

# The Impact of Summer School on English Learners' Beginning-of-Year (BOY) Performance in 2019-2020

## Introduction

English learner (EL) students at Austin Independent School District (AISD) are eligible to attend a month-long, state-required summer school program, before entering kindergarten and 1st grade. The EL summer school program is designed to prepare students for future success. In March, pre-kindergartners and kindergartners register to be enrolled in the EL summer school program, which takes place in June each year. In 2019, the EL summer school program was offered 5 days a week, beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 1:30 p.m., with transportation provided to and from school. Six different AISD elementary schools hosted an EL summer school program: Blanton, Pillow, Walnut Creek, Galindo, Travis Heights and Uphaus Early Childhood Center.

This report explores the impact of attending the EL summer school program on kindergartners' and 1<sup>st</sup> graders' fall academic performance. Students who attended the EL summer school program were compared with similar ELs who did not attend summer school, in terms of their beginning-of-year (BOY) early reading performance. Additionally, students who attended both kindergarten (in 2018) and 1<sup>st</sup> grade summer school (in 2019) programs were compared with students who only attended 1<sup>st</sup> grade summer school, in terms of their 1<sup>st</sup> grade BOY performance. Students entering kindergarten were assessed with the Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment (TX-KEA), which is composed of several subtests designed to gauge students' readiness for kindergarten. Students entering 1<sup>st</sup> grade were assessed with the iStation Indicators of Progress (ISIP), which include five domains of early reading ability.

## Summer School Student Demographics 2019

A total of 1,243 students attended the 2019 EL summer school program. Of those, 650 students were entering kindergarten, 589 students were entering 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and four had no grade data. After summer school, 509 students enrolled in AISD kindergarten in the fall of 2019. Of the remaining students set to enroll in kindergarten, 123 did not enroll and 18 withdrew at some point in the fall semester. There were 512 summer school students who enrolled in 1<sup>st</sup> grade in the fall of 2019. The remaining students included 58 who did not enroll and 19 who withdrew at some point in the fall semester. The resulting retention rate (i.e., percentage of enrolled students) was 82% of all summer school attendees.

Most (81%) of the EL summer school program students were Hispanic. Other racial backgrounds included: 13% Asian, 3% White, 2% Black or African American, 0.3% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 0.3% two or more races. Additionally, most students (82%) were economically disadvantaged.

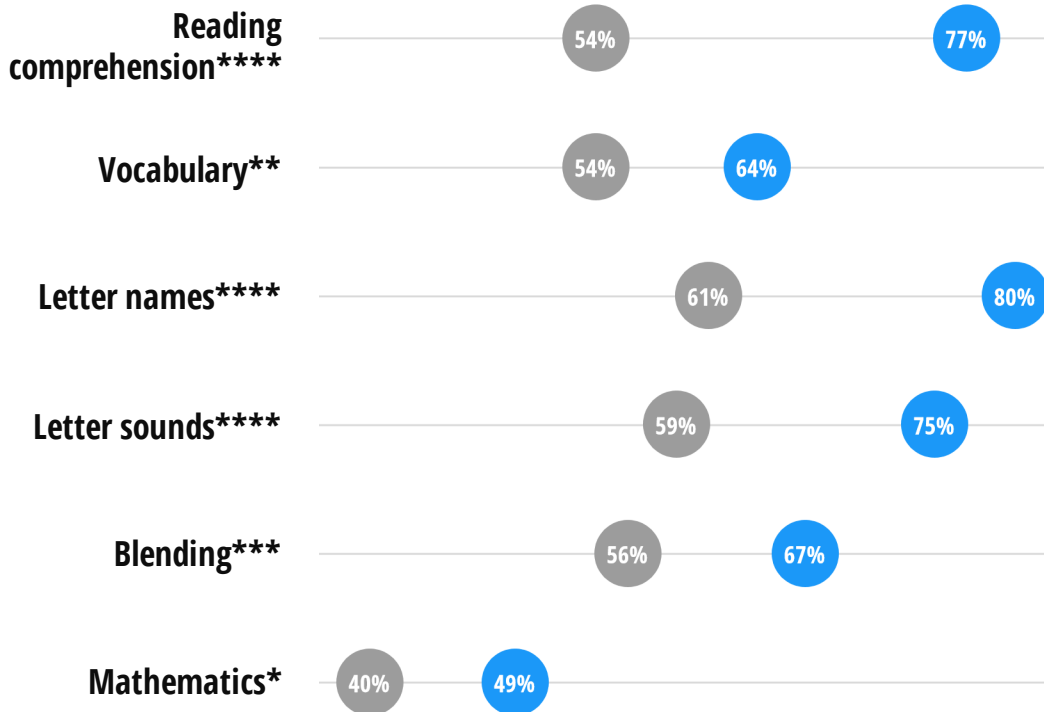
## Kindergarten BOY Performance

Kindergartners enrolled in AISD were administered the TX-KEA to assess their academic performance, at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. For more information on the TX-KEA test, please see the sidebar. Students who attended the summer school program for ELs were compared to similar EL kindergarten students who did not attend summer school. The ELs who did not attend summer school were chosen at random to create a subgroup whose proportion of economically disadvantaged students was equal to that of the ELs who attended summer school (85%).

Attending the EL summer school program in June 2019 had a positive impact on kindergarten ELs' TX-KEA performance (Figure 1). All subtests listed in the figure show statistically significant differences between the two student groups. Some subtests included more score results than others, because not all were required to be administered. In Figure 1, the percentages of students scoring on track for BOY kindergarten for each subtest are displayed. The vast majority of kindergartners who attended the EL summer school program scored on track in all subtest domains, except for mathematics. Overall, students who attended summer school scored 9 to 19 percentage points higher than did the comparison group.

Figure 1.

**Summer school ELs outperformed ELs who did not attend summer school on TX-KEA subtests.**



Source. AISD student TX-KEA records

Note. Percentages indicate students scoring on track for grade level. Statistical significance is indicated by asterisks. \*\*\*\* indicates significance at the  $p < .00001$  level, \*\*\* indicates significance at the  $p < .001$ , \*\* indicates significance at the  $p < .01$  level, and \* indicates significance at the  $p < .05$  level.

## TX-KEA

The TX-KEA is administered to AISD kindergartners in the fall and is used to screen students' school readiness upon entry to kindergarten. The University of Texas Health Science Center's Children's Learning Institute, the Texas Education Agency, and the U.S. Department of Education collaborated in the development of the TX-KEA.

The TX-KEA is a criterion-referenced test designed to assist school staff with determining whether students meet specific academic standards and development levels. The test assesses kindergarten readiness across six domains: language, literacy, math and science, executive functioning, social emotional skills, and academic motor skills. Test results are used to guide instruction and help teachers identify students in need of further diagnostic assessment and intervention.

The test is available in both English and Spanish. The results presented in this report represent the best performance for a student in either language. Thus, if a student took the test in both English and Spanish, the higher performance of the two would be the data included in the analysis. For more information on the TX-KEA, see <https://www.texaskea.org>.

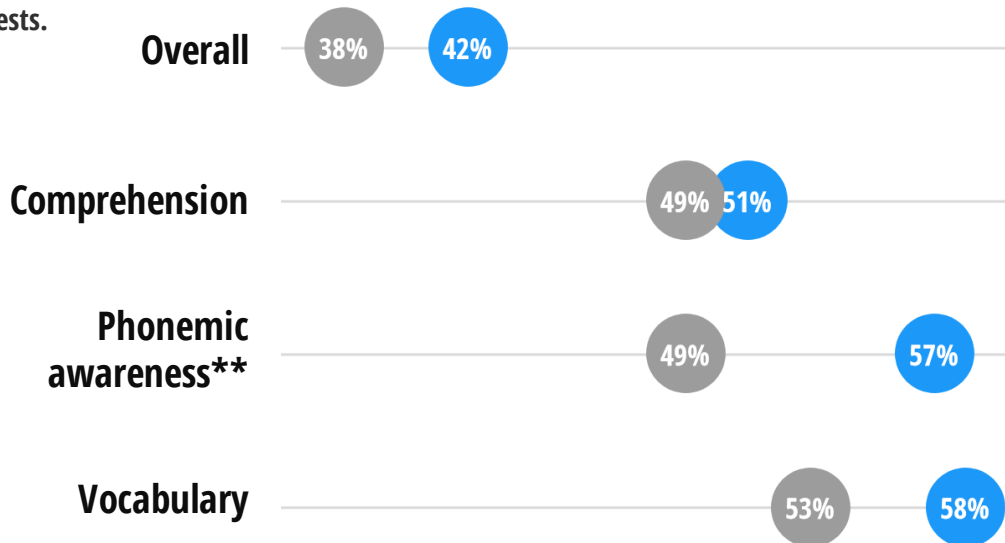
## First Grade BOY Performance

First graders enrolled in AISD were administered the ISIP to assess their academic performance, in the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. For more information on the ISIP test, please see the sidebar. Students who attended the summer school program for ELs were compared with similar EL 1<sup>st</sup> grade students who did not attend summer school. The ELs who did not attend summer school were chosen at random to create a subgroup whose proportion of economically disadvantaged students was equal to that of the ELs who attended summer school (84%).

Attending the EL summer school program in June 2019 had a positive impact on 1<sup>st</sup> grade ELs' ISIP performance (Figure 2). However, the differences between the two student groups were not statistically significant for three of the four subtests. There was a significant difference between groups for phonemic awareness. In Figure 2, the percentages of students scoring on track for subtests on the 1<sup>st</sup> grade BOY assessment are displayed. Half of 1<sup>st</sup> graders who attended the EL summer school program scored on track in all subtest domains, except for the overall domain. Generally, students who attended summer school scored 2 to 8 percentage points higher than did the comparison group.

Figure 2.

**Summer school ELs** outperformed ELs who did not attend summer school on ISIP subtests.



Source. AISD student ISIP records

Note. Percentages indicate students scoring on track for grade level. Statistical significance is indicated by asterisks. \*\* indicates significance at the  $p < .01$  level.

## ATTENDANCE FOR KINDERGARTEN AND 1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE EL SUMMER SCHOOL

Students who attended consecutive years of the kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade EL summer school programs were compared with students who only attended 1<sup>st</sup> grade summer school, in terms of their ISIP scores (Figure 3). The number of students who only attended kindergarten summer school was too small for analyses.

## ISIP

The assessment AISD uses to assess early reading skills is ISIP. The ISIP is a nationally norm-referenced test designed to assist teachers with determining whether students are on track for early reading standards. The test is designed for continuous progress monitoring of skills identified as predictors of later reading success and to help teachers identify students at risk for reading difficulties.

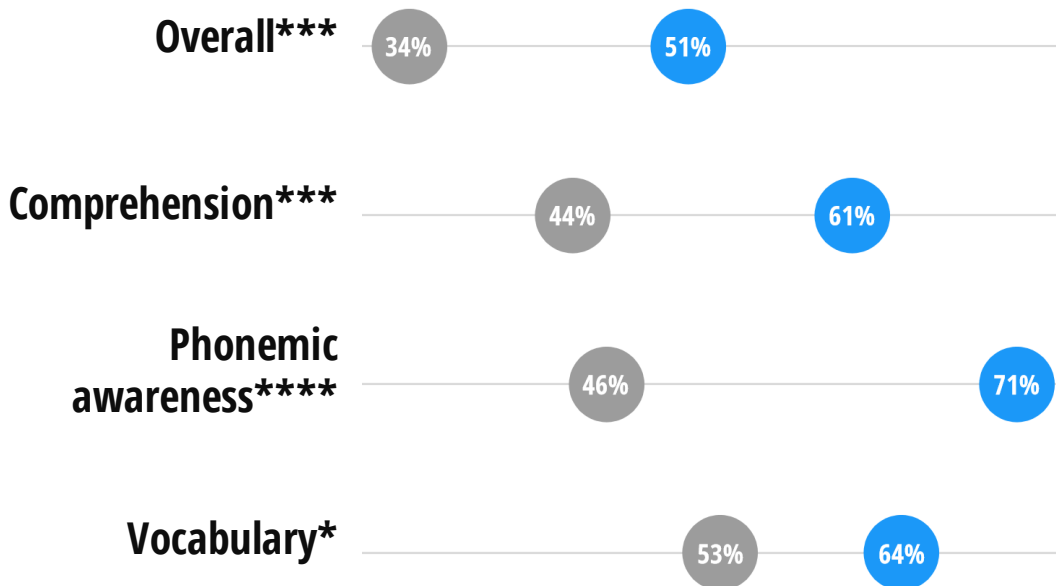
The ISIP provides information on five critical early reading domains: phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge and skills, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The tests are scored into one of three tiers. Tier 1 indicates performing at grade level. Tier 2 indicates performing moderately below grade level, and Tier 3 indicates performing seriously below grade level. The assessment is given at the BOY, middle of year (MOY), and end of year (EOY). Students are not required to take all five domains.

The test is available in both English and Spanish. Students can take the test more than once during each testing window. The results presented in this report represent the best performance for a student in either language and of multiple attempts. Thus, if a student took the test in both English and Spanish, or more than once, the best performance would be included in the analysis. For more information on the ISIP, see <https://www.istation.com/Reading>

Attending both the EL summer school program for kindergartners in 2018 and the program for 1<sup>st</sup> graders in 2019 had a positive impact on 1<sup>st</sup> graders' ISIP performance (Figure 3). All subtests included in the figure show statistically significant differences between the two student groups. There were 221 students enrolled in both years of the EL summer school program and 285 were only enrolled in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade summer school program. In Figure 3, the percentages of students scoring on track for subtests on 1<sup>st</sup> grade BOY assessment are displayed. The large majority of 1<sup>st</sup> graders who attended the EL summer school program both years scored on track in all subtest domains. Overall, students who attended summer school both years scored 11 to 25 percentage points higher than did students who only attended 1<sup>st</sup> grade summer school. Additionally, in comparison with the group of ELs who did not attend any summer school (in Figure 2), the students who only attended 1<sup>st</sup> grade summer school did not differ in their performance in a statistically significant way (more than what may occur by chance).

Figure 3.

**First graders who attended summer school both years outperformed those who only attended summer school one year on ISIP subtests.**



Source. AISD student ISIP records

Note. Percentages indicate students scoring on track for grade level. Statistical significance is indicated by asterisks. \*\*\*\* indicates significance at the  $p < .00001$  level, \*\*\* indicates significance at the  $p < .001$ , and \* indicates significance at the  $p < .05$  level.

## Performance Differences by Test Language

The majority of EL summer school program students' home language was Spanish, but about 25% to 30% of students had other home languages, such as Arabic and Vietnamese. To know whether Spanish-speaking or other foreign-language-speaking ELs fared differently in terms of their TXKEA and ISIP scores, the results shown in Figures 1 and 2 were dichotomized by test language and compared. The TXKEA and ISIP tests are only offered in English or Spanish, so other foreign-language-speaking ELs were tested in English. It is also important to note that the EL summer school program includes instruction in Spanish for Spanish-speaking ELs, but does not provide the equivalent in other foreign languages.

Results indicated that Spanish-speaking ELs were more likely to score on track for their grade level on vocabulary

and blending on the TXKEA in kindergarten than were other ELs (Table 1). Conversely, non-Spanish-speaking ELs scored more on grade level than did Spanish speakers on letter sounds and math. For the 1<sup>st</sup> grade ISIP test, Spanish-speaking ELs outperformed other ELs on the vocabulary and overall domains.

Table 1.

**Differences Between Spanish-Speaking (Spanish-tested) and Other Foreign-Language-Speaking (English-Tested) EL Summer School Students' TXKEA and ISIP Scores, BOY 2019**

Test	English-tested	Spanish-tested
<b>TXKEA</b>		
Literature reading comprehension	81%	76%
Vocabulary****	31%	75%
Letter names	82%	78%
Letter sounds**	84%	69%
Blending****	47%	73%
Math***	68%	49%
<b>ISIP</b>		
Overall*	32%	43%
Comprehension	50%	47%
Phonemic awareness	54%	52%
Vocabulary****	34%	66%

Source. AISD student ISIP records

Note. Statistical significance is indicated by asterisks. \*\*\*\* indicates significance at the  $p < .00001$  level, \*\*\* indicates significance at the  $p < .001$ , and \* indicates significance at the  $p < .05$  level.

## Conclusions

BOY performance test results show that participation in the EL summer school program was positively associated with better kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade academic performance for ELs. Positive impacts were especially apparent for kindergartners and 1<sup>st</sup> graders who attended both years of EL summer school (kindergarten in 2018 and 1<sup>st</sup> grade in 2019). These trends were similar to those found in last year’s report on EL summer school (Jensen, 2019). However, it is a new finding that attending the EL summer school for 2 consecutive years appears to be more beneficial for 1<sup>st</sup> graders than was only attending summer school once prior to the start of 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

Several factors may be related to the discrepancy between kindergartners’ and 1<sup>st</sup> graders’ on track performance levels. First, the makeup of the different tests administered in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade could affect the outcomes. While the TX-KEA was created to capture many areas of academic performance to create an overall picture of kindergarten readiness, the ISIP was primarily created to measure reading skills. Second, the teaching materials covered in the EL summer school programs differed by grade.

It is difficult to determine why 1<sup>st</sup> graders who attended the EL summer school for 2 consecutive years fared better in their BOY performance than did 1<sup>st</sup> graders who only attended the prior summer school session. On one hand, it may



be that earlier intervention is more impactful than later intervention. Thus, those who received summer school instruction earlier, prior to kindergarten, had an advantage over those who only attended prior to 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

In addition, or alternatively, the compounded, consecutive summer school instruction, that students who attended both years received, might have been the key to higher performance levels in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Since not enough students in the sample only attended the kindergarten summer school program for ELs, we cannot compare them with those who received both years or only the last year to understand how these three groups may differ in terms of outcome.

Interestingly, for the kindergarten TX-KEA test, there were two test domains in which Spanish-speaking ELs fared better than did other foreign-language-speaking ELs and two in which they fared worse. In 1<sup>st</sup> grade, differences were less notable between the two test languages, except for vocabulary, in which fewer non-Spanish-speaking ELs did well. It appears that being tested in English instead of the student's native language may put students at a disadvantage for vocabulary.

Lastly, it may be that 1<sup>st</sup> grade ELs who were behind academically in their kindergarten year were recommended to attend the 1<sup>st</sup> grade summer school session; thus, this group of students was already at an academic disadvantage. This would help explain why 1<sup>st</sup> graders who only attended one summer school session, just prior to their 1<sup>st</sup> grade year, performed lower than did those who attended both kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade summer school sessions.

Overall, it appears that attending summer school is beneficial for ELs' academic success in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and this is especially true for students who attended consecutive years of the EL summer school program. Other educational research echoes the importance of summer interventions to prevent or reduce summer reading skill loss, particularly for low-income students (Zvoch & Stevens, 2013).

## References

Jensen, M. (2019). *English learner summer school students' beginning-of-year (BOY) performance* (Publication 18.10). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District.

Zvoch, K., & Stevens, J. J. (2013). Summer school effects in a randomized field trial. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(1), 24-32.



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