

Changing Schools, Part 4

Differences in School Year Student Mobility by Subgroup



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Patterns of student mobility differed by race, socioeconomic status, and English learner status. This study used seven years of data from the state of Texas (2010-11 through 2016-17) to illustrate how statewide patterns of school year student mobility differed by subgroup. There were differences in the rates of mobility during the school year by both race and socioeconomic status. Specifically, Black students and economically disadvantaged students had higher mobility rates than their peers from other subgroups. There were also subgroup differences in the destination of these moves. A higher percent of the moves made by Hispanic and Black students, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners (EL) students took place within district. A higher percent of moves made by White, Asian, and non-economically disadvantaged students took place out of the Texas Public School System (TPSS).

Key Terms

School year mobility: when a student changed the school they attended during a school year

Mobility rate: the number of moves departing or entering a school per every 100 students enrolled. This brief focuses on moves departing schools.

Within-district move: when a student changes schools but stays within the same school district

Between-district move: when a student changes schools and goes to a different school district

Non-Texas public school move (Non-TPSS): when a student changes schools and goes to or comes from a school that is outside the Texas public school system (e.g., private school, homeschool, or a school in another state or country)

Key Findings

Differences in mobility rates

- Black students and economically disadvantaged students had higher school year mobility rates than their peers. Mobility rates between EL students and their non-EL peers did not meaningfully differ.

Differences in the breakdown of within-district, between-district, non-TPSS mobility

- A higher percent of Black and Hispanic students' school year mobility stayed within district, while a higher percent of moves made by White and Asian students were to non-TPSS schools.
- A higher percent of economically disadvantaged students' school year mobility stayed within district, while a higher percent of moves made by non-economically disadvantaged students were to non-TPSS schools.
- A lower percent of EL students' school year mobility took place between districts compared to non-EL students.

Background

Study Purpose

In a series of research briefs, the Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC) examined and described the amount of student mobility in Texas, with particular focus on Houston area public schools. This fourth research brief provides a state-level overview of how patterns of mobility differ between groups of students. Briefs in this series are outlined as follows:

- 1) Student mobility during the summer months
- 2) Student mobility during the school year
- 3) Student mobility within districts versus between districts
- 4) **Patterns of student mobility by subgroup (e.g., race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage status, and English learner status)**

Research Questions

This brief examines the following question:

1. How do student mobility rates differ across race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, and English learner status?
2. How does the breakdown of within-district versus between-district mobility differ across race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, and English learner status?

To address these questions, analyses for this brief used Texas Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) six-week attendance records from the 2010-11 through 2016-17 school years to calculate mobility rates and describe the breakdown of within-district, between-district and non-Texas public school moves in Texas. These student mobility data were merged with enrollment information in order to look at mobility across subgroups of students, calling attention to differences in school year student mobility by race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage status, and English learner status.

Key Findings

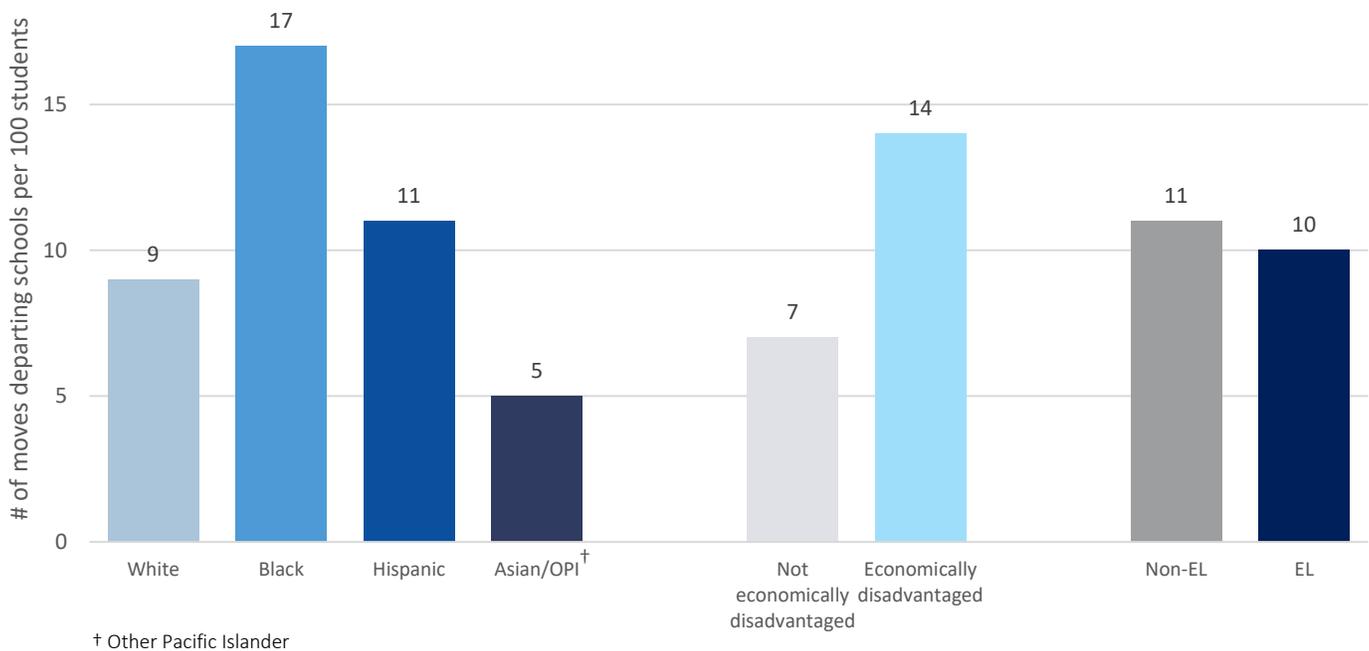
1

Black students and economically disadvantaged students had higher school year mobility rates than their peers.

Which groups of students had higher mobility rates?

During the school year in Texas, an average of 11 moves¹ departed public schools for every 100 students enrolled (Potter et. al, 2019). However, Figure 1 shows that this rate was not the same across all student groups. When examining differences by race/ethnicity, Black students had the highest mobility rate at 17 moves per 100 Black students. White and Asian students had mobility rates lower than average, and Hispanic students had a mobility rate that matched the state average. When disaggregating the mobility rate by economic disadvantage status, economically disadvantaged students had a mobility rate of 14 moves per 100 economically disadvantaged students—twice that of non-economically disadvantaged students. Differences in mobility rate by English learner status were minor.

Figure 1. School year mobility rates differed by race/ethnicity and economic disadvantage status



¹ Note that some students may move more than once during the school year.

Key Findings

2

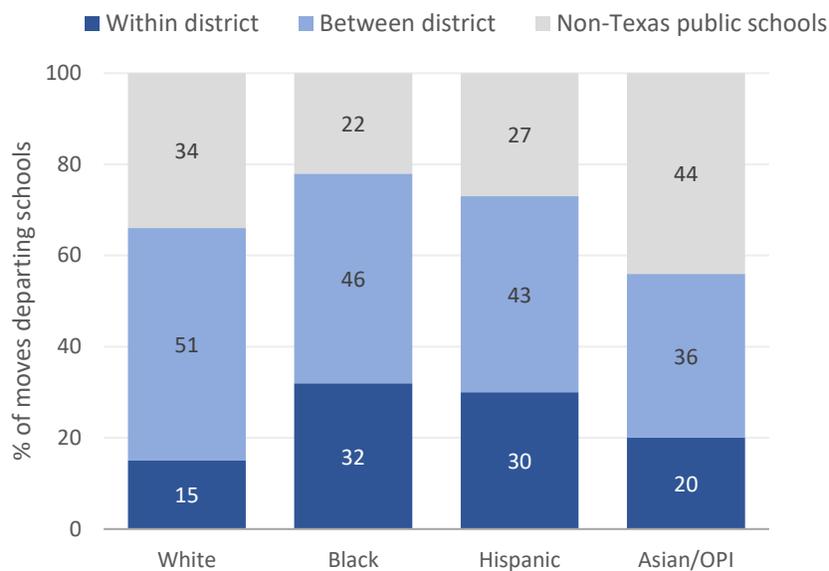
Black and Hispanic students' school year mobility stayed within district more than their peers, while White students and Asian students' mobility exited to non-TPSS schools more often.

Which student groups tended to move within district, between districts, or outside of TPSS?

Previous research in this series found that during the school year, the most common type of move took place between districts. School year mobility that stayed within the same district or left TPSS entirely was less common (Potter, et. al, 2020). Figure 2 illustrates how these general patterns remained similar in some cases and differed in others across race/ethnicity. For White students, Black students, and Hispanic students, between district mobility remained the most common type of school year mobility, but for Asian students the most common type of school change was going to a non-Texas public school.

And while representing only a fraction of all school year mobility, Black and Hispanic students had higher percentages of their moves stay within district – about 30 percent – compared to White and Asian students – 20 percent or less.

Figure 2. Between-district mobility tended to be the most common mobility for White, Black, and Hispanic students, but not Asian students.



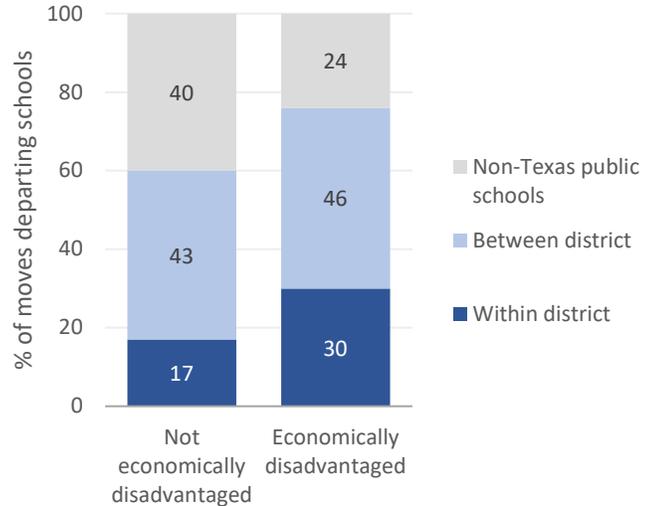
Key Findings

3

Economically disadvantaged students changed schools within district more than non-economically disadvantaged students.

The type of move students made during the school year differed by economic disadvantage status. About one third (30%) of economically disadvantaged students' mobility stayed within the school district compared to less than one-fifth (17%) of non-economically disadvantaged students' school year mobility. In contrast, students who were not economically disadvantaged had a higher percent of moves going to non-TPSS schools. Forty percent of their school year moves landed at a private school, homeschool, or out-of-state school. Only 24 percent of the moves made by economically disadvantaged students left TPSS.

Figure 3. A higher percent of economically disadvantaged students' school year mobility stayed within district

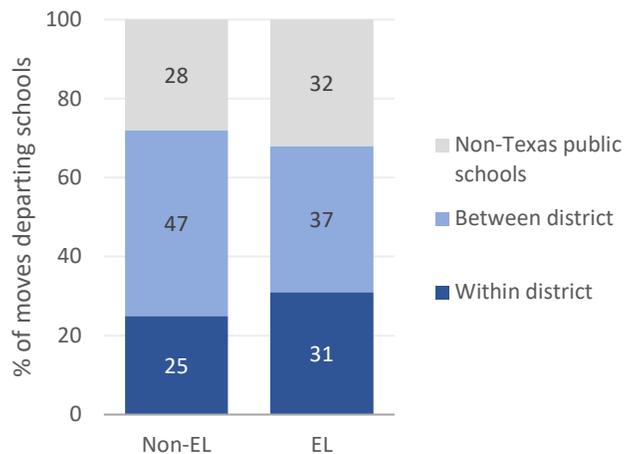


4

A lower percent of English learners' school year mobility went to another public school district compared to their non-EL peers.

Compared to their non-EL peers, a lower proportion of moves made by EL students took place between districts. Specifically, nearly half (47%) of the moves made by non-EL students took place between districts compared to only 37% of moves for EL students. Instead, slightly more of EL students' school changes stayed within district or left TPSS altogether.

Figure 4. A lower percent of ELs' school year mobility went between districts



Conclusion

Summary

Using seven years of data from the state of Texas (2010-11 through 2016-17), this brief highlighted similarities and differences in school year student mobility by race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage status, and English learner (EL) status. During the school year, Black students and economically disadvantaged students moved at higher rates than other students. Black and Hispanic students, along with EL students, also had a higher percent of their school changes stay within a school district. Asian students and non-economically disadvantaged students had a higher percent of their moves take place outside of TPSS.

Implications and Recommendations

School-year mobility is often a reaction to changes in life circumstances beyond students' control such as a parent losing a job or needing to find new housing (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Wright, 1999). Despite being largely outside the control of the student, school year mobility still carries negative repercussions for students and places them at an *even higher* risk of falling behind (Rumberger, 2003; South, Haynie, & Bose, 2007; Wright, 1999). This brief highlights how groups that have historically experienced barriers to educational success are also those that move at higher rates during the school year.

Findings from this brief show that Black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and EL students are changing schools but staying within district more than their peers. To help provide stability to these students, districts could consider implementing policies that allow students to finish out the school year at their original campus and provide transportation to get to and from school.

Additionally, with the exception of Asian student school year mobility, the most common destination for student mobility was other Texas public school districts. Establishing more efficient policies and practices for sharing information across district boundaries will position all schools to better and more effectively serve their mobile students.

Beyond describing differences in student mobility patterns, future research is needed to understand the diversity in decision making about why students change schools. Such research would help provide more nuance guidance for districts on how to optimally support its students, particularly those who change schools during the school year.

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