

EXITED ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS RESEARCH BRIEF

May, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Meeting the educational needs of English language learners (ELLs) and closing the achievement gap between ELLs and other students are top priorities for Austin Independent School District (AISD). One way to evaluate the success of bilingual education (BE) and English as second language (ESL) programs is to examine the academic performance of students who have exited those programs.

A recent report showed that students who exited BE and ESL programs before transitioning to middle school performed as well as or better than did non-ELLs on all Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) subjects, except science; however, ELLs who exited after the transition to middle school scored lower on all TAKS subjects than did non-ELLs (Herrera & Malerba, 2009).

BE AND ESL PROGRAM ENTRY AND EXIT PATTERNS

Among students who had exited BE/ESL by the end of 2007–2008, three distinct BE/ESL entry and exit patterns were evident:

- **Elementary group.** These students (74% of exited ELLs) entered and exited the program between prekindergarten (Pre-K) and 6th grade.
- **Extended group.** These students (24% of exited ELLs) entered the program between Pre-K and 6th grade and exited between 7th and 12th grade; these students also have been called “long-term ELLs.”
- **Secondary group.** These students (2% of exited ELLs) entered and exited ESL services between 7th and 12th grade.

Exit Patterns by English Language Learner Group

Program	Percentage of students	Average years in Bilingual Education/English as a Second Language	Standard deviation in years	Range of years in program
Elementary (n = 3,809)	74%	5.13	1.43	0.12 to 8
Extended (n = 1,261)	24%	6.97	2.69	0.51 to 15
Secondary (n = 95)	2%	2.41	1.28	0.52 to 8
Total (n = 5,165)	100%	5.54	2.03	0.12 to 15

Source. AISD student records 2007-2008

The complete report is available online at http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope_08-101_ELL_TAKS_Passing_Rates.pdf



Quick Facts

- **Almost one-third (29%)** of AISD students are ELLs.
- **The majority of ELLs also are economically disadvantaged.** In Fall 2009, 93% of ELLs were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, compared with 51% of all other students.
- **AISD has a late transitional BE model.** ELLs take an average of 5.5 years to exit the program.
- **Early education matters.** Most ELL students (82%) who enter BE/ESL in Pre-K exit the program by 6th grade; in contrast, 70% of ELLs who enter AISD in 2nd grade exit by 6th grade.

DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

Almost all of the ELL students examined in the report were Hispanic and economically disadvantaged; however, a few demographic differences existed between the exited ELL groups. Those in the extended group were more likely to be at risk of school dropout, more likely to be economically disadvantaged, and less likely to be in the gifted and talented program than were exited ELLs in the other groups. Contrary to anecdotal reports, extended ELLs were not more likely than were the other ELLs to be enrolled in special education programs.

English Language Learner Characteristics

Characteristic	Elementary group	Extended group	Secondary group
Economically disadvantaged	3,286 (86%)	1,109 (88%)↑	71 (74%)
At risk of dropout	2,142 (56%)	1,082 (85%)↑	63 (66%)
Gifted and Talented	469 (12%)	41 (3%)↓	1 (1%)

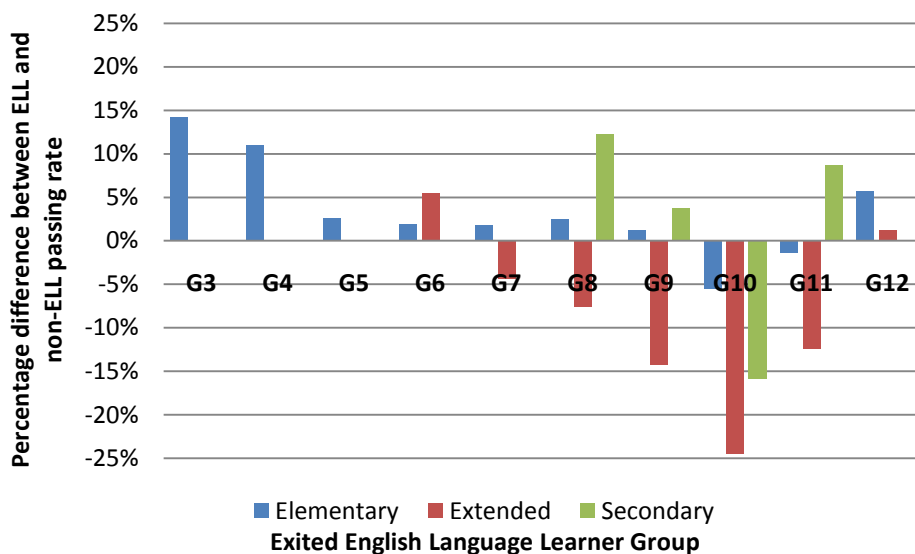
Source. AISD student records 2008-2009

↑ Arrows indicate the direction of the statistically significant differences.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The 2008–2009 TAKS passing rates of the exited ELLs in the elementary group were equal to or higher than those of non-ELLs. The TAKS passing rates of exited ELLs in the extended group were lower than those of non-ELLs. The exited ELLs in the secondary group performed well at most grade levels, but performed less well than did non-ELLs at 10th grade.

Exited English Language Learners' (ELLs) and Non-ELLs' Passing Rates on the 2008–2009 Mathematics Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), by Grade Level



Source. AISD student records 2008–2009

Note. The length of a bar represents the difference between the passing percentage of exited ELL groups and the passing percentage of non-ELLs. "G" stands for grade level.

Quick Facts

- **Language proficiency and academic achievement criteria must be met for students to exit BE and ESL.** For example, ELLs must pass the reading TAKS in English and score advanced on the reading and speaking sections of the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS).
- **Students who exit in late elementary show good academic progress.** ELLs who exit the program by 6th grade pass TAKS at rates comparable to or higher than those of non-ELLs.
- **Exiting the program in secondary school may mean students are struggling academically.** Many long-term ELLs may require additional support to be successful in secondary school.
- **AISD should develop an early warning system.** This system should closely monitor students' language proficiency and academic progress in elementary school to ensure their readiness for program exit by the end of 5th or 6th grade.