Robinson & Theule, 2011) found generally similar patterns. Using K–8 national longitudinal data, the authors investigated males' and females' achievement in mathematics and reading, including when gender gaps first appeared, whether the appearance of gaps depended on the metric used, and where the achievement distribution gaps were most prevalent. The authors found no mathematics gender gap in kindergarten, except at the top of the distribution; however, females throughout the distribution lost ground in elementary school and regained some in middle school. In reading, gaps favoring females generally narrowed as the grade level increased, but widened among low-achieving students.


Initial English language proficiency and grade level

Research generally shows that ELL students tend to make greater year-to-year ELP and academic content improvement in the lower grades than they do in the higher grades, when both age groups start at the same ELP (Cook, Wilmes, Boals, & Santos, 2008; Grissom, 2004; Kieffer, 2008, 2010, 2011; Salazar, 2007). Thus, ELL students are more likely to take longer to progress from the Intermediate ELP level to the fully Proficient ELP level in higher grades, such as high school, than ELL students starting at the same ELP level in the elementary school grades. In addition, this difference in lower and higher grade levels' rate of progress in ELP tends to get larger as the level of ELP increases (Cook et al., 2008; Garcia, 2003; Halle et al., 2012). In other words, a student at a low grade level and a low ELP level (such as a kindergarten student at the Pre-emergent ELP level) would typically have a much higher rate of progress in achieving RFEP (that is, scoring Proficient on the ELP test) than a student at a high grade level and high ELP level (such as a grade 11 student at the Intermediate ELP level).

For progress on subject-matter content tests, there do not appear to be any research studies that specifically describe the characteristics of Struggling RFEP students. There are, however, related research studies that provide partial insights into the characteristics associated with the achievement of ELL students on academic content tests. For example, the length of time for initially designated ELL students to reach the 50th percentile on academic achievement tests ranged from four to ten years and depended on several factors: the level of the student's schooling in his or her first language; the student's initial level of English proficiency; the type of language program (for example, two-way bilingual, sheltered English immersion); and the subject being tested (for example, mathematics knowledge appeared to transfer into the English language assessments more readily than reading and writing skills) (Collier, 1989, 1992).

Characteristics examined in this study

This study describes several characteristics of Struggling RFEP students—initial level of ELP, as well as gender, eligibility for FRL, eligibility for IEP services, and grade level—as they relate to achievement on Nevada's ELA content test. State-level data were not available in Nevada (or in Utah or Arizona) on ELL students' proficiency in their first language, or on the types of language programs that ELL students are participating in.



This study addresses the gaps in the research literature by providing descriptions of the initial characteristics² of Nevada ELL students who became either long-term ELL students or Struggling RFEP students and of any differences in the initial characteristics between these groups and their more successful counterparts, RFEP students as a whole, and Transitioned RFEP students.



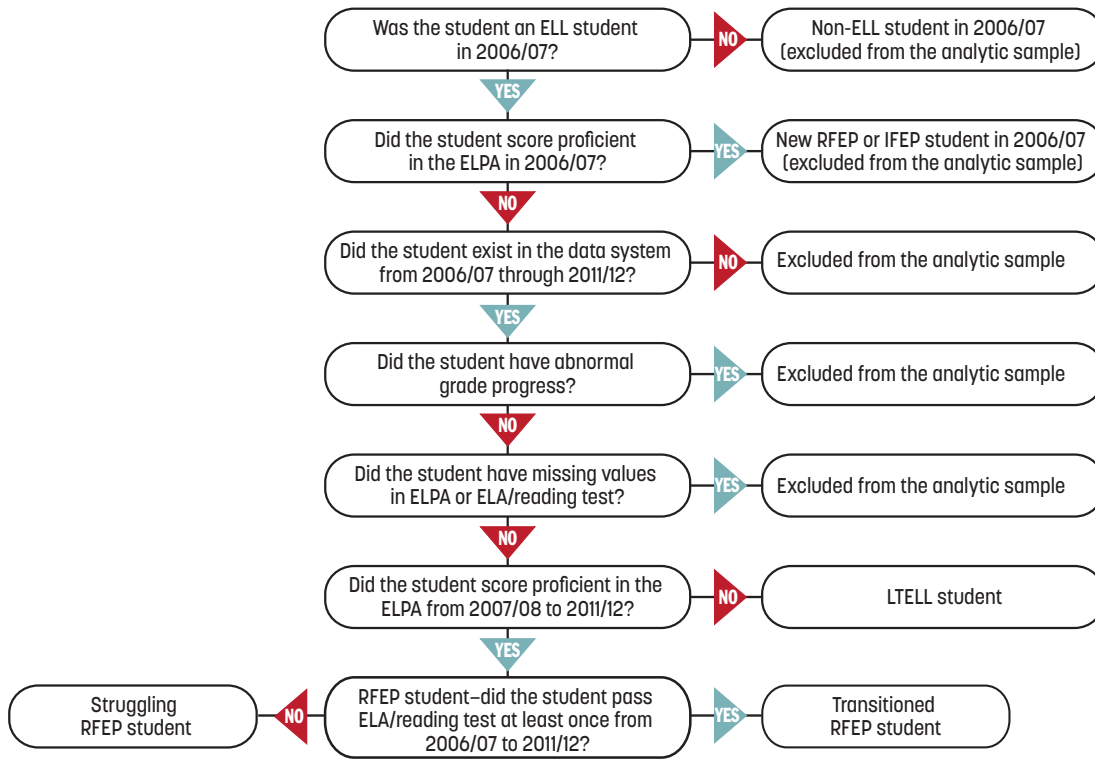
What the study examined

This study on ELL students in Nevada’s two largest school districts, Clark County and Washoe County, (like its two companion reports on ELL students in Utah and Arizona) is a descriptive analysis of the progress on state assessments and characteristics of four categories of ELL students—*long-term ELL students*, *RFEP students*, *Struggling RFEP students*, and *Transitioned RFEP students*. Nevada’s state testing process is described in box 2.

For the Nevada study, we used data from the state’s two largest counties, Clark County School District (CCSD) and Washoe County School District (WCSD), as the Nevada State Department of Education did not collect all the data necessary to conduct the analyses statewide during the study period. The findings for Nevada are reported separately for each of these two counties.³ In this study, *long-term ELL students* were defined as ELL students who never scored at or above the required ELP level on their state ELP test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) during the six years of the study (see, e.g., Olsen, 2010). *RFEP students*, in contrast to long-term ELL students, were defined as those ELL students who did score at or above the required ELP level on their state ELP test to achieve RFEP status. *Struggling RFEP students* were defined as those ELL students who met the ELP requirements for RFEP but did not pass the state ELA or reading content test at least once by the end of the sixth year of the study. We used the descriptor “Struggling” because this group of ELL students had moved from full success in their ELL support programs (i.e., passing their ELP test to achieve RFEP status) but had not yet achieved one of the minimum expected levels of success for all students (i.e., passing the state ELA or reading content test) during the six years of the study. This study also examines *Transitioned RFEP students*, who, in contrast to the Struggling RFEP students, were defined as RFEP students who passed the state ELA or reading content test at least once during the study period.

The analytic sample for this study was purposefully limited to ELL students who had attended school for at least six years, in order to focus on the characteristics of ELL students who had participated in a state educational program for an extended period of time. The criteria for the analytic sample for each of the four ELL subgroups are described in figure 1. For each of the study’s four ELL student subgroups, we examined and compared the following characteristics: eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), gender, ELP level, and eligibility for receipt of individualized education program (IEP) services during the first year of the study. We analyzed and compared the patterns of characteristics of students within and across the three grade-level cohorts: the grade K cohort, who started kindergarten in 2006/07; the grade 3 cohort, who started grade 3 in 2006/07; and the grade 6 cohort, who started grade 6 in 2006/07. Specifically, we compared long-term ELL students versus all RFEP students, and we compared Struggling RFEP students versus Transitioned RFEP students.

Figure 1. Criteria for analytic sample, Nevada, 2006/07–2011/12



ELPA is English language proficiency assessment.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Box 2. Nevada's testing process

During the study period, 2006/07–2011/12, LAS Links (CTB-McGraw Hill) was the English language proficiency (ELP) assessment that Nevada used as the assessment tool to measure English language learner (ELL) students' annual progress and attainment of ELP. There were five levels of proficiency: *Entry*, *Emerging*, *Intermediate*, *Advanced Intermediate*, and *Proficient*. Prior to 2009/10, ELL students were considered proficient if they achieved the Proficient level for the overall ELP assessment score, which was the average of the scores across each of the assessment's four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Starting in 2009/10, to be considered proficient and to exit the ELL program, ELL students had to achieve Proficient for the overall test score average across the four domains and achieve Advanced Intermediate or higher on each of the four domains.⁴

Nevada students in grades 3–8 take the Nevada criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) and students in high school take the High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE), both of which are aligned to the Nevada state standards for each grade. The CRT and HSPE tests measure how well the students learned subject matter content. A reading test is used to assess general English language arts (ELA) content knowledge in the CRT and HSPE. There are four performance levels for the CRT and HSPE: *Emergent/Developing*, *Approaches Standard*, *Meets Standard*, and *Exceeds Standard*. For this report, references to the Nevada CRT reading test refer to the reading tests administered through both the CRT and HSPE.



What we learned

The study's findings revealed key patterns across Nevada's three grade-level cohorts in relation to (1) the proportions of ELL students that met the study's definitions of long-term ELL students, RFEP students, Transitioned RFEP students, and Struggling RFEP students; and (2) the characteristics of each of these subgroups of ELL students.

Subgroup proportions

The study examined the following questions in relation to ELL student subgroup proportions:

- » What proportion of ELL students fit the study's definition of long-term ELL student by the end of the six years?
- » What proportion of ELL students fit the study's definition of Struggling RFEP student by the end of the six years?

Long-term ELL students and RFEP students

By the end of the study period, across the kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD, between 50 and 83 percent of the ELL students scored at or above Nevada's required ELP level to meet RFEP criteria (tables 1 and 2; figures 2 and 3). In other words, between 17 and 50 percent of the ELL students were long-term ELL students at the end of the study period. The grade 3 cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD had the largest percentages of students who achieved RFEP (81 and 83 percent, respectively). The kindergarten cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD had the highest percentage of long-term ELL students and the highest percentage of RFEP students who passed the CRT reading test at least once among the three grade-level cohorts in their school districts. The kindergarten cohort in WCSD had the lowest RFEP percentage among all six grade-level cohorts in both school districts (50 percent).

Table 1. Less than one-third of ELL students became long-term ELL students, CCSD, 2006/07–2011/12

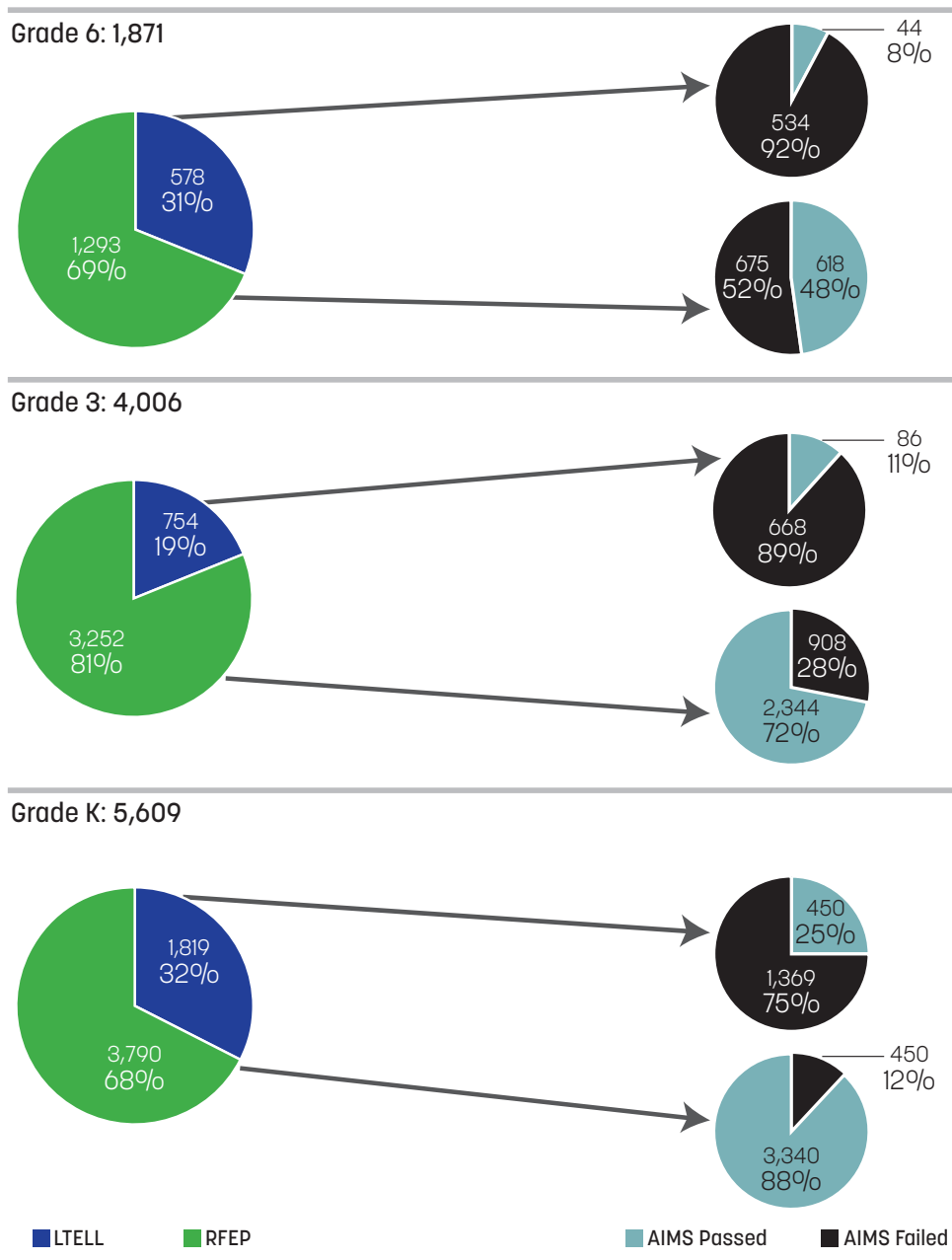
| Category | Grade K cohort (N = 5,609) | Grade 3 cohort (N = 4,006) | Grade 6 cohort (N = 1,871) |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Transitioned RFEP | 60 | 59 | 33 |
| Struggling RFEP | 8 | 23 | 36 |
| Long-term ELL | 32 | 19 | 31 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Transitioned RFEP is reclassified as fluent English proficient and passed the English language arts content test at least once. Struggling RFEP is reclassified as fluent English proficient and never passed the English language arts content test during the study period.

Note: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 2. The kindergarten cohort had the highest percentages of long-term ELL students and RFEP students who passed the CRT reading test, CCSD, 2006/07–2011/12



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. CRT is Reading criterion-referenced test. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

Note 2: The lower right-side circle in each grade cohort's box represents the percentage of Struggling RFEP students (black wedge) and Transitioned RFEP students (light blue wedge).

Note 3: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Table 2. One-half of ELL students in the kindergarten cohort became long-term ELL students, WCSD, 2006/07–2011/12

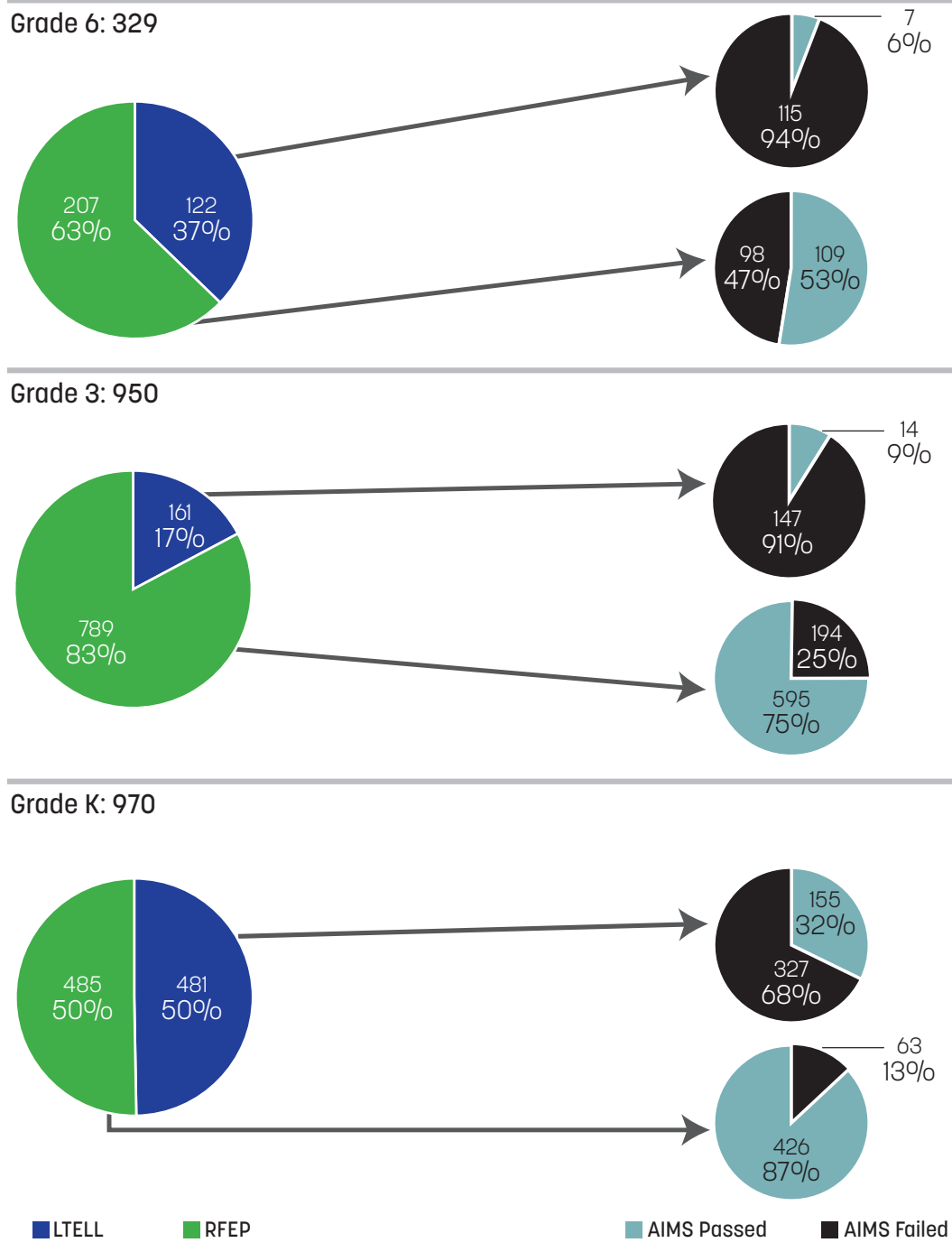
| Category | Grade K cohort (N = 970) | Grade 3 cohort (N = 950) | Grade 6 cohort (N = 329) |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Transitioned RFEP | 44 | 63 | 33 |
| Struggling RFEP | 6 | 20 | 30 |
| Long-term ELL | 50 | 17 | 37 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Transitioned RFEP is reclassified as fluent English proficient and passed the English language arts content test at least once. Struggling RFEP is reclassified as fluent English proficient and never passed the English language arts content test during the study period.


Note: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 3. The kindergarten cohort had the highest percentages of long-term ELL students and RFEP students who passed the CRT reading test, WCSD, 2006/07–2011/12



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. CRT is Reading criterion-referenced test. LTELL is long-term English language learner.



Note 2: The lower right-side circle in each grade cohort's box represents the percentage of Struggling RFEP students (black wedge) and Transitioned RFEP students (light blue wedge).

Note 3: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Struggling RFEP students and Transitioned RFEP students

Across the kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD, between 48 and 88 percent of the RFEP students passed their CRT reading test at least once, thereby becoming Transitioned RFEP students (see figures 2 and 3). In other words, between 12 and 52 percent of the RFEP students remained as Struggling RFEP students at the end of the study.

Among long-term ELL students, between 6 and 32 percent passed the CRT reading test at least once. Overall, a higher proportion of RFEP students passed their CRT reading test compared to long-term ELL students.

Across all these various subgroups—long-term ELL, RFEP, Struggling RFEP, and Transitioned RFEP—there was an additional proportion pattern across the grade-level cohorts. With one exception, the grade 6 cohort had the lowest percentage of RFEP students, Transitioned RFEP students, and long-term ELL students who passed the CRT reading test at least once. The exception was the percentage of RFEP students in WCSD (see figure 3). There, the lowest percentage of RFEP students was in the kindergarten cohort (50 percent), while the grade 6 cohort had the second lowest percentage of RFEP students (63 percent).

Subgroup characteristics

To understand the characteristics of each of the ELL student subgroups, the study examined the following questions:

- » What are the characteristics of long-term ELL students? How are these characteristics different from those of all RFEP students?
- » What are the characteristics of Struggling RFEP students? How are these characteristics different from those of the Transitioned RFEP students (that is, those who passed their ELA content test at least once by the end of the six years)?

Long-term ELL students and RFEP students

With one exception, in each grade-level cohort in both CCSD and WCSD a greater percentage of long-term ELL students compared to their RFEP peers were eligible for FRL (figures 4 and 5), male (figures 6 and 7), began the study at one of the two lowest ELP levels (Entry or Emerging; figures 8 and 9), and were eligible for receipt of IEP services (figures 10 and 11). Further, with the exception of the CCSD kindergarten cohort, the majority of long-term ELL students across all three grade-level cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD were eligible for FRL (between 60 and 86 percent; see figures 4 and 5). In each grade-level cohort

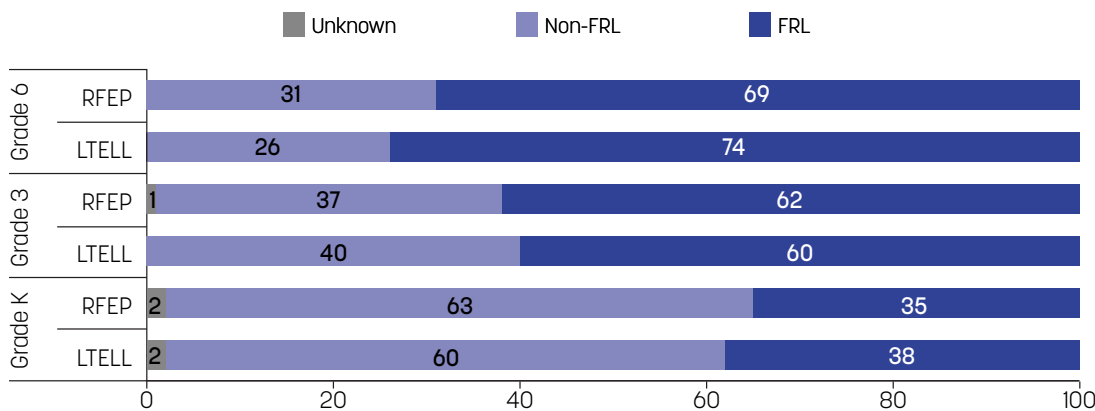
in both CCSD and WCSD, the majority of long-term ELL students were male (between 52 and 62 percent; see figures 6 and 7).

Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch

With the exception of the kindergarten cohort in CCSD, the majority of long-term ELL and RFEP students (from 60 to 86 percent) were eligible for FRL (see figures 4 and 5). In the CCSD kindergarten cohort, 35 percent of the RFEP students and 38 percent of the long-term ELL students were eligible for FRL (see figure 4).

In most of the grade-level cohorts, but not all, a larger proportion of long-term ELL students were eligible for FRL compared to RFEP students. In CCSD, in the kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts, a greater percentage of long-term ELL students were eligible for FRL than RFEP students (38 percent versus 35 percent in the kindergarten cohort and 74 percent versus 69 percent in the grade 6 cohort; see figure 4). In contrast, in the grade 3 cohort, 60 percent of the long-term ELL students were eligible for FRL compared to 62 percent of the RFEP students. Similarly in WCSD, in two of the grade-level cohorts, kindergarten and grade 3, there were greater percentages of long-term ELL students who were eligible for FRL than RFEP students, while in the third grade-level cohort, grade 6, a greater percentage of RFEP than long-term ELL students were eligible for FRL (see figure 5).

Figure 4. Over 60 percent of long-term ELL students received free or reduced-price lunch in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, CCSD, 2006/07 (percent)

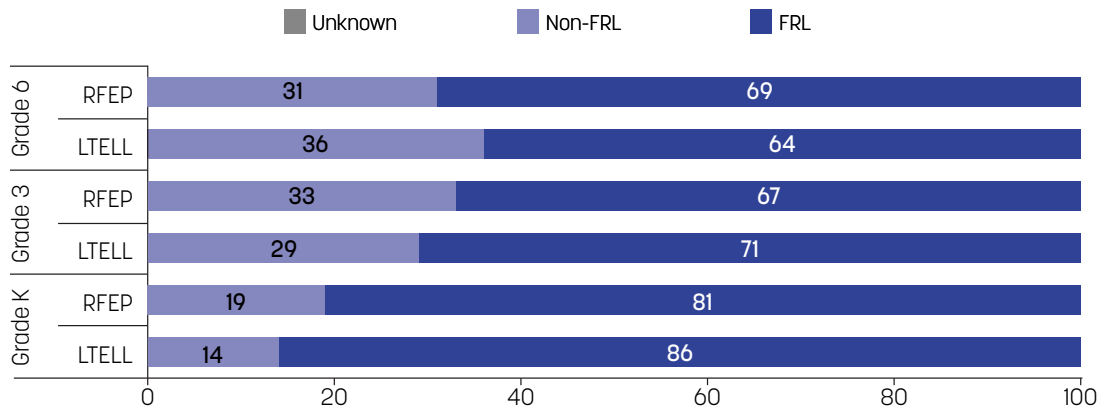


Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 5. The majority of long-term ELL students received free or reduced-price lunch, WCSD, 2006/07 (percent)



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

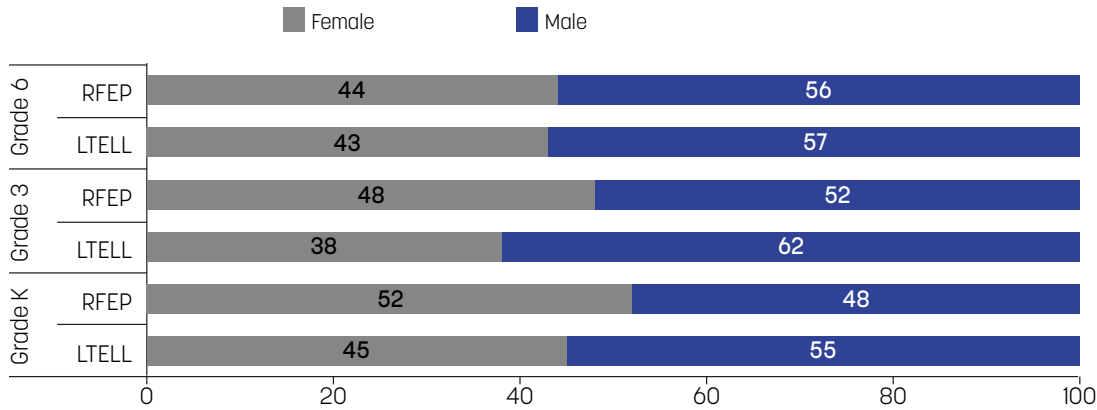
Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Gender

Most of the long-term ELL students across all three grade-level cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD were male (see figures 6 and 7). For example, in the grade 3 cohorts, 62 percent of the long-term ELL students in CCSD were male and in WCSD, 61 percent were male. For the RFEP students, a predominance of male students did not occur in every grade-level cohort. In two grade-level cohorts, female RFEP students outnumbered male RFEP students: in the CCSD kindergarten cohort (52 percent female versus 48 percent male; see figure 6) and in the WCSD grade 6 cohort (53 percent female versus 47 percent male; see figure 7). In the WCSD kindergarten cohort, the male and female percentages were equal (50 percent).

For each grade-level cohort in both CCSD and WCSD, long-term ELL students had a greater percentage of male students than their RFEP student peers. For example, in the CCSD grade 3 cohort, the long-term ELL students were 62 percent male and the RFEP students were 52 percent male (see figure 6).

Figure 6. More than half of long-term ELL students were male, CCSD, 2006/07 (percent)

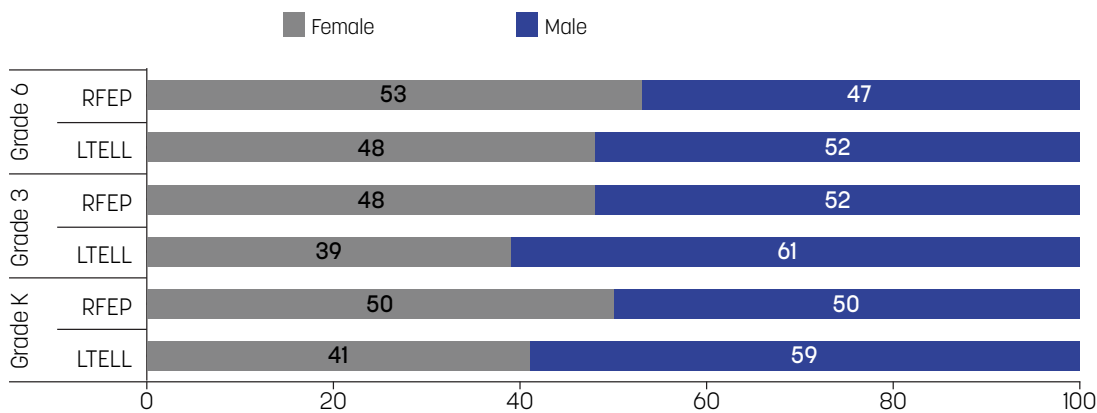


Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient; K is kindergarten; LTELL is long-term English language learner.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District (Nevada) for English language learner (ELL) students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 7. More than half of long-term ELL students were male, WCSD, 2006/07 (percent)



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

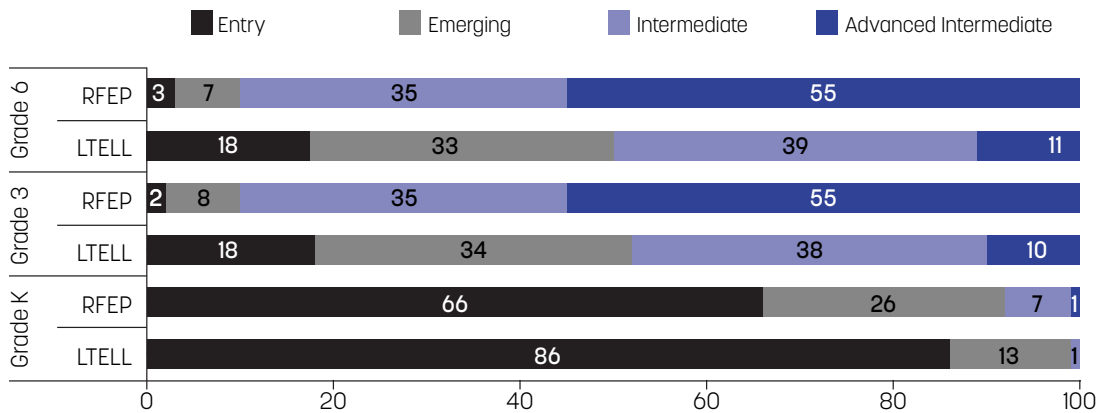
Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Initial English language proficiency level

For the characteristic of initial English language proficiency (ELP) level, the patterns within and across the cohorts were less consistent than for those of other student characteristics (see figures 8 and 9). In both CCSD and WCSD, across the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, the two highest initial ELP levels (2006/07) for long-term ELL students were Emerging or Intermediate (levels 2 and 3, with 5 being Proficient), while the two highest initial ELP levels (2006/07) for RFEP students were Intermediate or Advanced Intermediate (levels 3 and 4). For example, in the WCSD grade 6 cohort, 28 percent of the long-term ELLs started the study at the Emerging level and 42 started at the Intermediate level, while 31 percent of the RFEP students started the study at the Intermediate level and 59 percent started at the Advanced Intermediate level (see figure 9). However, in the kindergarten cohort, the vast majority of both long-term ELL students and RFEP students in both CCSD and WCSD had an initial ELP level of Entry (level 1). The percentage of long-term ELL students and RFEP students in the kindergarten cohorts who started the study at the Entry level ranged from 66 percent for CCSD RFEP students to 93 percent for WCSD long-term ELL students.

Figure 8. The majority of long-term ELL students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts had an initial ELP level at either Emerging or Intermediate, CCSD, 2006/07 (percent)

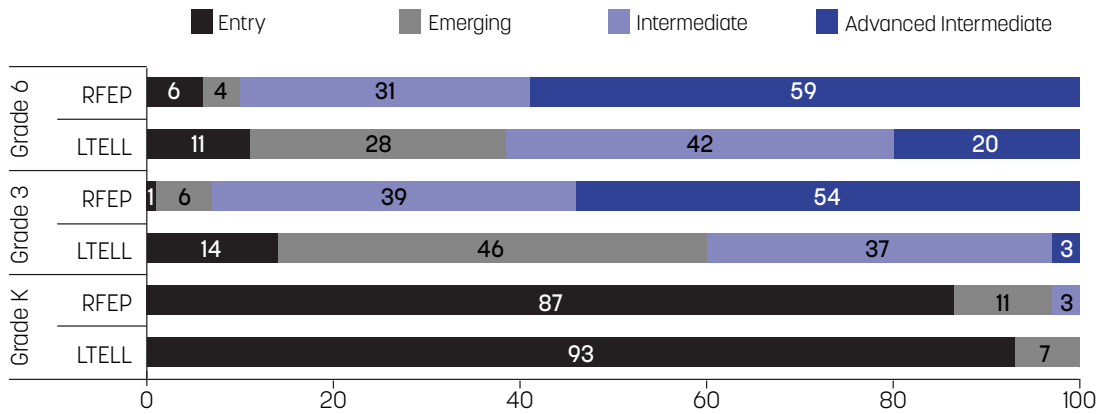


Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 9. The majority of long-term ELL students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts had an initial ELP level of Emerging or Intermediate, WCSD, 2006/07 (percent)



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

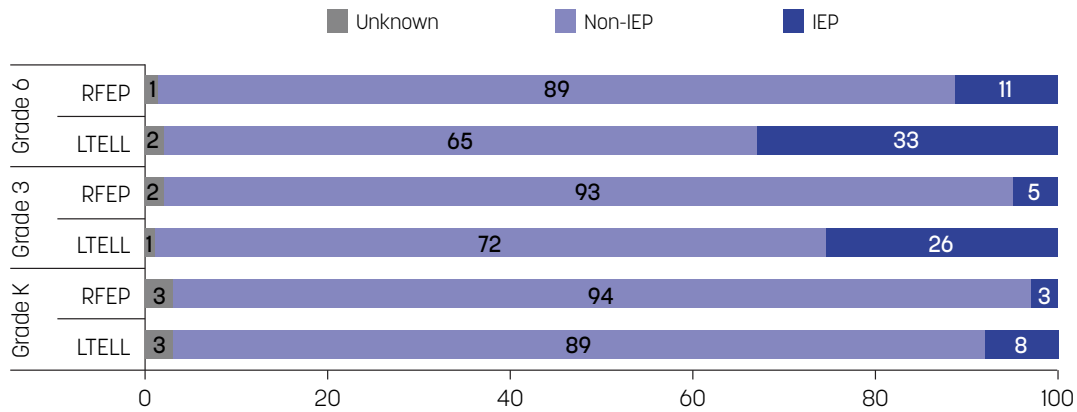
Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Eligibility to receive individualized education program services

In all three grade-level cohorts, in both CCSD and WCSD, a higher percentage of long-term ELL students were eligible to receive IEP services at the start of the study period than RFEP students (see figures 10 and 11). For both long-term ELL students and RFEP students, the percentage of students who were eligible to receive IEP services at the start of the study period was greater in the higher grade-level cohorts. For example, in WCSD, 19 percent of long-term ELL students and 2 percent of RFEP students in the kindergarten cohort were eligible to receive IEP services, compared to 48 percent and 6 percent in the grade 3 cohort, respectively, and 56 percent and 16 percent, respectively, in the grade 6 cohort (see figure 11).

Figure 10. Thirty-three percent of the long-term ELL students in the grade 6 cohort were eligible to receive IEP services, CCSD, 2006/07 (percent)

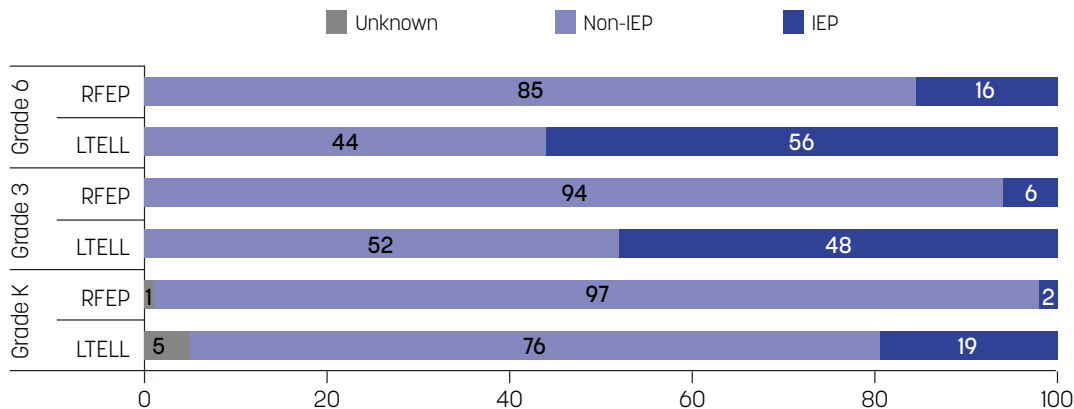


Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 11. More than half of the long-term ELL students in the grade 6 cohort were eligible to receive IEP services, WCSD, 2006/07 (percent)



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Struggling RFEP and Transitioned RFEP students

With three exceptions across all the grade-level cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD, a greater percentage of Struggling RFEP students were eligible for FRL (figures 12 and 13), were male (figures 14 and 15), began the study at one of the two lowest ELP levels (Entry or Emerging) (figures 16 and 17), and were eligible to receive IEP services (figures 18 and 19), compared to their Transitioned RFEP student peers. Except in the CCSD kindergarten cohort, at least half of the Struggling RFEP students across all three grade-level cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD were eligible for FRL (see figures 12 and 13) and were male (see figures 14 and 15). Further, the vast majority of the Struggling RFEP students across all three grade-level cohorts were not eligible to receive IEP services (see figures 18 and 19).

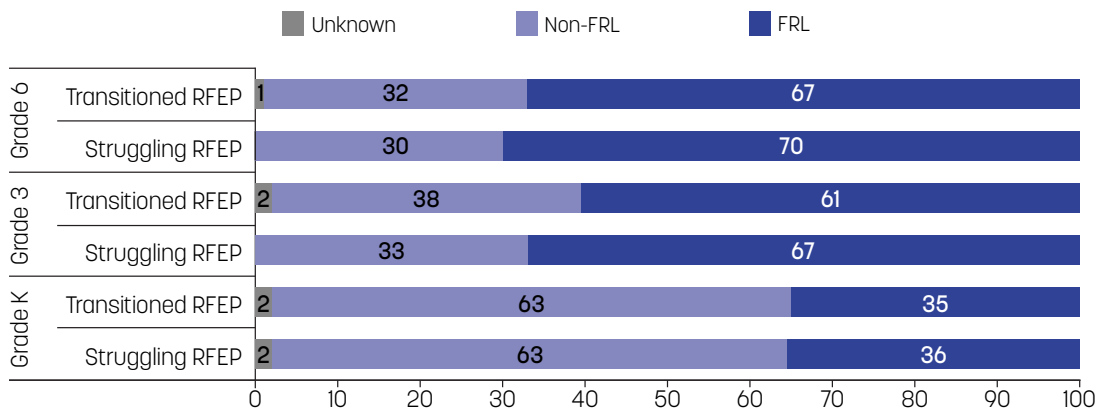
Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch

With the exception of the CCSD kindergarten cohort, the vast majority of both Struggling and Transitioned RFEP students were eligible for FRL (see figures 12 and 13). For example, in the CCSD grade 3 cohort, 67 percent of the Struggling RFEP students and 61 percent of the Transitioned RFEP students were eligible for FRL (see figure 12). In the CCSD kindergarten cohort, the one exception to this pattern, 36 percent of the Struggling RFEP students and 35 percent of the Transitioned RFEP students were eligible for FRL.

In four of the six grade-level cohorts across both districts, a higher percentage of Struggling RFEP students than Transitioned RFEP students were eligible for FRL. For

example, in the CCSD grade 6 cohort, 70 percent of the Struggling RFEP students were eligible for FRL compared to 67 percent of the Transitioned RFEP students (see figure 12). In contrast, in the WCSD kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts, a higher percentage of Transitioned RFEP students than Struggling RFEP students were eligible for FRL (82 percent versus 75 percent in the kindergarten cohort and 75 percent versus 62 percent in the grade 6 cohort; see figure 13).

Figure 12. The majority of both Transitioned and Struggling RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, CCSD, 2006/07 (percent)

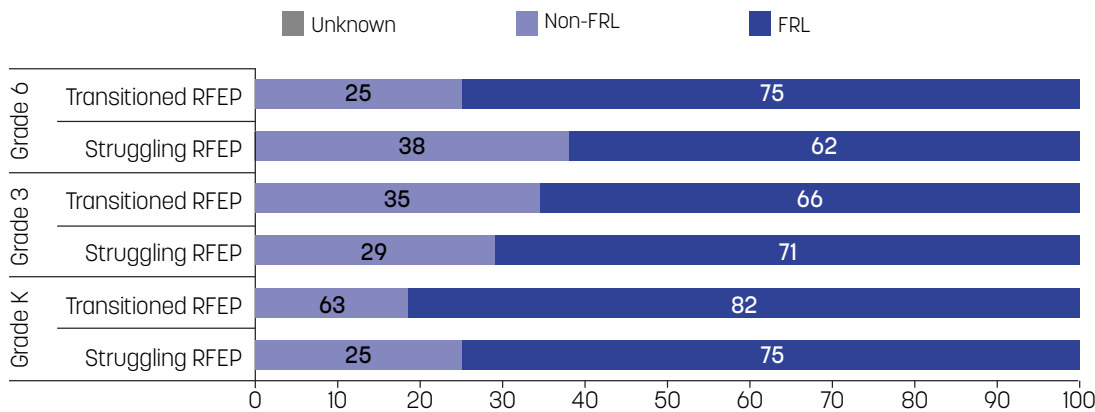


Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 13. The majority of both Transitioned and Struggling RFEP students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, WCSD, 2006/07 (percent)



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch.

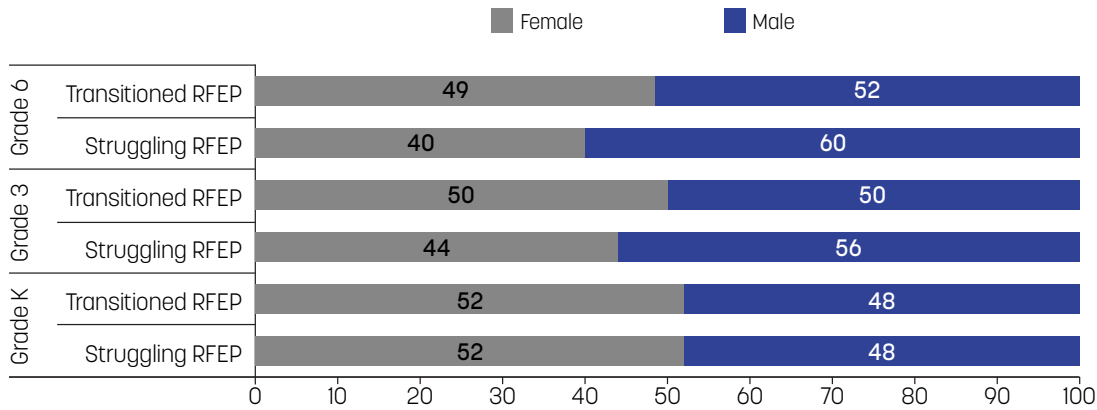
Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Gender

Across the grade-level cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD, with one grade-level cohort exception, a higher percentage of the Struggling RFEP students were male compared to the Transitioned RFEP students (see figures 14 and 15). For example, in the WCSD kindergarten cohort, 64 percent of the Struggling RFEP students were male and 48 percent of the Transitioned RFEP students were male (see figure 15). The one exception was the CCSD kindergarten cohort, in which 48 percent of the students were male in both the Struggling and Transitioned RFEP groups (see figure 14). In all but the CCSD kindergarten cohort, at least 50 percent of the Struggling RFEP students were male. For the Transitioned RFEP students, half of the grade-level cohorts were at least 50 percent male and half had a majority of female students.

Figure 14. More than half of the Struggling RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts were male, CCSD, 2006/07 (percent)

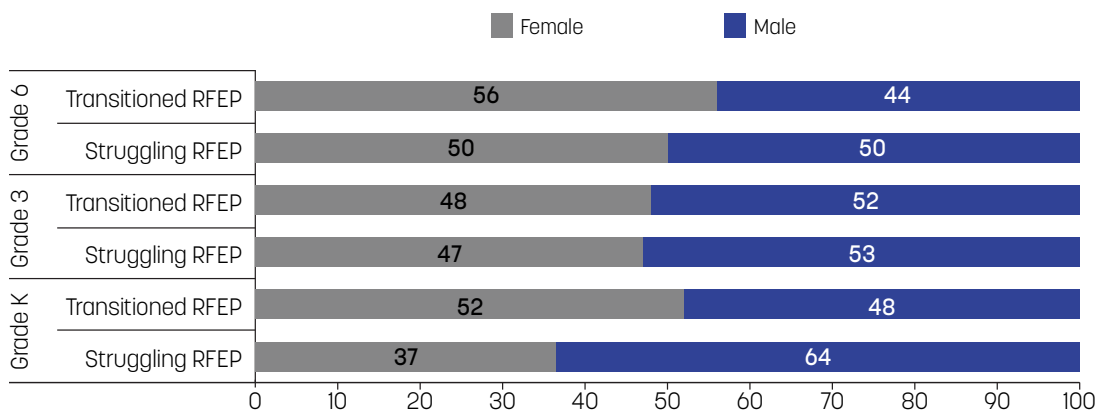


Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 15. At least half of the Struggling RFEP students were male, WCSD, 2006/07 (percent)



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

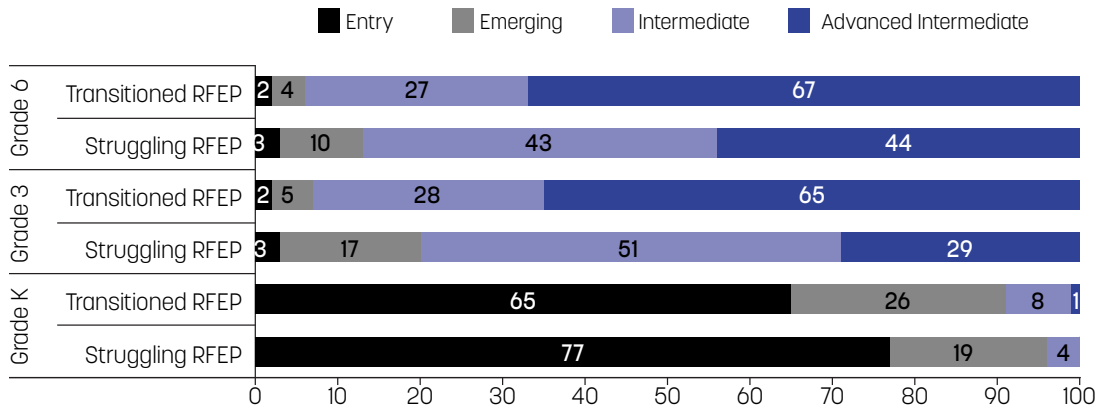


Initial English language proficiency level

For the kindergarten cohort in both CCSD and WCSD, most students in both the Struggling RFEP and Transitioned RFEP group were classified as Entry level (level 1, with level 5 being Proficient) on the ELP assessment in 2006/07. In the CCSD kindergarten cohort, the Entry level percentages were 77 percent for the Struggling RFEP group and 65 percent for the Transitioned RFEP group (see figure 16). In the WCSD kindergarten cohort, the Entry level percentages were 91 percent for the Struggling RFEP group and 86 percent for the Transitioned RFEP group (see figure 17). Struggling RFEP students had lower percentages of students at each of the higher three ELP levels below Proficient (i.e., Emerging, Intermediate, and Advanced Intermediate) than the Transitioned RFEP students. For example, in the CCSD cohort, 19 percent of the Struggling RFEP students were at Emerging (level 2 of 5) compared to 26 percent of the Transitioned RFEP students (see figure 16).

For the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD, the patterns of the initial ELP level were different from the patterns seen in the kindergarten cohorts. For both the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, most students in both the Struggling RFEP and the Transitioned RFEP groups were classified as Intermediate or Advanced Intermediate (levels 3 and 4) on the ELP assessment in 2006/07 (see figures 16 and 17). For example, in the WCSD grade 3 cohort, 83 percent of the Struggling RFEP students and 96 percent of the Transitioned RFEP students started the study at the Intermediate or Advanced Intermediate ELP levels (see figure 17). At the same time, in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts for both CCSD and WCSD, Struggling RFEP students had a lower percentage of students who started at the Advanced Intermediate level than the Transitioned RFEP students. For example, in the CCSD grade 6 cohort, 44 percent of the Struggling RFEP students and 67 percent of the Transitioned RFEP students were at the Advanced Intermediate level in 2006/07 (see figure 16). Approximately two-thirds of the Transitioned RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD were at the Advanced Intermediate ELP level at the start of the study period.

Figure 16. Most Struggling RFEP and Transitioned RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts had an initial ELP level of Intermediate or Advanced Intermediate, CCSD, 2006/07 (percent)

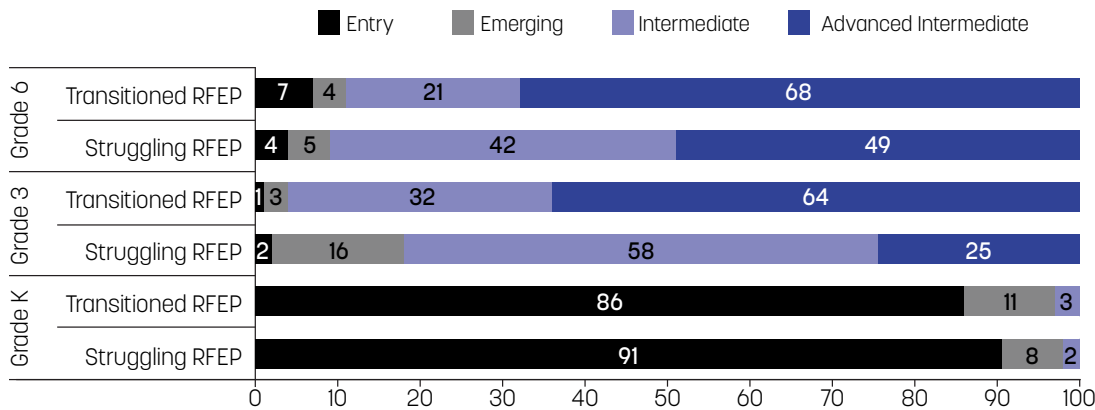


Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 17. Most Struggling RFEP and Transitioned RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts had an initial ELP level of Intermediate or Advanced Intermediate, WCSD, 2006/07 (percent)



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

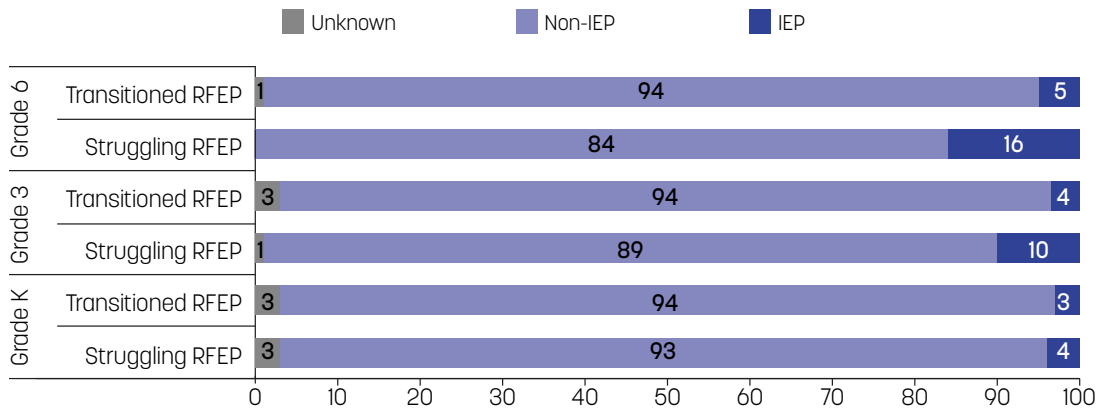
Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Eligibility to receive individualized education program services

Across all the grade-level cohorts, in both CCSD and WCSD, a greater percentage of Struggling RFEP than Transitioned RFEP students were eligible to receive IEP services at the start of the study period (see figures 18 and 19). For example, in the WCSD grade 6 cohort, 25 percent of the Struggling RFEP and 7 percent of the Transitioned RFEP students were eligible to receive IEP services at the start of the study. In partial contrast, in the CCSD kindergarten cohort, the IEP percentages for the Struggling RFEP students were larger, though nearly identical, to the Transitioned RFEP students: 4 percent of Struggling RFEP students were eligible to receive IEP services compared to 3 percent of Transitioned RFEP students.

In both CCSD and WCSD, there was a successively higher percentage of both Struggling and Transitioned RFEP students who were eligible to receive IEP services in each succeeding grade-level cohort. For example, in WCSD, the percentage of Struggling RFEP students who were eligible to receive IEP services was 5 percent in the kindergarten cohort, 16 percent in the grade 3 cohort, and 25 percent in the grade 6 cohort (see figure 19).

Figure 18. A higher percentage of Struggling RFEP students were eligible to receive IEP services compared to Transitioned RFEP students, CCSD, 2006/07 (percent)

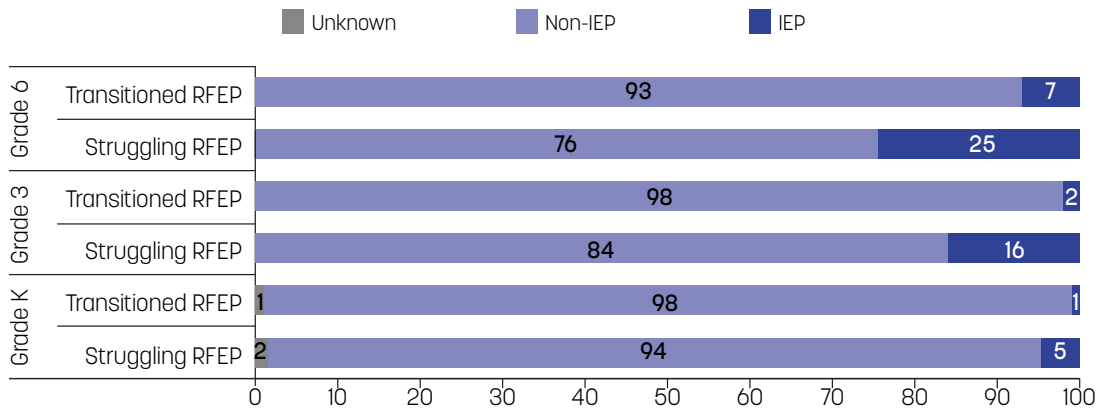


Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 19. A higher percentage of Struggling RFEP students were eligible to receive IEP services compared to Transitioned RFEP students, WCSD, 2006/07 (percent)



Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program.

Note 2: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.




Implications and next steps

This study describes the progress and characteristics of four groups of Nevada’s ELL students—long-term ELL students, RFEP students, Struggling RFEP students, and Transitioned RFEP students—across three grade-level cohorts. The findings suggest three areas for further research.

First, across the grade-level cohorts the pattern of percentages of ELL students who achieved the necessary ELP scores to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) during the study period differed in the two Nevada districts; the pattern in both districts also differed from the general findings of the research literature. The general findings of the research literature show that progressing in fluent English proficient status is generally more difficult for older ELL students than for younger ELL students (Cook, Wilmes, Boals, & Santos, 2008; Garcia, 2003). However, in CCSD, the percentage of RFEP students was nearly identical in the kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts (68 percent and 69 percent, respectively) and was 82 percent in the grade 3 cohort (see table 1). In WCSD, the percentage of RFEP students was lowest in the kindergarten cohort (50 percent), followed by the grade 6 cohort (63 percent) and then the grade 3 cohort (83 percent) (table 2). Conducting further research to examine possible reasons why this study’s ELP results differ from the general findings of the research literature could provide more accurate or targeted understandings of (1) why, in contrast to the general research findings, this study’s ELL students in the grade 6 cohorts were more successful in achieving RFEP than the ELL students in the kindergarten cohorts and (2) why between nearly one third and one half of the ELL students in the kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts still took longer than expected to achieve RFEP.

Second, the percentage of Struggling RFEP students in the two Nevada districts across the three grade-level cohorts was consistent with the research literature that suggests that reclassified former ELL students generally have lower achievement in academic subjects in the higher grades, at least initially, than they do in the lower grades (Grissom, 2004; Kieffer, 2011, 2010, 2008; Salazar, 2007). This pattern was reflected in the percentages of Struggling RFEP students in both CCSD and WCSD: 8 percent and 6 percent, respectively, in the kindergarten cohorts; 23 percent and 20 percent, respectively, in the grade 3 cohort; and 36 percent and 30 percent, respectively, in the grade 6 cohort. While the pattern was consistent with the research literature, further research designed to examine why Nevada’s percentages of Struggling RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts were many times higher than the percentages of the Struggling RFEPs in the kindergarten cohort could provide insights into more effective practices for improving the academic content achievement of RFEP students at the secondary level.

Finally, across all cohorts in both CCSD and WCSD, with only two exceptions, greater percentages of long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students were eligible for FRL, eligible to receive IEP services, and male, compared to their more successful peers in the RFEP and Transitioned RFEP groups, respectively. These findings are consistent with the research literature on the negative relationship between poverty/eligibility for FRL and academic achievement (Berliner, 2006; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan,



2003; Parrish et al., 2006; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004) and the negative relationship between disabilities/eligibility for IEP services and academic achievement (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sirin, 2005; Sullivan, 2011; Vellutino et al., 1996). These findings are also consistent with studies on gender and its relationship to academic achievement, which have shown that boys are more likely than girls to have lower academic achievement in reading (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Perie et al., 2005; Robinson & Theule, 2011); however, no studies that specifically examined gender and academic achievement for ELL students were located. Further research should continue exploring ways to assist these subgroups of ELL students (i.e., those who are eligible for FRL, those who are eligible to receive IEP services, and those who are male) to help them achieve greater academic success.



Limitations of the study


A major strength of this study is that Nevada's Clark and Washoe County School Districts provided six years of data on all students who were in kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 in 2006/07 and who had ELP test results and available subject-matter content test results in ELA/ reading.

There are three limitations of this study. The first limitation relates to the scope of the sample. The study addresses the characteristics of three cohorts of ELL students who were in CCSD and WCSD's data system for each school year over the six-school-year period of the study (2006/07–2011/12) and who advanced a grade level each year. Thus, the sample excludes mobile students who left and/or entered these school districts during the study period. This stable ELL cohort was designed in response to the English Learner Alliance states' interest in the performance of ELL students who had been in their school systems for an extended period of time, which, for this study, was defined as six years. As a result, the study sample is a more geographically stable group of ELL students than is present in most schools, so the proficiency rates and passing rates could be higher for these students than for the ELL population as a whole. The sample also excludes students who repeated or skipped a grade, due to difficulties tracking students who did not progress with the rest of their grade-level cohort. As a result, this sample does not include some ELL students who would be present in CCSD's or WCSD's schools on a given day.

The percentages of students in the study samples, out of all of the ELL students in the cohort grade in the first year of each cohort, were the following: for CCSD, 73 percent for the kindergarten cohort, 70 percent for the grade 3 cohort, and 57 percent for the grade 6 cohort (table B1) and for WCSD, 72 percent for the kindergarten cohort, 85 percent for the grade 3 cohort, and 73 percent for the grade 6 cohort (table B2).

The second limitation relates to comparisons among cohorts based on differences in sample characteristics and in content test-taking opportunities. For instance, there are likely to be differences in the characteristics of the students in the kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, especially related to initial ELP levels. For ELL students in the kindergarten cohort samples, kindergarten was their initial enrollment year in each district and, thus, their ELP level was their initial ELP level when they started school (which was when the study began for the kindergarten cohort). For ELL students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, grade 3 and grade 6 were their current enrollment grades, respectively, at the start of the study, and their ELP level was their current one at the start of the study. We do not know when these ELL students started in the state and we do not know their initial ELP level when they started school. Furthermore, the composition of the kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts could differ across cohorts due to differences in student mobility and grade repetition.

Finally, the cohort samples could also be different from one another in that, compared to the kindergarten cohort, the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts are likely composed of the students who have the most difficulty learning English, since faster learners will have already



achieved RFEP; in kindergarten, these faster English language learners will have not yet been given a chance to achieve RFEP. Differences in ELL student achievement percentages across the three cohorts are also likely influenced by differences in the content of the tests because Nevada, like the other states in the English Learner Alliance, increases the difficulty of its ELP and ELA/CRT reading content tests as the grade level increases. Further, students in the kindergarten cohort have fewer opportunities to take, and therefore have fewer opportunities to pass, Nevada's CRT reading test, as it is first administered in grade 3. However, while these factors are all limitations of the study, they also reflect the actual experience of ELL students, over time, in these state systems.



Appendix A. Methodology

This study is a descriptive analysis of the characteristics of four categories of English language learner (ELL) students in Nevada’s Clark and Washoe County School Districts—*long-term ELL students*, *reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students*, *Struggling RFEP students*, and *Transitioned RFEP students*. In this study (and in the two companion reports on ELL students in Arizona and Utah), *long-term ELL students* were defined as students who never scored at or above the required English language proficiency (ELP) level on their state ELP test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient during the six years of the study. In contrast to the long-term ELL students, *RFEP students* were defined as those ELL students who did score at or above the required ELP level on their state ELP test to achieve RFEP status. *Struggling RFEP students* (part of federal Title III accountability in annual measurable achievement objective 3) were defined as those ELL students who met the ELP requirements for reclassification as fluent English proficient but did not pass the state ELA/reading content test by the end of the six-year study period. In contrast to the Struggling RFEP students, *Transitioned RFEP students* were defined as RFEP students who passed the state ELA/reading content test at least once during the study period.


Data sources

The data sources for this study were the CCSD and WCSD data systems. All of the data files used in the study contained student-level information from school year 2006/07 through school year 2011/12. Each file had anonymous, unique student identification numbers, which allowed for matching of students across different files. The data were analyzed in three parallel grade-span cohorts: kindergarten through grade 5, grade 3 through grade 8, and grade 6 through grade 11.

Methods

The study used descriptive statistics to describe patterns of characteristics of long-term ELL students and RFEP students, with particular attention to those RFEP students who did not pass their ELA/reading content tests during the study period (referred to in this study as Struggling RFEP students).

The analysis resulted in tables and figures that compare the percentages of certain characteristics of long-term ELL students to those of RFEP students and compare the percentages of certain characteristics of Struggling RFEP students to those of Transitioned RFEP students. The study focused on the following ELL student characteristics: eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), gender, initial ELP level, and eligibility for receipt of individualized education program (IEP) services. These characteristics were characteristics that students possessed during the first year of the study, 2006/07. The study focused on these particular characteristics because they were identified by research literature as being linked with long-term ELL status and low academic achievement in general, and because data on these characteristics were available in the state data system. Differing patterns of student achievement based on gender have also been described for ELL students, as well



as for students in general (Dunn, Griggs, & Price, 1993; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Restak, 1979). Overall, eligibility for FRL and learning disabilities (such as a reading disability) that result in eligibility for IEP services have consistently been found to be highly associative with student achievement (Sirin, 2005; Vellutino et al., 1996).

Criteria for analytic sample

Students were included in the analytic sample based on meeting all of the following criteria (the same criteria were used across all three companion reports):

- » Had an initial ELP level lower than Proficient in school year 2006/07.
- » Were in the agency's data system for all six years of the study (i.e., in the data files of each school year, from 2006/07 to 2011/12).
- » Began in the cohort grade (K, 3, or 6) in school year 2006/07, with normal grade progress through school year 2011/12.⁵
- » Achieved the ELP level required for RFEP status during the study period or took the ELP test in the last school year, 2011/12.
- » Passed the state ELA/reading content test at least once, or had a state ELA/reading content test result in each year, when available, during the study period.⁶

Please note that the analytic samples in each grade-level cohort included all ELL students who met all of the above criteria, not just ELL students who were new to the state in 2006/07.

Appendix B. Details on analytic samples

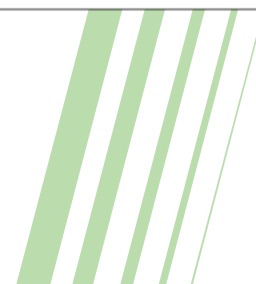


Table B1. Steps to get analytic samples in Clark County School District

| Steps | Sample category | Grade K cohort | | Grade 3 cohort | | Grade 6 cohort | |
|-------------|---|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Start point | English language learner students in 2007 (initial ELP level lower than Proficient) | 7,723 | 100 | 5,757 | 100 | 3,302 | 100 |
| Step 1 | Students excluded because did not exist in all 6 years | 1,662 | 22 | 1,208 | 21 | 1,116 | 34 |
| Step 2 | Students excluded because of abnormal grade progress | 357 | 5 | 267 | 5 | 141 | 4 |
| Step 3 | Students excluded because of missing values | 95 | 1 | 276 | 5 | 174 | 5 |
| End point | Analytic sample | 5,609 | 73 | 4,006 | 70 | 1,871 | 57 |

ELP is English language proficiency. K is kindergarten.

Note: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Table B2. Steps to get analytic samples in Washoe County School District

| Steps | Sample category | Grade K cohort | | Grade 3 cohort | | Grade 6 cohort | |
|-------------|---|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Start point | English language learner students in 2007 (initial ELP level lower than Proficient) | 1,339 | 100 | 1,122 | 100 | 449 | 100 |
| Step 1 | Students excluded because did not exist in all 6 years | 334 | 25 | 84 | 7 | 57 | 13 |
| Step 2 | Students excluded because of abnormal grade progress | 0 | 0 | 20 | 2 | 13 | 3 |
| Step 3 | Students excluded because of missing values | 35 | 3 | 68 | 6 | 50 | 11 |
| End point | Analytic sample | 970 | 72 | 950 | 85 | 329 | 73 |

ELP is English language proficiency. K is kindergarten.

Note: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Appendix C. Detailed tables on student characteristics

Table C1. Characteristics of long-term ELL students and RFEP students for kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, Clark County School District

| Characteristics | Grade K cohort | | | | | | Grade 3 cohort | | | | | | Grade 6 cohort | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Long-term ELL | | RFEP | | Overall | | Long-term ELL | | RFEP | | Overall | | Long-term ELL | | RFEP | | Overall | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 826 | 45.4 | 1,982 | 52.3 | 2,808 | 50.1 | 288 | 38.2 | 1,572 | 48.3 | 1,860 | 46.4 | 249 | 43.1 | 572 | 44.2 | 821 | 43.9 |
| Male | 993 | 54.6 | 1,808 | 47.7 | 2,801 | 49.9 | 466 | 61.8 | 1,680 | 51.7 | 2,146 | 53.6 | 329 | 56.9 | 721 | 55.8 | 1,050 | 56.1 |
| IEP in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unknown | 59 | 3.2 | 108 | 2.8 | 167 | 3.0 | 10 | 1.3 | 71 | 2.2 | 81 | 2.0 | 12 | 2.1 | 11 | 0.9 | 23 | 1.2 |
| Non-IEP | 1,613 | 88.7 | 3,567 | 94.1 | 5,180 | 92.4 | 545 | 72.3 | 3,008 | 92.5 | 3,553 | 88.7 | 375 | 64.9 | 1,146 | 88.6 | 1,521 | 81.3 |
| IEP | 147 | 8.1 | 115 | 3.0 | 262 | 4.7 | 199 | 26.4 | 173 | 5.3 | 372 | 9.3 | 191 | 33.0 | 136 | 10.5 | 327 | 17.5 |
| FRL in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unknown | 38 | 2.1 | 72 | 1.9 | 110 | 2.0 | 1 | 0.1 | 34 | 1.0 | 35 | 0.9 | 2 | 0.3 | 5 | 0.4 | 7 | 0.4 |
| Non-FRL | 1,084 | 59.6 | 2,387 | 63.0 | 3,471 | 61.9 | 301 | 39.9 | 1,191 | 36.6 | 1,492 | 37.2 | 148 | 25.6 | 402 | 31.1 | 550 | 29.4 |
| FRL | 697 | 38.3 | 1,331 | 35.1 | 2,028 | 36.2 | 452 | 59.9 | 2,027 | 62.3 | 2,479 | 61.9 | 428 | 74.0 | 886 | 68.5 | 1,314 | 70.2 |
| Initial ELP level in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Entry | 1,571 | 86.4 | 2,505 | 66.1 | 4,076 | 72.7 | 138 | 18.3 | 774 | 2.3 | 212 | 5.3 | 102 | 17.6 | 35 | 2.7 | 137 | 7.3 |
| Emerging | 232 | 12.8 | 967 | 25.5 | 1,199 | 21.4 | 253 | 33.6 | 261 | 8.0 | 514 | 12.8 | 189 | 32.7 | 89 | 6.9 | 278 | 14.9 |
| Intermediate | 16 | 0.9 | 282 | 7.4 | 298 | 5.3 | 287 | 38.1 | 1,125 | 34.6 | 1,412 | 35.2 | 226 | 39.1 | 457 | 35.3 | 683 | 36.5 |
| Advanced Intermediate | 0 | 0.0 | 36 | 0.9 | 36 | 0.6 | 76 | 10.1 | 1,792 | 55.1 | 1,868 | 46.6 | 61 | 10.6 | 712 | 55.1 | 773 | 41.3 |
| Total | 1,819 | 100.0 | 3,790 | 100.0 | 5,609 | 100.0 | 754 | 100.0 | 3,252 | 100.0 | 4,006 | 100.0 | 578 | 100.0 | 1,293 | 100.0 | 1,871 | 100.0 |

ELL is English language learner. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. ELP is English language proficiency.

Note: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Table C2. Characteristics of Struggling RFEP students and Transitioned RFEP students for kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, Clark County School District

| Characteristics | RFEP in grade K cohort | | | | RFEP in grade 3 cohort | | | | RFEP in grade 6 cohort | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Struggling | | Transitioned | | Struggling | | Transitioned | | Struggling | | Transitioned | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 235 | 52.2 | 1,747 | 52.3 | 397 | 43.7 | 1,175 | 50.1 | 272 | 40.3 | 300 | 48.5 |
| Male | 215 | 47.8 | 1,593 | 47.7 | 511 | 56.3 | 1,169 | 49.9 | 403 | 59.7 | 318 | 51.5 |
| IEP in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unknown | 14 | 3.1 | 94 | 2.8 | 9 | 1.0 | 62 | 2.6 | 3 | 0.4 | 8 | 1.3 |
| Non-IEP | 420 | 93.3 | 3,147 | 94.2 | 807 | 88.9 | 2,201 | 93.9 | 567 | 84.0 | 579 | 93.7 |
| IEP | 16 | 3.6 | 99 | 3.0 | 92 | 10.1 | 81 | 3.5 | 105 | 15.6 | 31 | 5.0 |
| FRL in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unknown | 8 | 1.8 | 64 | 1.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 34 | 1.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 0.8 |
| Non-FRL | 282 | 62.7 | 2,105 | 63.0 | 299 | 32.9 | 892 | 38.1 | 204 | 30.2 | 198 | 32.0 |
| FRL | 160 | 35.6 | 1,171 | 35.1 | 609 | 67.1 | 1,418 | 60.5 | 471 | 69.8 | 415 | 67.2 |
| Initial ELP level in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Entry | 348 | 77.3 | 2,157 | 64.6 | 31 | 3.4 | 43 | 1.8 | 20 | 3.0 | 15 | 2.4 |
| Emerging | 84 | 18.7 | 883 | 26.4 | 154 | 17.0 | 107 | 4.6 | 66 | 9.8 | 23 | 3.7 |
| Intermediate | 18 | 4.0 | 264 | 7.9 | 462 | 50.9 | 663 | 28.3 | 290 | 43.0 | 167 | 27.0 |
| Advanced Intermediate | 0 | 0.0 | 36 | 1.1 | 261 | 28.7 | 1,531 | 65.3 | 299 | 44.3 | 413 | 66.8 |
| Total | 450 | 100.0 | 3,340 | 100.0 | 908 | 100.0 | 2,344 | 100.0 | 675 | 100.0 | 618 | 100.0 |

ELL is English language learner. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. ELP is English language proficiency. Struggling RFEP students are those RFEP students who did not pass the ELA content test during the course of the study. Transitioned RFEP students are those RFEP students who passed the ELA content test at least once during the course of the study.

Note: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Clark County School District, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Table C3. Characteristics of long-term ELL students and RFEP students for kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, Washoe County School District

| Characteristics | Grade K cohort | | | | | | Grade 3 cohort | | | | | | Grade 6 cohort | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | Long-term ELL | | RFEP | | Overall | | Long-term ELL | | RFEP | | Overall | | Long-term ELL | | RFEP | | Overall | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 195 | 40.5 | 244 | 49.9 | 439 | 45.3 | 63 | 39.1 | 377 | 47.8 | 440 | 46.3 | 59 | 48.4 | 110 | 53.1 | 169 | 51.4 |
| Male | 286 | 59.5 | 245 | 50.1 | 531 | 54.7 | 98 | 60.9 | 412 | 52.2 | 510 | 53.7 | 63 | 51.6 | 97 | 46.9 | 160 | 48.6 |
| IEP in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unknown | 26 | 5.4 | 5 | 1.0 | 31 | 3.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Non-IEP | 365 | 75.9 | 475 | 97.1 | 840 | 86.5 | 83 | 51.6 | 744 | 94.3 | 827 | 87.1 | 54 | 44.3 | 175 | 84.5 | 229 | 69.6 |
| IEP | 90 | 18.7 | 9 | 1.8 | 99 | 10.2 | 78 | 48.4 | 45 | 5.7 | 123 | 12.9 | 68 | 55.7 | 32 | 15.5 | 100 | 30.4 |
| FRL in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unknown | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Non-FRL | 66 | 13.7 | 95 | 19.4 | 161 | 16.6 | 47 | 29.2 | 262 | 33.2 | 309 | 32.5 | 44 | 36.1 | 64 | 30.9 | 108 | 32.8 |
| FRL | 415 | 86.3 | 394 | 80.6 | 809 | 83.4 | 114 | 70.8 | 527 | 66.8 | 641 | 67.5 | 78 | 63.9 | 143 | 69.1 | 221 | 67.2 |
| Initial ELP level in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Entry | 447 | 92.9 | 424 | 86.7 | 871 | 89.8 | 22 | 13.7 | 9 | 1.1 | 31 | 3.3 | 13 | 10.7 | 12 | 5.8 | 25 | 7.6 |
| Emerging | 32 | 6.6 | 53 | 10.8 | 85 | 8.8 | 74 | 46.0 | 49 | 6.2 | 123 | 12.9 | 34 | 27.9 | 9 | 4.3 | 43 | 13.1 |
| Intermediate | 2 | 0.4 | 12 | 2.5 | 14 | 1.4 | 60 | 37.3 | 304 | 38.5 | 364 | 38.3 | 51 | 41.8 | 64 | 30.9 | 115 | 35.0 |
| Advanced Intermediate | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 3.1 | 427 | 54.1 | 432 | 45.5 | 24 | 19.7 | 122 | 58.9 | 146 | 44.4 |
| Total | 481 | 100.0 | 489 | 100.0 | 970 | 100.0 | 161 | 100.0 | 789 | 100.0 | 950 | 100.0 | 122 | 100.0 | 207 | 100.0 | 329 | 100.0 |

ELL is English language learner. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. ELP is English language proficiency.

Note: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Table C4. Characteristics of Struggling RFEP students and Transitioned RFEP students for kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, Washoe County School District

| Characteristics | RFEP in grade K cohort | | | | RFEP in grade 3 cohort | | | | RFEP in grade 6 cohort | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Struggling | | Transitioned | | Struggling | | Transitioned | | Struggling | | Transitioned | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 23 | 36.5 | 221 | 51.9 | 92 | 47.4 | 285 | 47.9 | 49 | 50.0 | 61 | 56.0 |
| Male | 40 | 63.5 | 205 | 48.1 | 102 | 52.6 | 310 | 52.1 | 49 | 50.0 | 48 | 44.0 |
| IEP in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unknown | 1 | 1.6 | 4 | 0.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Non-IEP | 59 | 93.7 | 416 | 97.7 | 163 | 84.0 | 581 | 97.6 | 74 | 75.5 | 101 | 92.7 |
| IEP | 3 | 4.8 | 6 | 1.4 | 31 | 16.0 | 14 | 2.4 | 24 | 24.5 | 8 | 7.3 |
| FRL in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unknown | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Non-FRL | 16 | 25.4 | 79 | 18.5 | 57 | 29.4 | 205 | 34.5 | 37 | 37.8 | 27 | 24.8 |
| FRL | 47 | 74.6 | 347 | 81.5 | 137 | 70.6 | 390 | 65.5 | 61 | 62.2 | 82 | 75.2 |
| Initial ELP level in 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Entry | 57 | 90.5 | 367 | 86.2 | 4 | 2.1 | 5 | 0.8 | 4 | 4.1 | 8 | 7.3 |
| Emerging | 5 | 7.9 | 48 | 11.3 | 30 | 15.5 | 19 | 3.2 | 5 | 5.1 | 4 | 3.7 |
| Intermediate | 1 | 1.6 | 11 | 2.6 | 112 | 57.7 | 192 | 32.3 | 41 | 41.8 | 23 | 21.1 |
| Advanced Intermediate | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 48 | 24.7 | 379 | 63.7 | 48 | 49.0 | 74 | 67.9 |
| Total | 63 | 100.0 | 426 | 100.0 | 194 | 100.0 | 595 | 100.0 | 98 | 100.0 | 109 | 100.0 |

ELL is English language learner. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. ELP is English language proficiency. Struggling RFEP students are those RFEP students who did not pass the ELA content test during the course of the study. Transitioned RFEP students are those RFEP students who passed the ELA content test at least once during the course of the study.

Note: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.


Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Washoe County School District, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

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Notes



1 For the Nevada study, we used data from the two largest counties, Clark County School District and Washoe County School District, as the Nevada State Department of Education did not collect all the data necessary to conduct the analyses statewide during the study period. The findings for Nevada are reported separately for each of these two counties.

2 The ELL student characteristics reported in this study—eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, eligibility to receive individualized education program services, and English language proficiency level—are characteristics that students possessed during the first year of the study, 2006/07.

3 Nevada does not issue a unique statewide student identification number that would allow us to merge student files across the two districts in this study. As a result, students who transferred between these two districts but stayed within them for the whole study period were excluded. Thus, if we were to report the two Nevada districts as one sample, the student sample criteria for Nevada as a state would be slightly different than that used for the states of Arizona and Utah.

4 After the period of this study, beginning in spring 2013, Nevada began using the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) test to determine the ELP level of its ELL students.

5 Students who repeated or skipped a grade, and thus no longer progressed with the vast majority of peers in their grade-level cohort, were excluded due to difficulties in tracking these students once they were out of step with their cohort.

6 All ELL students in these states were required to take their ELA/reading content tests each year the tests were administered. ELL students were not exempted from this testing requirement.