Fifth-Grade Native English Speakers' Performance on the Spanish-Language Proficiency Assessment, STAMP 4Se

Austin Independent School District, 2018–2019

Introduction

Every year Austin Independent School District (AISD) assesses the 5th-grade native-English–speaking students enrolled in two-way dual language (2-way DL) on their Spanish-language proficiency. This report presents the performance of these students on the STAMP 4Se, the Spanish-language proficiency test.

The test was administered during December 2018 through March 2019 to all 150 DL 5th graders at 13 elementary schools (Becker, Blanton, Blazier, Casey, Dawson, Maplewood, Menchaca, Oak Hill, Perez, Ridgetop, Sunset Valley, Travis Heights, and Wooten).

STAMP 4Se is a computer adaptive test designed for children in grades 2 through 6. Computer adaptive tests allow for shorter tests because the items selected for each student are based on the responses to previous items, thereby creating a test tailored to each test taker's ability. Test items are situated within the context of daily school life, and characters mentioned in the test items are attending a fictitious elementary school in the United States. STAMP 4Se is composed of four domains:

- Interpretive reading, which consists of a series of dialogues and monologues in Spanish, followed by a question phrased in Spanish

- Reading comprehension, which consists of passages designed to mimic authentic reading tasks (e.g., reading signs, journal entries, or classroom materials), followed by a question that evaluates the students' ability to scan passages for the main topic as well as to extract detailed information

- Presentational writing, which consists of two short tasks that are presented to the students aurally in English and are designed to test the students' ability to express themselves in written Spanish

- Presentational speaking, which also consists of two tasks presented aurally in English that are designed to test the students' ability to express themselves in spoken Spanish

STAMP 4Se is designed to give a general snapshot of proficiency, with a fairly limited number of items (i.e., approximately 30 multiple-choice reading and listening items each, two writing prompts, and two speaking prompts). This allows the test to be used as a dynamic tool to inform teachers, parents, and administrators about students' language learning progress. However, as with any test, STAMP 4Se scores should be considered as one piece of evidence of a child's proficiency. In addition, it should be noted that students, especially young ones, can perform differently on different days, due to a variety of factors. More information about STAMP 4Se can be obtained at www.avantassessment.com.

An interpretation guide describing a typical student at each proficiency level is provided in the appendix.

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Results

On average, AISD students received scores of 3.6 in the reading domain, indicating students were approaching an intermediate proficiency level; 4.0 in the listening domain, indicating an intermediate level of proficiency in this domain; and 3.0 in the writing domain and 3.1 in the speaking domain, indicating a novice-high proficiency level in these domains. In 2017–2018, the STAMP 4Se national average for 5th graders in Spanish immersion programs (predominantly 50/50 2-way DL) was 4.0 in reading, 4.4 in listening, and 3.7 in writing and speaking. AISD averages are represented in Figures 1 and 2 as a **green triangle**, whereas national averages are represented as a **red triangle**. The slightly lower averages at AISD than at the national level may simply reflect the small number of AISD students tested compared with the much larger number of students tested nationally; therefore, it is helpful to look at the distribution of students across proficiency levels. Additionally, the higher national averages may reflect the increased number of repeat test takers, resulting in increased readiness for the test. For more information on how the national sample is normed, see https://avantassessment.com/avant-stamp-annual-averages-2017-2018.

Figures 1 and 2 show the percentage of AISD students at each proficiency level for each domain. These results show that the majority of AISD students performed at the intermediate or higher proficiency level in the reading and listening domains of STAMP 4Se, 56% and 60%, respectively. The results for writing and speaking show that 38% and 34% of students performed at the intermediate-low or higher proficiency level, respectively.

Figure 1.

Fifth Grade, 2-Way Dual Language Program Non-EL Students' Performance on the Reading and Listening Domains of STAMP, 2019
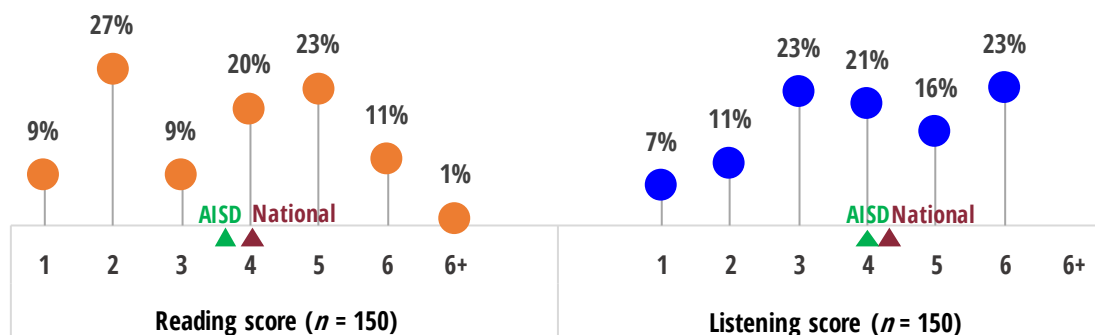
Source. AISD STAMP assessment records, 2018 –2019 school year

Figure 2.

Fifth Grade, 2-Way Dual Language Program Non-EL Students' Performance on the Writing and Speaking Domains of STAMP, 2019
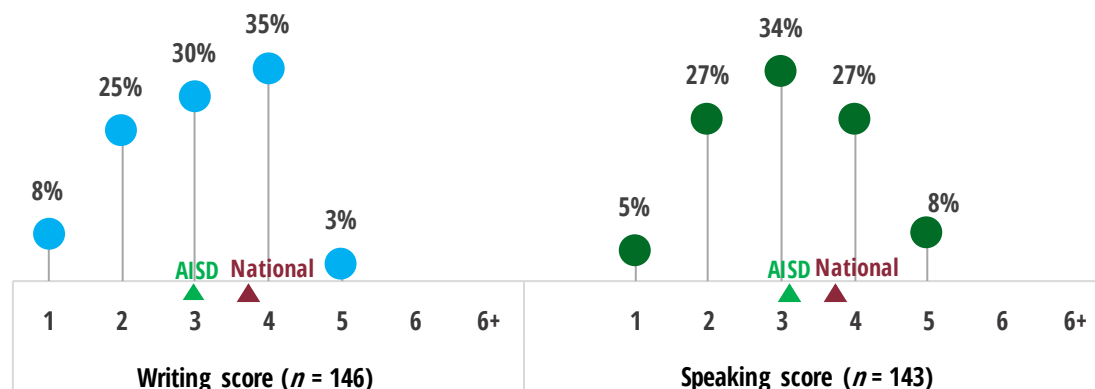
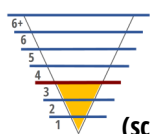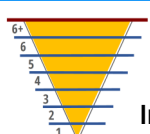*Source.* AISD STAMP assessment records, 2018 –2019 school year
Note. Not all 150 students completed the writing or speaking assessments.
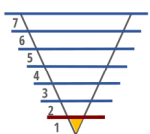
Conclusion
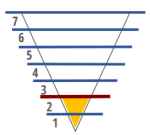
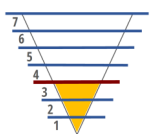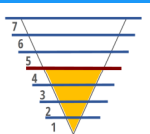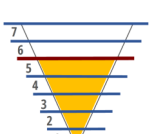Currently, AISD is in the process of reviewing and revising the proficiency standards for the STAMP 4Se; however the current unofficial target of intermediate proficiency level (which corresponds to a score of 4 or higher) has been set for the DL program by 5th grade on the reading, listening, and speaking domains and a target of novice-high (corresponding to a score of 3 or higher) on the writing domain. The majority of students met the targets for the reading, listening, and writing domains; however, the majority of students fell short of the target for the speaking domain. The lower proficiency in the speaking domain may be due to students embarrassment with speaking aloud in front of their peers resulting in less practice or a stronger focus on the other three domains in the classroom. Although the majority of students failed to meet the target for the speaking domain, the proportion of students meeting the targets increased compared with last year's performance in all domains. In addition, the gap between the average performance in AISD and the national average was diminished compared with last year, see Fifth-Grade Native English Speakers' Performance on STAMP 4Se Spanish Language Proficiency Assessment, February 2018. This was partly due to the national average decreasing slightly for all four domains and partly due to the increase in the average for AISD. It should be noted that both nationally and at AISD students performed at higher proficiency levels for the passive domains, reading and listening, than the productive/active domains, writing and speaking. The passive language skills may be easier to attain proficiency than the active skills such as writing and speaking.

Appendix

Guide for Interpreting Reading and Listening Scores

	Novice **(scores: 1 to 3)**	• **Reliance of learned phrases and basic vocabulary.** • **Ability to recognize the purpose of basic texts.** • **Can understand a core of simple, formulaic expressions, such as "I don't' know" or "how do you do?"**
	Intermediate **(scores: 4 to 6+)**	• **In reading, ability to understand the main ideas and explicit detail in everyday language.** • **Ability to use language knowledge to understand information in everyday materials.** • **Can follow short conversations and announcements on common topics and answer questions about the main idea and explicitly stated details.**

Guide for Interpreting Writing and Speaking Scores

	Text characteristics	Language control
Novice-low **(score = 1)**	**Produces words in target language with no connection. Does not have enough vocabulary or the ability necessary to formulate even simple phrases to address the prompt.**	**Limited language control. Inability to create more than individual words. L1 (first language) influence may be strong. Errors are expected at this level, but the student must be able to produce at least two comprehensible words.**
Novice-mid **(score = 2)**	**Language production is beyond individual words but clearly shows the lack of ability to construct more than phrases. May include one simple sentence, but incapable of showing more.**	**May make frequent errors, but usually comprehensible to a sympathetic reader/listener. L1 (first language) influence may be present.**
Novice-high **(score = 3)**	**Short, common expressions or memorized statements that may be combined together. Able to create at least 2 different simple sentences.**	**Good accuracy for high frequency expressions. Usually comprehensible to a sympathetic reader/listener. Grammatical (syntax, spelling, conjugation) errors are expected at this level but sentences must make sense to be acceptable.**
Intermediate-low **(score = 4)**	**Variety of sentences that utilize different verbs to create independent thoughts, mostly composed of a recombination of learned simple sentences with added detail in the form or prepositional phrases and verbal phrases.**	**Good accuracy with formulaic sentences with some added detail. Errors may occur as student attempts higher level skills. Good Language Control is expected with the majority of the response.**
Intermediate-mid **(score = 5)**	**Logical organization of ideas and flow of sentences or statements. Contains at least 2 unique and non-formulaic sentences intermixed with a variety of sentences creating groupings of sentences showing connectedness.**	**Good accuracy evident with possible errors that don't affect the overall meaning. Delivery may be somewhat choppy. May have repetitive use of concrete vocabulary with occasional use of expanding terms. Accuracy for complex sentences is emerging.**
Intermediate-high **(score = 6 or 6+)**	**Able to demonstrate an Intermediate-High control of the language. Complexity is evident. Transition words and connectors are used correctly and efficiently a majority of the time to create a flow within the response. Groups of sentences focus on different aspects of the prompt and include transition words or phrases to introduce next concept. Does not have Advanced vocabulary or language to move into the Advanced level.**	**Response is well constructed. Intermediate-High sentence structures can be found throughout response. Demonstrates beginning ability to create a coherent response with increased use of complexity as well as transition words and phrases. No evidence of advanced vocabulary.**