



What's Happening

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# The achievement progress of English learner students in Utah

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## Key findings

This study examined three cohorts of Utah English learner students over six years. The cohorts were students in kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 at the start of the study. Using scores from the previously administered English language proficiency assessment and content knowledge tests in English language arts and math, the study team found that at least 59 percent of English learner students in these cohorts were reclassified as fluent English proficient students over the six-year period. English learner students who were eligible for special education services had the lowest passing rates on all three tests. English learner students in higher grades had lower cumulative passing rates on all three tests than English learner students in lower grades. The overall cumulative passing rate was highest for the English language arts content test, followed by the math content test and the English language proficiency assessment.



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This report is available on the Regional Educational Laboratory website at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

The study was replicated in two other states, Arizona and Nevada, and those reports are also available on the Regional Educational Laboratory website.

## Summary

Before considering how to successfully educate growing numbers of English learner students, especially those who struggle to pass state English language arts and math content tests, it is important that policymakers and educators first understand the patterns of these students' achievement progress. Representatives of the state office of education in Utah requested this study of the English language proficiency and academic progress of the state's English learner students. (The state departments of education in Arizona and Nevada requested similar studies, which Regional Educational Laboratory West also conducted and published separately.)

This study followed cohorts of English learner students in Utah over six school years to assess their progress in English proficiency and tracked their academic progress in English language arts and math content knowledge. It analyzed three cohorts—which started at kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6—from 2006/07 through 2011/12 by their level of English proficiency at the start of the study, eligibility for special education services, eligibility for the school lunch program (a proxy for low-income status), gender, and grade level.

To track the students' progress, the study used the tests Utah administered during the study period: the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the state's subject matter tests in English language arts and math.<sup>1</sup> This report describes the cumulative percentage of Utah's English learner students in each grade cohort who reached each of three specific milestones during the study period: meeting the criteria for reclassification as fluent English proficient students, passing the English language arts content test for the first time, and passing the math content test for the first time. The study also compared the cumulative passing rates of English learner students taking the three tests. Finally, it compared the students' progress in English proficiency with Utah's expectation that English learner students advance, on average, slightly less than one proficiency level each year.

During the study period at least 59 percent of English learner students were reclassified as fluent English proficient students.

The largest differences in cumulative passing rates for all three tests were associated with student eligibility for special education services and with students' initial English language proficiency level (on a scale of 1, low, to 5, high). Smaller differences in cumulative passing rates were associated with student eligibility for the school lunch program and with student gender.

In all three grade cohorts English learner students who started the study at the two English language proficiency levels just below the level needed for reclassification as fluent English proficient students generally had higher cumulative passing rates on all three tests than English learner students who started at the two lowest English language proficiency levels. In the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students who started the study at the two lowest English language proficiency levels had final cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient of less than 30 percent. English learner students in higher grades had lower cumulative passing rates on all three tests than English learner students in lower grades.

Within the kindergarten cohort 77 percent of English learner students passed the English language arts content test, 76 percent passed the math content test, and 73 percent passed the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment. Within the grade 3 cohort 77 percent passed the English language arts content test, 69 percent passed the math content test, and 64 percent passed the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment. Within the grade 6 cohort 68 percent passed the English language arts content test, 59 percent passed the math content test, and 59 percent passed the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment.

Less than 60 percent of any group of English learner students made progress in English fluency at the expected annual rate of slightly less than one level per year, as called for by Utah's annual measurable achievement objective 1.

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## Why this study?

Across the United States, particularly in states served by Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) West, concern is widespread about how to successfully educate growing numbers of English learner students, especially those who struggle to pass state English language arts and math content tests (Horwitz et al., 2009; Olsen, 2010; Quality Counts, 2009). The members of REL West's English Learner Alliance, which includes representatives of state departments of education in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah, requested studies of the English language proficiency and academic progress of English learner students in their states. This study is for Utah.<sup>2</sup>

Having a better understanding of the progress of English learner students in both English language proficiency and subject matter knowledge will enable English Learner Alliance members to more effectively target interventions for students who are not achieving English language proficiency within expected timeframes and for those not passing English language arts and math content tests.

While previous studies examined some of these issues, the study durations were generally shorter than in this study (box 1). Few, if any, studies directly examined the progress of cohorts of English learner students over five or more years, and none examined English learner students' progress on subject matter tests in English language arts and math, based both on students' initial English language proficiency level and on their initial grade level. This report addresses this gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence on the progress of grade cohorts of English learner students in English language proficiency and in English language arts and math content knowledge over several years. It also examined how these outcomes differed by student subgroups. See box 2 for definitions of key terms used in the report.

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### **Box 1. Previous studies show English learner students tend to lag behind native English speakers on academic achievement tests**

English learner students, as a group, tend to lag behind native English speakers in their rate of academic achievement (Kindler, 2002; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012; Olsen, 2010; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). This gap largely reflects English learner students' need to simultaneously learn English and master subject matter knowledge (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). However, English learner students are a diverse group with different strengths and needs, depending on a number of characteristics (Kindler, 2002).

Characteristics that appear to be related to academic achievement for English learner students specifically, and for students generally, for which most states and districts collect data include initial English language proficiency when students first enroll in school (Cook, Linquanti, Chinen, & Jung, 2012; Collier, 1989, 1992; Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012). They also include grade level (Genesee et al., 2005); poverty status (Goldenberg, 2008; Mulligan, Halle, & Kinukawa, 2012; Rathbun & West, 2004; Roberts, 2009; Roberts & Bryant, 2011); disability status (Liasidou, 2013; McCardle, McCarthy-Mele, Cutting, Leos, & D'Emilio, 2005; Nguyen, 2012); and gender (Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005).

**Initial English language proficiency and grade level.** Research shows that English learner students at the same English language proficiency level tend to make greater year-to-year progress

*Having a better understanding of the progress of English learner students in both English language proficiency and subject matter knowledge will enable English Learner Alliance members to more effectively target interventions for students who are not achieving English language proficiency within expected timeframes and for those not passing English language arts and math content tests*

(continued)



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## Box 1. Previous studies show English learner students tend to lag behind native English speakers on academic achievement tests *(continued)*

in English language proficiency and subject matter knowledge in the lower grades than they do in the higher grades (Cook, Wilmes, Boals, & Santos, 2008; Grissom, 2004; Kieffer, 2008, 2010, 2011; Salazar, 2007).

**Poverty status.** English learner students from homes of lower socioeconomic status generally score lower on subject matter tests and are less likely to achieve reclassification as fluent English proficient students than their peers of higher socioeconomic status (Mulligan et al., 2012; Roberts & Bryant, 2011).

**English learner students with disabilities.** Nearly 400,000 English learner students in the United States in grades K–12 were identified as needing special education services in 2001/02 (McCardle et al., 2005). While a learning disability can affect a student’s academic achievement, it is often difficult to determine whether English learner students struggle to develop literacy and other academic benchmarks because of their limited English proficiency or because they have a learning disability (Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006; Nguyen, 2012).

**Gender.** Differences in academic achievement by gender have been found among K–12 students, including small but persistent gender disparities in math favoring male students (McGraw, Lubienski, & Strutchens, 2006; Perie et al., 2005) and small gender disparities in reading favoring female students (Perie et al., 2005).

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## Box 2. Key terms

**Annual measurable achievement objective 1.** In annual measurable achievement objective 1 the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 asked states to set expectations for how quickly English learner students should progress from one English proficiency level to the next, measured by annual increases in the number or percentage of students making progress in learning English. Utah, like about half the states, set an expectation of advancing an average of less than one English language proficiency level per school year. Utah defines annual measurable achievement objective 1 progress differently depending on the English learner student’s English language proficiency level. To determine adequate progress on annual measurable achievement objective 1, beginning (level 2) and developing (level 3) are divided into two sublevels, A and B, creating the following annual minimum progress levels: entering (level 1), beginning A (level 2A), beginning B (level 2B), developing A (level 3A), developing B (level 3B), expanding (level 4), and bridging (level 5). Utah expects English learner students to score at least at the next higher English proficiency progress level. At Utah’s average annual measurable achievement objective 1 progress rate of slightly less than one English language proficiency level per school year English learner students would be expected to be reclassified as fluent English proficient students within one to six years of the start of the study, depending on the level at which they started in 2006/07. See appendix A.

**Cohorts.** Students were grouped into three analytic cohorts based on their grade level in 2006/07: kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6. Within each cohort students’ initial English language proficiency level was determined based on the 2006/07 Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment. The first subject matter tests were also administered in 2006/07. The study covered six years: 2006/07–2011/12. Thus the kindergarten cohort followed students

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**Box 2. Key terms** *(continued)*

from kindergarten to grade 5, the grade 3 cohort from grade 3 to grade 8, and the grade 6 cohort from grade 6 to grade 11 (see also box 3).

**English language proficiency levels.** During the study period Utah had two different labels for the five levels of English language proficiency. Prior to 2010/11 the five proficiency levels were pre-emergent (level 1), emergent (level 2), intermediate (level 3), advanced (level 4), and fluent (level 5). In 2010/11 the five proficiency levels were renamed entering (level 1), beginning (level 2), developing (level 3), expanding (level 4), and bridging (level 5). The two versions of the proficiency levels are equivalent to each other, and the exit standards are intended to be the same. For clarity the current proficiency level labels are used in this study. The levels are based on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (see below). Throughout this report English language proficiency level refers to the English language proficiency level in the first year of the study period.

**English learner students.** Students are classified as English learner students if they fall into levels 1–4 on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment. Students are asked to take the assessment when they initially register as new students if their family speaks a language other than English at home.

**Fluent English proficient students.** Before 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education used both the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test (described below) to identify English learner students' level of English language proficiency and to determine whether they would be reclassified as fluent English proficient. To achieve reclassification English learner students had to achieve an overall Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment score of level 4 (currently named expanding) or above and an English language arts content test score of partial (level 2 of 4) or above, which is one level below passing (sufficient, level 3 of 4). Starting in 2010/11 English learner students were reclassified as fluent English proficient when they achieved level 5 (currently named bridging) on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment.

**Special education services.** All special education services or individualized education programs under this Utah State Office of Education designation in the state dataset were included in this study sample. Data were not collected on individual types of learning disabilities or special education services within this general category.

**Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment.** This assessment makes the initial determination of whether a student is classified as an English learner and places the student at one of five levels of English proficiency. The test measures proficiency in four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As described above (see fluent English proficient students), Utah used two different standards to determine reclassification as fluent English proficient: one before 2010/11 and another starting in 2010/11. During the study period Utah administered the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment each spring. After the conclusion of the study period, Utah switched to WIDA ACCESS as its English language proficiency test.

**Utah's English language arts and math content tests.** Utah administers content tests in several subjects, including English language arts and math. The English language arts content test is grade specific for both the elementary and secondary grades. The math content test is grade specific for the elementary grades and course specific (for example, Algebra 1 and

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## Box 2. Key terms *(continued)*

Geometry) for the secondary grades. Prior to 2008 Utah administered its content tests in grades 1–11. In spring 2008 Utah began administering its content tests in grades 2–11, and beginning in spring 2011 Utah administered its content tests in grades 3–11. For the study period, which began in 2006/07, only the kindergarten cohort was affected by these changes to the content test administration. This study described student progress on the content tests in the kindergarten cohort beginning in grade 2 in spring 2009. The content tests have four performance levels: minimal (level 1), partial (level 2), sufficient (level 3), and substantial (level 4). Students must score at or above sufficient to pass the English language arts and math content tests. During the study period Utah administered its content tests each spring. Utah no longer administers the content tests used during the study period, having replaced them with its own Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence content tests in English language arts and math in 2014/15.

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### What the study examined

This study is a descriptive analysis of the progress of three grade cohorts of Utah English learner students in English language proficiency and in English language arts and math content knowledge over 2006/07–2011/12. Student English language proficiency scores and English language arts and math content test scores were followed over the study period.

Three cohorts of students were examined based on their grade level in 2006/07: kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6. Students' initial English language proficiency level was based on results on the 2006/07 Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment<sup>3</sup> (see box 2).

The study examined the cumulative percentages of students in each of these cohorts who reached each of three specific academic milestones over the course of the study (2006/07–2011/12):

- Scoring at or above the level for reclassification as fluent English proficient students on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment.
- Passing the English language arts content test for the first time.
- Passing the math content test for the first time.

The study also examined how meeting these criteria varied by students' initial English language proficiency level (see box 2), eligibility for special education services, eligibility for the school lunch program (a proxy for low-income status), gender, and grade level (which, of course, changed over the study period).

First, to determine how many and how quickly English learner students became proficient in English, the study looked at cumulative reclassification rates:

- What was the cumulative percentage of English learner students from each cohort who were reclassified as fluent English proficient students after the baseline year (2006/07)?
- How did the cumulative percentage of English learner students who achieved reclassification as fluent English proficient students vary by students' initial English language proficiency level, eligibility for special education services, eligibility for the school lunch program, gender, and grade level?

Second, to determine how well English learner students did academically in English language arts and math, the study looked at cumulative passing rates:

- What was the cumulative percentage of English learner students from each cohort who passed the English language arts and math content tests for the first time after the baseline year?
- How did the cumulative percentage of English learner students who passed the English language arts and math content tests for the first time vary by students' initial English language proficiency level, eligibility for special education services, eligibility for the school lunch program, gender, and grade level?

The study also compared the cumulative reclassification rates of English learner students on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the cumulative passing rates on the English language arts and math content tests. Finally, it compared the progress rates in English language proficiency for English learner students at each English language proficiency level with Utah's progress expectations on annual measurable achievement objective 1, of advancing, on average, slightly less than one English language proficiency level each year.

Box 3 summarizes the study's data sources and methods. Appendix B provides more detail.

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### **Box 3. Data and methods**

**Data source.** The state of Utah provided data on all students who had English language proficiency test results and subject matter test results in English language arts and math from 2006/07 through 2011/12, starting in kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6. This dataset enabled Regional Educational Laboratory West to examine aspects of these students' progress in English language proficiency and subject matter knowledge over six school years.

**Analysis sample and methods.** Because the study analyzed the entire population of Utah English learner students who met the analytic sample criteria for each of the grade cohorts, statistical tests were not conducted.

The analytic sample included all students identified as English learner students who were enrolled in the state's public schools in the designated grade of the first year of the cohort, who progressed to the next grade level each year, and for whom the required test data were available for all six years being analyzed.

Each cohort consisted of a separate sample of students. For example, the students in the grade 3 cohort were English learner students who enrolled in a Utah public school in grade 3 in 2006/07, progressed to the next grade level each year, and for whom the required Utah test score data were available through grade 8 in 2011/12.

Each cohort was progressively smaller because younger students who met the reclassification criteria as fluent English proficient students in the earlier grades were not included in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts. Further, the number of newly registering English learner students in grade 3 in the grade 3 cohort and in grade 6 in the grade 6 cohort was smaller than the number of English learner students who reclassified as fluent English proficient in the earlier grade levels. For example, for the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment, the kindergarten cohort had 3,237 students, the grade 3 cohort had 2,088 students, and the grade 6 cohort had 1,152 students. For a description of the steps taken to define each analytic sample see table B1 in appendix B.

*This report provides empirical evidence on the progress of grade-level cohorts of English learner students in English language proficiency and in English language arts and math content knowledge over several years*

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### Box 3. Data and methods *(continued)*

The analyses were done for each English learner grade cohort as a whole and by both cohort and each of four student characteristics at the start of 2006/07: English language proficiency level, eligibility for special education services, eligibility for the school lunch program, and gender. For a breakdown of the characteristics of the whole sample and each cohort see table B2 in appendix B.

For the English language proficiency analysis 2007/08 was the first year data were available on measured progress (relative to 2006/07), and 2011/12 was the final year, for a total of five years of progress measurement. For the subject matter tests English learner student achievement levels for 2006/07–2011/12 were examined, for a total of six years.

See appendix B for further details on data and methods.

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### What the study found

All three cohorts of English learner students made moderate progress in achieving reclassification as fluent English proficient students, with 59–73 percent of each cohort’s students achieving reclassification as fluent English proficient students based on their performance on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (and, before 2010/11, on the English language arts content test as well; see box 2). English learner students in the kindergarten cohort had the highest cumulative reclassification rate, which was consistent with previous research.

As expected, English learner students who started the study at expanding proficiency (level 4), the level just below that needed for reclassification as fluent English proficient students, had the highest cumulative reclassification rates. However, in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, English learner students who started the study at the lowest English language proficiency level (entering) had cumulative reclassification rates that were higher than or similar to those of students who began the study at level 2 (beginning).

Cumulative passing rates on the subject matter tests—Utah’s English language arts and math content tests—were similar for both subjects. English learner students in the kindergarten cohort had the highest cumulative passing rates in English language arts and math, while English learner students in the grade 6 cohort had the lowest cumulative passing rates. This finding is consistent with previous research that found that English language students in lower grades made better academic progress than students in higher grades. For all three grade cohorts English learner students who started the study at the two highest English language proficiency levels below that needed for reclassification as fluent English proficient students (developing, level 3, and expanding, level 4) had the highest cumulative passing rates in English language arts and math, as expected. However, in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students who started the study at the lowest English language proficiency level (entering) had cumulative reclassification rates in English language arts that were higher than or similar to students who began the study at level 2 (beginning).

Across all three tests the cumulative passing rate for the three grade cohorts was highest for the English language arts content test (68–77 percent), followed by the math content test (59–76 percent), and then by the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment

***All three cohorts of English learner students made moderate progress in achieving reclassification as fluent English proficient students***

(59–73 percent). The largest differences in cumulative passing rates for all three tests were associated with students' eligibility for special education services and with their English language proficiency level at the start of the study.

English learner students eligible for the school lunch program scored lower on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test than their peers who were not eligible for the school lunch program, and male students scored lower than female students. Female English learner students scored lower than their male peers on the math content test.

Less than 60 percent of any group of English learner students made the expected progress of slightly less than one English proficiency level per year called for in Utah's annual measurable achievement objective 1. At the same time more than two-thirds of English learner students eventually reclassified in 7 of the 15 proficiency level groups across the three grade cohorts.<sup>4</sup>

Specific results related to the research questions are presented below.

#### **How many English learner students became proficient in English during the five-year study period and how quickly**

*Less than three-fourths of English learner students were reclassified as fluent English proficient, and students made consistent progress during the study period.* Across all three grade cohorts between 59 percent (grade 6 cohort) and 73 percent (kindergarten cohort) of English learner students scored at or above the required level for reclassification as fluent English proficient on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (figure 1). In the grade 3 cohort 64 percent of the English learner students reclassified. Overall, English learner students made consistent progress in cumulative reclassification rates during the study period.

*English learner students who started the study at the highest two English proficiency levels below that needed for reclassification as fluent English proficient students scored highest on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment.* Compared with English learner students who began the study at lower English language proficiency levels, English learner students at expanding proficiency (level 4) and developing proficiency (level 3) had the two highest cumulative reclassification rates on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (figure 2). In the kindergarten cohort English learner students at beginning proficiency (level 2) and entering proficiency (level 1) had the two lowest cumulative reclassification rates. In the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students who started the study at entering proficiency (level 1) had slightly higher final cumulative passing rates as fluent English proficient than the English learner students who started the study at beginning proficiency (level 2).

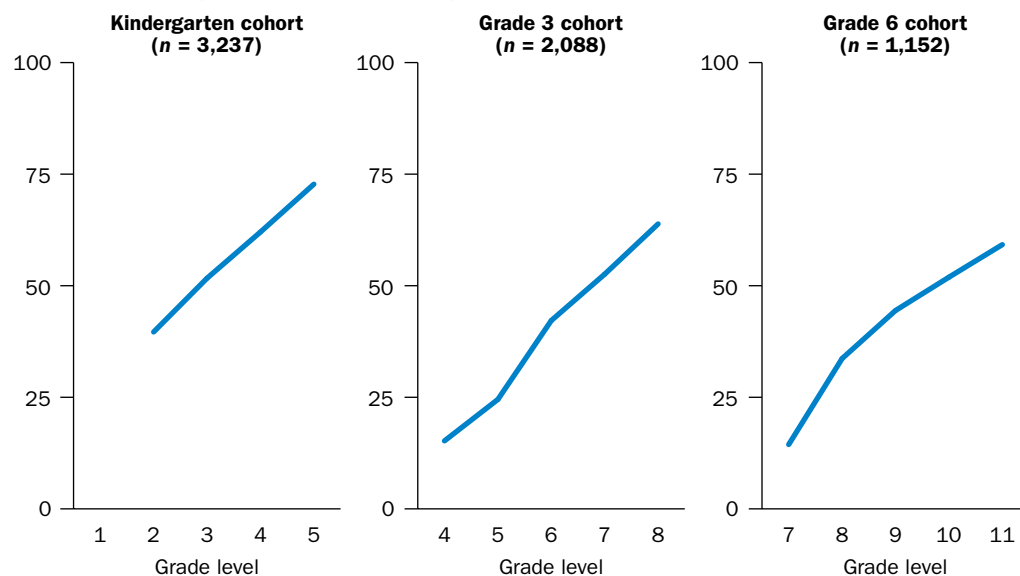
*English learner students who were eligible for special education services had lower cumulative passing rates on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment than their peers who were not eligible.* For all three grade cohorts English learner students who were eligible for special education services at the start of the study had lower cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient than students who were not eligible (figure 3). After five years this gap remained consistent in the kindergarten cohort and increased in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts. The kindergarten cohort had the highest cumulative

**Less than 60 percent of any group of English learner students made the expected progress of slightly less than one English proficiency level per year called for in Utah's annual measurable achievement objective 1**



**Figure 1. For all three grade cohorts of English learner students the cumulative reclassification rate in becoming fluent English proficient followed a steady progression from the beginning to the end of the study period, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage reclassified as fluent English proficient



**Across all three grade cohorts between 59 percent and 73 percent of English learner students scored at or above the required level for reclassification as fluent English proficient on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment**

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. Prior to 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education used both the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test to reclassify English learner students; beginning in 2010/11 only the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment was used. For the kindergarten cohort of English learner students reclassification started in grade 2 since there was no English language arts content test for grade 1 in 2007/08.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

reclassification rate for English learner students eligible for special education services at the start of the study, at 52 percent.

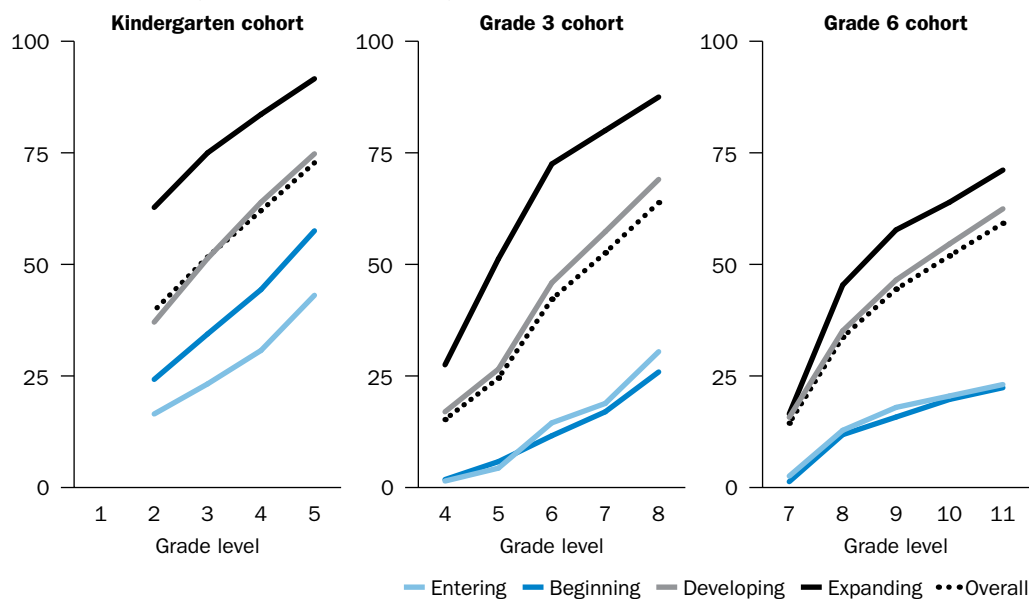
*Cumulative reclassification rates were lower for English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program than for their peers who were not eligible and were lower for male English learner students than for their female counterparts.* The difference in cumulative reclassification rates between English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program and those who were not ranged from 6 percentage points in the grade 6 cohort to 7 percentage points in the kindergarten cohort (see figure C1 in appendix C). The difference between male and female English learner students ranged from 2 percentage points in the grade 6 cohort to 8 percentage points in the kindergarten cohort (see figure C2 in appendix C).

#### How well English learner students did academically in English language arts and math

*At least 68 percent of English learner students passed the English language arts content test during the six-year study period.* The cumulative passing rate on the English language arts content test ranged from 68 percent in the grade 6 cohort to 77 percent in both the kindergarten and grade 3 cohorts (figure 4). Similar to the cumulative reclassification rate progress on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment, the cumulative passing rate progress on the English language arts content test was generally consistent throughout the study.

**Figure 2. For the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students at the two lowest initial English language proficiency levels made the slowest cumulative reclassification rate progress in becoming fluent English proficient, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage reclassified as fluent English proficient



*Compared with English learner students who began the study at lower English language proficiency levels, English learner students at expanding proficiency (level 4) and developing proficiency (level 3) had the two highest cumulative reclassification rates on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment*

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. Prior to 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education used both the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test to reclassify English learner students; beginning in 2010/11 only the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment was used. For the kindergarten cohort of English learner students reclassification started in grade 2 since there was no English language arts content test for grade 1 in 2007/08. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: entering, 267; beginning, 805; developing, 1,225; and expanding, 940. Grade 3 cohort: entering, 69; beginning, 224; developing, 1,715; and expanding, 80. Grade 6 cohort: entering, 39; beginning, 76; developing, 940; and expanding, 97.

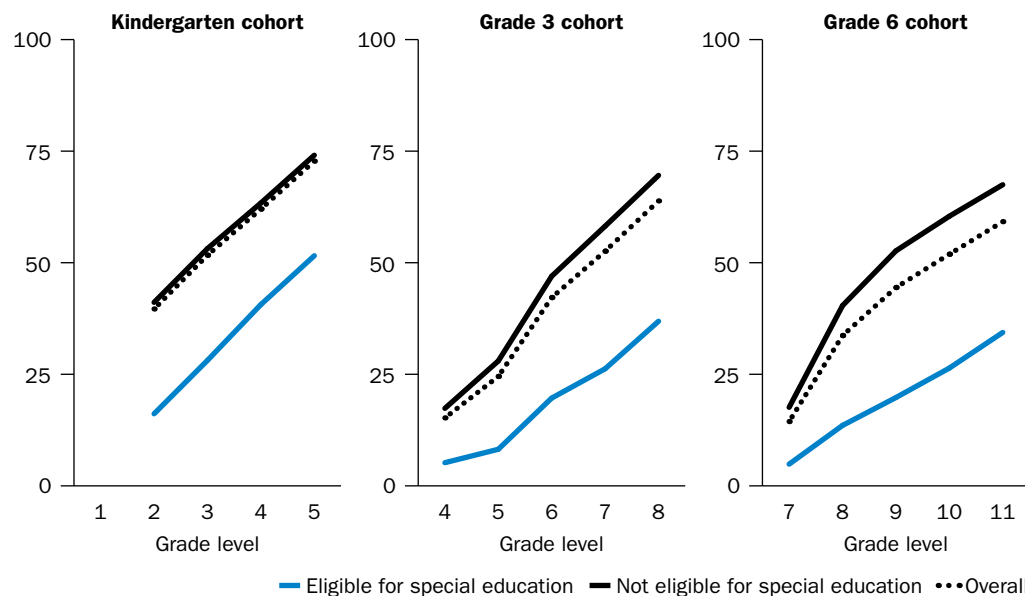
**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

*English learner students who began the study at higher English language proficiency levels generally had higher cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test than students who started at lower proficiency levels.* In all three grade cohorts English learner students who started the study at the two highest English language proficiency levels below the level needed for reclassification (expanding, level 4, and developing, level 3) had the highest cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test (figure 5). In the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students who started the study at expanding proficiency (level 4) had the highest final cumulative passing rates in their cohorts despite the fact that none of those students passed the English language arts content test in the first year of the study. In the kindergarten cohort English learner students at beginning proficiency (level 2) had a higher cumulative passing rate than English learner students at entering proficiency (level 1). However, for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students who started the study at the entering level (level 1) had higher cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test than their peers who started the study at beginning proficiency (level 2). Of the students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts who began the study at the two lowest English language proficiency levels, 50 percent or less passed the English language arts content test.



**Figure 3. The difference in cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient students between English learner students who were eligible for special education services and those who were not was largest in the grade 6 cohort, followed by the grade 3 cohort, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage reclassified as fluent English proficient



*For all three grade cohorts English learner students who were eligible for special education services at the start of the study had lower cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient than students who were not eligible*

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. Prior to 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education used both the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test to reclassify English learner students; beginning in 2010/11 only the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment was used. For the kindergarten cohort of English learner students reclassification started in grade 2 since there was no English language arts content test for grade 1 in 2007/08. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: eligible for special education, 192; not eligible for special education, 3,045. Grade 3 cohort: eligible for special education, 366; not eligible for special education, 1,722. Grade 6 cohort: eligible for special education, 288; not eligible for special education, 864.

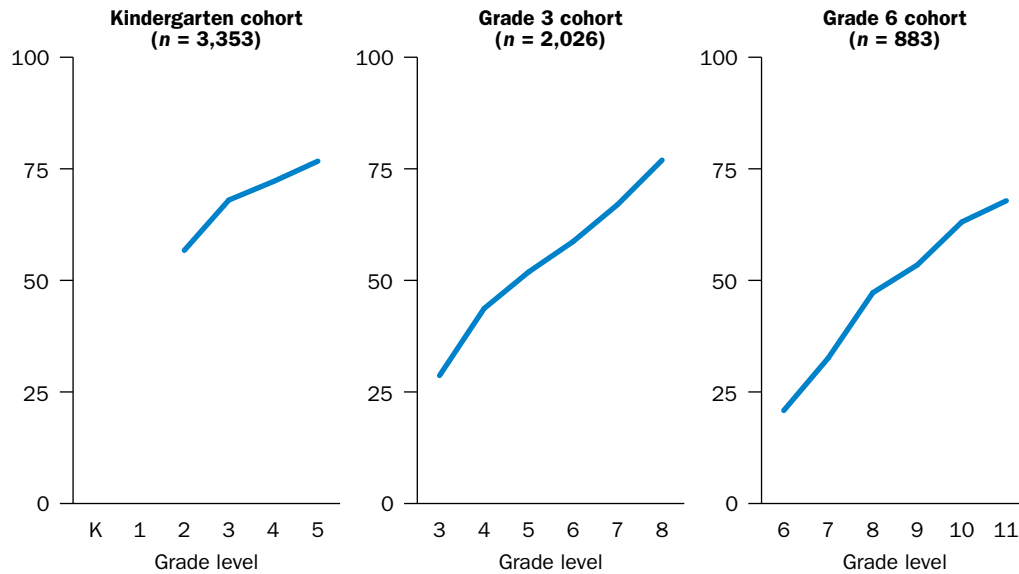
**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

*English learner students who were eligible for special education services at the start of the study had lower cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test than students who were not eligible.* The difference in cumulative passing rates decreased for the kindergarten cohort and increased for both the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts as the study progressed (figure 6). The gap ranged from 14 percentage points in the kindergarten cohort to 28 percentage points in the grade 6 cohort. In the grade 6 cohort more than half of English learner students who were eligible for special education services at the beginning of the study never passed the English language arts content test.

*Cumulative passing rates in English language arts were lower for English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program than for their peers who were not eligible and were lower for male English learner students than for their female peers.* English language students who were eligible for the school lunch program had lower cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test than their peers who were not eligible. The difference ranged from 4 percentage points in the kindergarten cohort to 8 percentage points in the grade 3 cohort (see figure C3 in appendix C). Male English learner students had lower cumulative passing rates on the English language arts

**Figure 4. For the kindergarten and grade 3 cohorts the cumulative passing rate progress on the English language arts content test was greater than the cumulative passing rate progress for the grade 6 cohort, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage passing English language arts



*The cumulative passing rate on the English language arts content test ranged from 68 percent in the grade 6 cohort to 77 percent in both the kindergarten and grade 3 cohorts*

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take the English language arts content test in grades 2–11.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

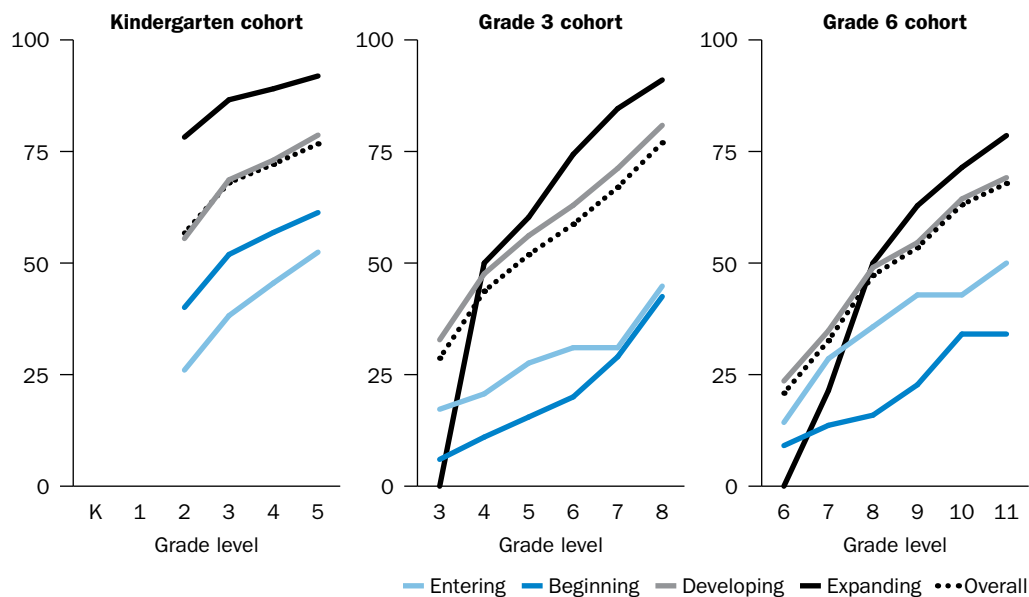
content test than their female peers. The gap ranged from 5 percentage points in the grade 6 cohort to 6 percentage points in the kindergarten and grade 3 cohorts (see figure C4).

*Cumulative passing rates on the math content test showed both similar and different patterns among subgroups and cohorts compared with rates on the English language arts content test: the kindergarten cohort scored highest; however, progress eventually slowed for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts.* Across the three grade cohorts the cumulative passing rate on the math content test ranged from 59 percent in the grade 6 cohort to 76 percent in the kindergarten cohort (figure 7). Different from the progress on the English language arts content test, the cumulative passing rate progress in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts on the math content test was greater during the first few years of the study period and then slowed toward the end of the study. This change was most evident in the grade 6 cohort, where the passing rate increased from year 1 (grade 6) to year 2 (grade 7) and then slowed by year 3 (grade 8) to a nearly flat rate.

*English learner students who began the study at higher English language proficiency levels had higher cumulative passing rates on the math content test than students who started at lower proficiency levels.* The patterns of cumulative passing rate progress for the math content test were more consistent than those for the English language arts content test. In all three grade cohorts English learner students at each English language proficiency level had higher cumulative passing rates than their peers at lower English language proficiency levels (figure 8). For the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts the difference in cumulative passing rates between English learner students who began the study at higher and lower English language proficiency levels increased over the course of the six-year study period. For example, in the

**Figure 5. For the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students at the two lowest initial English language proficiency levels had the slowest progress rates on the English language arts content test, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage passing English language arts



*In all three grade cohorts English learner students who started the study at the two highest English language proficiency levels below the level needed for reclassification (expanding, level 4, and developing, level 3) had the highest cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test*

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take the English language arts content test in grades 2–11. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: entering, 246; beginning, 809; developing, 1,247; and expanding, 1,051. Grade 3 cohort: entering, 29; beginning, 200; developing, 1,719; and expanding, 78. Grade 6 cohort: entering, 14; beginning, 44; developing, 755; and expanding, 70.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

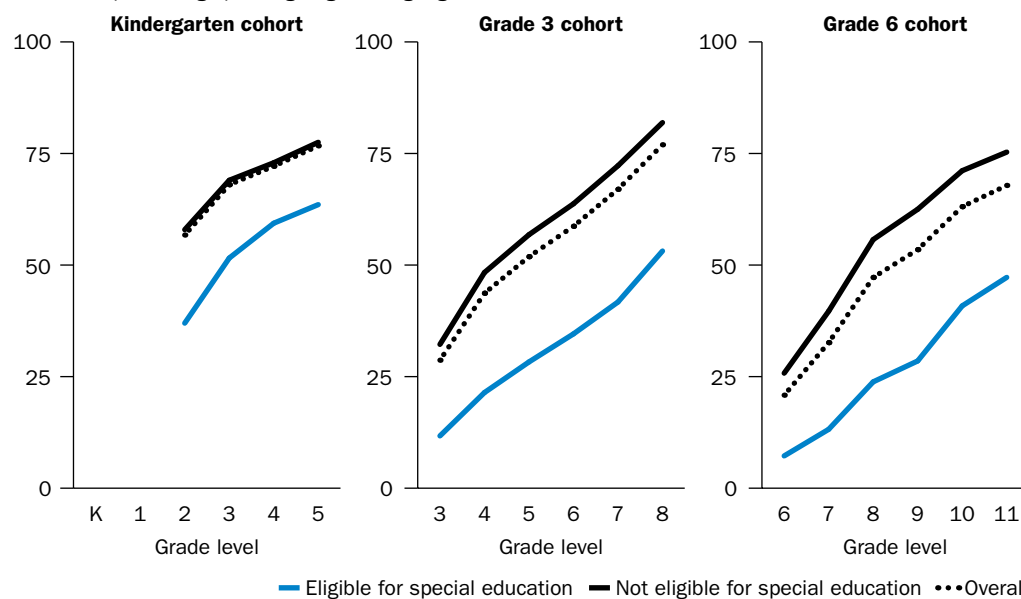
grade 3 cohort the gap in the math passing rate between English learner students at expanding (level 4) and entering (level 1) increased from 13 percentage points in year 1 of the study (grade 3) to 47 percentage points in year 6 of the study (grade 8). However, the final cumulative differences were small between some groups. The gap was 4 percentage points or less between the English learner students at entering proficiency (level 1) and those at beginning proficiency (level 2) in the kindergarten and grade 3 cohorts and between developing proficiency (level 3) and expanding proficiency (level 4) in the grade 6 cohort.

The highest cumulative passing rate on the math content test (91 percent) was achieved by English learner students in the kindergarten cohort who began the study at expanding (level 4), the highest English language proficiency level below that needed for reclassification as fluent English proficient. English learner students with the lowest cumulative passing rates on the math content test (50 percent) were those in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts who began the study at entering proficiency (level 1) and beginning proficiency (level 2), the two lowest English language proficiency levels.

*English learner students who were eligible for special education services at the start of the study had lower cumulative passing rates on the math content test than students who were not eligible, and the gap widened toward the end of the study for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts.* Like the results on the English language arts content test, English learner students who were eligible for special education services at the beginning

**Figure 6. English learner students who were eligible for special education services started with lower passing rates on the English language arts content test than students who were not eligible, a difference that decreased over time for the kindergarten cohort and increased for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage passing English language arts



*The difference in cumulative passing rates decreased for the kindergarten cohort and increased for both the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts as the study progressed*

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take the English language arts content test in grades 2–11. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: eligible for special education, 192; not eligible for special education, 3,161. Grade 3 cohort: eligible for special education, 350; not eligible for special education, 1,676. Grade 6 cohort: eligible for special education, 235; not eligible for special education, 648.

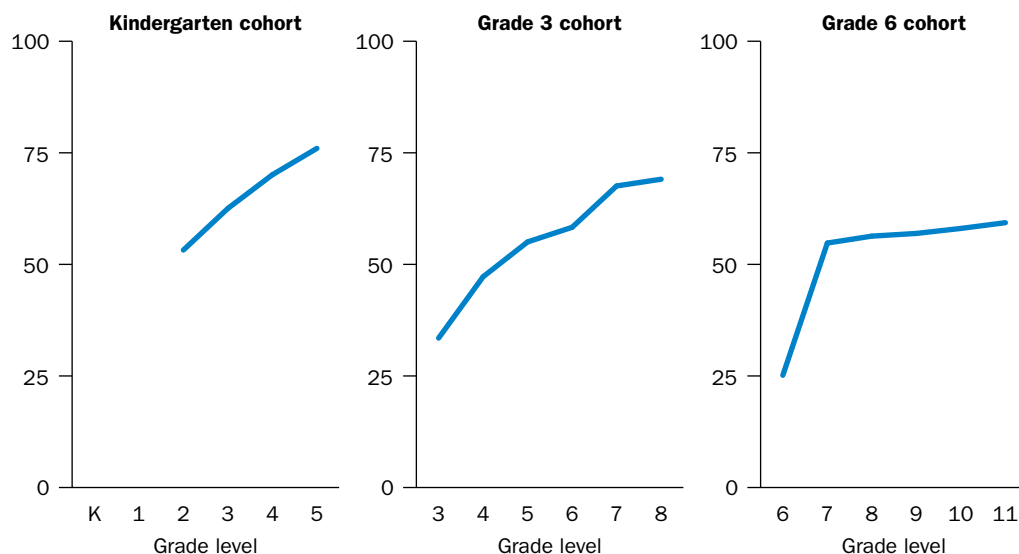
**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

of the study had lower cumulative passing rates on the math content test than their peers who were not eligible for special education services (figure 9). In the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts the gap in cumulative passing rates increased during the six-year study period. The gap increased 3 percentage points at the end of the study for the grade 3 cohort and 4 percentage points for the grade 6 cohort. For the kindergarten cohort the gap decreased 7 percentage points. The kindergarten cohort had the highest pass rate for English learner students who were eligible for special education services (67 percent), and the grade 6 cohort had the lowest (47 percent).

*English learner students eligible for the school lunch program and female English learner students had lower cumulative passing rates on the math content test than their peers who were not eligible and than male English learner students.* English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program had lower cumulative passing rates on the math content test than their peers who were not eligible. The difference ranged from 4 percentage points in the kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts to 6 percentage points in the grade 3 cohort (see figure C5 in appendix C). Female English learner students had lower cumulative passing rates on the math content test than their male English learner peers. Female and male English learner students had about the same

**Figure 7. For English learner students in the grade 6 cohort cumulative passing rate progress on the math content test slowed after the first two years of the study period, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage passing math



*Across the three grade cohorts the cumulative passing rate on the math content test ranged from 59 percent in the grade 6 cohort to 69 percent in the kindergarten cohort*

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take grade-specific math content tests in elementary school and course-specific math content tests in secondary school. Students take content tests in grades 3–8 and in either grade 10 or 11 in high school; there is no test in grade 9.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

cumulative passing rate on the math content test in the kindergarten cohort, while the difference was 2 percentage points in the grade 3 cohort, and 9 percentage points in the grade 6 cohort (see figure C6).

### Comparison of cumulative passing rates across tests and cohorts

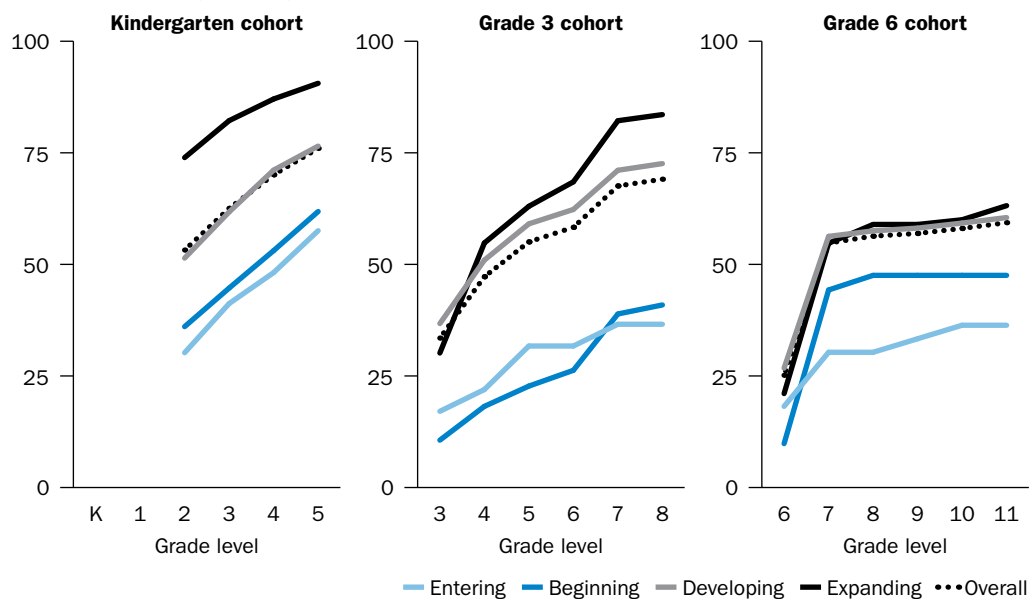
With one exception English learner students across all cohorts scored higher on the subject matter tests than on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment. Across all three tests the overall cumulative passing rate for each of the three grade cohorts was highest for the English language arts content test, followed by the math content test, and then the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (table 1). The one exception occurred in the grade 6 cohort, where English learner students had the same cumulative passing rate on the math content test and the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (59 percent).

### Comparison of cumulative passing rates with Utah's progress expectations

**Utah's annual measurable achievement objective 1.** Utah's annual measurable achievement objective 1 for English learners students—an average increase of slightly less than one English language proficiency level per school year—means that English learner students should have passed the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment within one to six years of the start of the study, depending on the proficiency level at which they started in 2006/07. For example, English learner students who started the study at

**Figure 8. By the end of the study the gap in cumulative passing rates on the math content test increased between the two highest and the two lowest initial English language proficiency levels for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage passing math



*In all three grade cohorts English learner students at each English language proficiency level had higher cumulative passing rates than their peers at lower English language proficiency levels*

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 served as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take grade-specific math content tests in elementary school and course-specific math content tests in secondary school. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: entering, 245; beginning, 810; developing, 1,247; and expanding, 1,051. Grade 3 cohort: entering, 41; beginning, 198; developing, 1,674; and expanding, 73. Grade 6 cohort: entering, 33; beginning, 61; developing, 972; and expanding, 95.

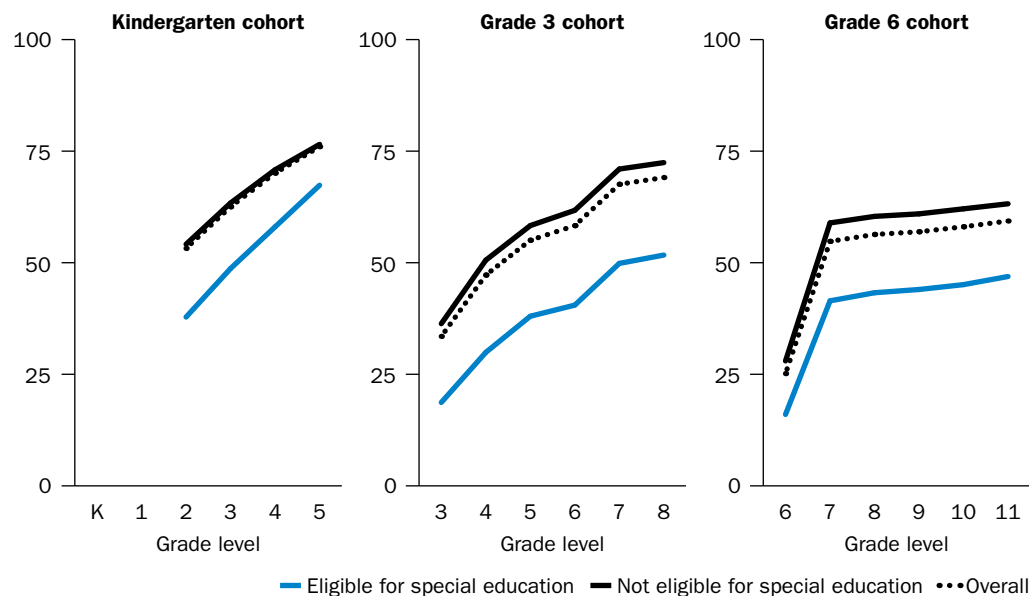
**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

beginning proficiency (level 2) should have been able to achieve reclassification as fluent English proficient students within five years of the start of the study.

*English learner students did not generally achieve the expected rate of progress in English proficiency but rather advanced at different rates.* How well English learner students in this sample met the progress expectation differed according to their cohort and language proficiency level at the start of the study. However, less than half of the English learner students in all but one of the cohort English language proficiency level groups achieved reclassification as fluent English proficient within the expected timeline of advancing at an average rate of slightly less than one English language proficiency level per school year (see table A1 in appendix A). The proportion of English learner students who met the expected reclassification timeline ranged from 7 percent (grade 3 cohort students who started the study at developing A, level 3A) to 58 percent (kindergarten cohort students who started at beginning proficiency, level 2).

**Figure 9. The difference in cumulative passing rates in math between English learner students who were eligible for special education services and those who were not decreased over time for the kindergarten cohort and increased for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage passing math



*English learner students who were eligible for special education services at the beginning of the study had lower cumulative passing rates on the math content test than their peers who were not eligible for special education services*

**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 served as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take grade-specific math content tests in elementary school and course-specific math content tests in secondary school. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: eligible for special education, 193; not eligible for special education, 3,160. Grade 3 cohort: eligible for special education, 321; not eligible for special education, 1,665. Grade 6 cohort: eligible for special education, 275; not eligible for special education, 886.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

**Table 1. Cumulative passing rates for each cohort for each test, 2006/07–2011/12 (percent of students passing the test)**

Test	Kindergarten	Grade 3	Grade 6
Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment	73	64	59
English language arts content test	77	77	68
Math content test	76	69	59

**Note:** Number of English learner students in each analytic sample is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: English language proficiency, 3,237; English language arts, 3,353; and math, 3,353. Grade 3 cohort: English language proficiency, 2,088; English language arts, 2,026; and math, 1,986. Grade 6 cohort: English language proficiency, 1,152; English language arts, 883; and math, 1,161.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.



## Implications of the study findings

This section includes some implications of the study findings for policy, practice, and future research and discusses how the findings expand on or vary from the findings of previous research.

### Three findings are consistent with current research and suggest areas for focused interventions

Utah may want to consider devoting additional attention to improving teaching practices and support services to help the following underperforming English learner student subgroups.

**English learner students who are eligible for special education services.** All English learner students who are eligible for special education services will likely need additional support to be successful, and this support may need to vary by specific subgroups of learning disabilities. Further investigation into more effective practices for improving the achievement of English learner students who are eligible for special education services, especially English learner students in secondary school, appears warranted.

**All English learner students who are eligible for special education services will likely need additional support to be successful, and this support may need to vary by specific subgroups of learning disabilities**

**Older English learner students.** English learner students in the grade 6 cohort always made less progress than the lower cohorts on all three tests. Older English learner students may require additional, possibly different, supports if they are to meet at least minimal expectations for academic achievement. Or, perhaps, middle and high school teachers will need additional or different skills from those they currently have. These teachers may need additional, targeted professional development to effectively support the academic English literacy needs of their older English learner students across content areas.

**English learner students eligible for the school lunch program and male and female English learner students, depending on the subject.** While performance differences between English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program and those were not and between male and female English learner students were generally smaller than those for the other two characteristics examined (eligibility for special education services and initial English language proficiency level), they were consistently present. Accordingly, comprehensive supports to improve English learner student achievement would likely need to include supports targeted to the additional or unique needs of English learner students who are eligible for the school lunch program. Similarly, additional or targeted supports for reclassification as fluent English proficient students and in English language arts for male English learner students and in math for female English learner students may be warranted.

### Four findings expand the current research literature and point to areas for possible changes in practice or further research

Four of the study findings offer evidence not found in the general research literature.

**Differentiated support by students' English language proficiency levels may be needed to help students at the lowest English language proficiency levels succeed on current and future subject matter tests.** For this study the achievement standard on the subject matter tests was low: passing the content test once over the course of six years. Nevertheless,



English learner students who started the study at lower proficiency levels still had low cumulative passing rates on English language arts and math content tests, especially compared with their grade-level peers who started the study at higher English language proficiency levels. For example, the gap in cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test in the grade 3 cohort was 46 percentage points between English learner students who started the study at expanding proficiency, level 4 (91 percent), and those who started the study at beginning proficiency, level 2 (45 percent). While these findings are consistent with the research literature (Cook et al., 2008; Grissom, 2004; Kieffer, 2008, 2010, 2011; Salazar, 2007), they also show something more: that large percentages of English learner students who were at the lower English language proficiency levels were not able to advance sufficiently in English proficiency and subject matter knowledge to pass subject matter tests once over six years. These findings suggest that changes in teaching and support practices may be needed if English learners at lower English language proficiency levels are ever going to meet minimum content achievement expectations.

*Examining English learner student achievement among special education students by specific learning disabilities may provide useful information for more effective, targeted supports.* In this study English learner students who were eligible for special education services had lower final cumulative passing rates on all three tests than their peers who were not eligible for special education services, which is consistent with the research literature (see, for example, Lipka, Siegel, & Vukovic, 2005). Additional research could take into consideration the fact that English learner students who are eligible for special education services cover a diverse set of learning-related disabilities—ranging from autism to hearing impairments to emotional disabilities to traumatic brain injury (Kavale, 2005). Examining the achievement rates of these different groups may provide useful information on how to best support each.

*Utah may want to examine the linguistic complexity of its English language proficiency and subject matter tests.* English learner students had higher cumulative passing rates on the subject matter tests than on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment. Since no research was found that directly compared English learner students' performance across multiple years on these three types of assessments, this study adds useful research. Based on the expected level of linguistic complexity, English learner students should pass the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment most often, followed by the math content tests and then the English language arts content tests (see, for example, Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Abedi & Gandara, 2006; Abedi & Lord, 2001). It was surprising to find that the opposite occurred. Perhaps these results indicate that the level of academic English literacy necessary for success on the English language proficiency and the math and English language arts content tests are different from what was expected. Further research is needed in this area if expected levels of achievement across these three tests are going to align with actual results.

*Utah may need to consider changing its annual measurable achievement objectives or its teaching and support practices, as most English learner students did not meet the progress and achievement targets.* This study's findings show that across grade cohorts and English language proficiency levels, less than 50 percent of the English learner students in all but one of the cohort English proficiency-level subgroups made the expected rate of progress. The percentage of English learner students who met the expected rate of progress ranged widely from 7 percent (grade 3 cohort, developing A proficiency, level 3A)

*Based on the expected level of linguistic complexity, English learner students should pass the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment most often, followed by the math content tests and then the English language arts content tests. It was surprising to find that the opposite occurred*

to 58 percent (kindergarten cohort, beginning proficiency, level 2). At the same time the percentage of English learner students within any of the 15 cohort English language proficiency level subgroups who eventually reclassified during the five years of the study period ranged from 22 percent (grade 6 cohort, entering proficiency, level 1) to 92 percent (kindergarten cohort, expanding proficiency, level 4). Thus, it may be too rigid or simplistic to assume that all English learner students, regardless of English language proficiency level and grade level, will advance at the same pace. More flexible standards may be useful to educators. Further, that such low percentages of English learner students meet the expected achievement targets may also signal that teaching and support practices are not effective. Improvements in these areas may also increase English learner student achievement.

### **One finding was not consistent with the research literature and points to areas for additional research**

Utah may want to examine why some groups of English learner students outperformed their grade-level peers with higher English language proficiency levels. This study finding was not consistent with the general research literature and points to areas for additional research to better understand the discrepancies between this study's results and the current research base.<sup>5</sup>

In a few instances English learner students with lower initial English language proficiency levels had higher cumulative passing rates than their peers who had higher initial proficiency levels. In the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students at entering proficiency (level 1) had cumulative passing rates on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and English language arts content test that were comparable to or slightly higher than their peers at beginning proficiency (level 2). This did not occur in the kindergarten cohort on any of the three tests, nor did it occur on the math content test in any of the three grade cohorts. It is not clear why this difference occurred. One possibility is that this finding may be driven by variation in the prevalence of risk factors, such as eligibility for special education services or the school lunch program, across students with different English language proficiency levels. Or, perhaps, the actual difference in English proficiency between English learner students at these two lower levels is much smaller than between any other levels, especially in the higher grade levels. Further analyses in these areas could help clarify this inconsistency with the research literature.

***Utah may want to examine why some groups of English learner students outperformed their grade-level peers with higher English language proficiency levels. This study finding was not consistent with the general research literature and points to areas for additional research to better understand the discrepancies between this study's results and the current research base***

### **Limitations of the study**

This study has two limitations. The first relates to the scope of the sample. The analytic sample excludes mobile students who left or entered Utah public schools during the study period. It also excludes students who repeated or skipped a grade, because of difficulties tracking students who did not progress with the rest of their grade cohort. As a result, this sample is a more stable group of English learner students than is the case in most schools. Thus, the cumulative passing rates on examined tests could be higher than for the English learner population as a whole. To address the possibility that the study sample may differ from the English learner population as a whole, table B2 in appendix B describes the difference between the whole population and the analytic sample.

The second limitation relates to comparisons among grade cohorts based on differences in sample characteristics. The students in the kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts

likely have different characteristics, especially related to initial English language proficiency level. For students in the kindergarten cohort, kindergarten was their initial enrollment year in Utah public schools, and their English language proficiency level was their initial English language proficiency level when they started school. For students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts their English language proficiency level was their level at the start of the study, which most likely differed from their proficiency level at the time they started school. Furthermore, the composition of the kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts could vary because of differences in student mobility, screening opportunities for special education services, and grade repetition across cohorts.

## Appendix A. Utah programs that provide context for the study

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To provide context for the analysis in this report, this appendix describes Utah's process for the identification of students who are eligible for special education services, the identification of students as English learner students, the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and proficiency levels, English language arts and math content tests and achievement levels, English learner support programs, and how Utah (and other states) defines "making progress in learning English." These descriptions provide a context for the state analysis and are not intended as evaluations of the state programs or assessments.

### Identification of students who are eligible for special education services

Students are eligible for special education services if they are determined to have a learning disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (34 C.F.R. Secs. 300 et al.) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Utah's procedures for making this determination are intended to comply with these federal statutes, Utah state statutes, and the Utah administrative code. The procedures are described in the Utah State Office of Education's (2008) *Specific Learning Disabilities Eligibility Guidelines*. The Utah State Office of Education formed a focus group composed of education specialists on its staff, representatives from local education agencies, parents, disability law center staff, related service providers, and Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center staff to create the guidelines for a comprehensive evaluation of whether a student has a learning disability or impairment and is eligible to receive special education services. The focus group identified three methods that local education agencies may use in making this determination:

- Student's response to increasing levels of response to intervention activities (method A).
- Level of discrepancy between the student's achievement and intellectual ability (method B).
- Combination of data from the response to intervention and discrepancy methods (method C).

Regardless of which eligibility determination method is used, the process must include all of these elements of the comprehensive evaluation:

- Creation of an evaluation team that includes parents and qualified professionals.
- Observation of the student's learning environment by someone other than the student's teacher, and repeated assessments at reasonable intervals, to determine that
  - The student does not make adequate achievement for his or her age.
  - The student's inadequate achievement is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading and math.
- Demonstration that the basis for the learning disability and eligibility determination is in line with one of the three methods.
- Certification, in writing, by each evaluation team member that the report reflects his or her conclusion.

If a student is determined to be eligible for special education services, the specially designed instruction for the student is set forth in the student's individualized education program.

In Utah, as in all states, each local education agency must make proactive efforts to identify, locate, and evaluate students with disabilities within its jurisdiction.

## Identification of students for an English learner program

As required by Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, each state must distribute a home language survey to all students when they first enroll in the state's public schools. The schools must assess the English language proficiency of all students whose parents or guardians report that a language other than English is spoken at home. Utah administers its own version of a home language survey and uses the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment test to make the initial determination of whether a student should be classified as an English learner student. Students whose parents or guardians report that a language other than English is spoken at home and who do not pass the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment are classified as English learner students.

## English language proficiency test and subject matter tests

Utah administers the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment each spring. It was developed to test students in five grade spans (K–1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12), with each grade span testing four different domains: listening, writing, reading, and speaking. Prior to 2010/11, the five proficiency levels were pre-emergent, emergent, intermediate, advanced, and fluent. During this time the Utah State Office of Education used both the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test to identify English learner students' level of English language fluency and to determine whether they would achieve reclassification. To achieve reclassification as fluent English proficient, English learner students had to achieve an overall Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment score of advanced or above and an English language arts content test score of partial (level 2 of 4) or above, which is one level below passing (sufficient, level 3 of 4). As of 2010/11 the five proficiency levels were renamed entering (formerly pre-emergent), beginning (formerly emergent), developing (formerly intermediate), expanding (formerly advanced), and bridging (formerly fluent). Since 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education has used only the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment results to reclassify English learner students. A student who achieves bridging proficiency (level 5) reclassifies as fluent English proficient and exits the English learner program. The two versions of the proficiency levels are equivalent to each other, and the exit standards are intended to be the same. For clarity, the current proficiency level labels are used in this study.

Utah administers the English language arts and math content tests each spring. The English language arts content test is grade specific for both the elementary and secondary grades. The math content test is grade specific for the elementary grades and course specific (for example, Algebra 1 and Geometry) for the secondary grades. Each content test has four proficiency levels: minimal (level 1), partial (level 2), sufficient (level 3), and substantial (level 4). Students must score at or above sufficient to pass the English language arts and math content tests. Prior to 2008 Utah administered its subject matter tests in grades 1–11. In spring 2008 Utah began administering its subject matter tests in grades 2–11, and beginning in spring 2011 Utah administered its subject matter tests in grades 3–11. For the study period, which began in 2006/07, only the kindergarten cohort was affected by these changes to the subject matter test administration. This study described student progress on the subject matter tests in the kindergarten cohort beginning in grade 2 in spring 2009.

## Types of English learner support programs

In Utah English learner support programs vary by district. Across districts English learner support programs include one-way and two-way immersion programs, English as a second language programs, and newcomer programs that address the language and cultural transition needs of recent-immigrant students, among others. English learner support programs also include strategies and resources for mainstream teachers of English learner students—most specifically through content-based English learner programs, such as the Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English program (Utah State Office of Education Title III Program, 2014).

## Guidelines for making progress in learning English

States have discretion to determine what is considered “making progress in learning English” under the annual measurable achievement objective 1 requirement of Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. According to an American Institutes for Research brief prepared for the U.S. Department of Education in May 2010, half of the states with sufficient documentation of their classification criteria (17 of 34 states examined in the study) defined annual measurable achievement objective 1 progress as advancing one English language proficiency level (or more) per school year until students score at the required English language proficiency level for reclassification as fluent English proficient (Boyle, Taylor, Hurlburt, & Soga, 2010). Utah is similar to the other half of the 34 states, which defined progress as various rates of less than one English language proficiency level per school year.

Utah defines annual measurable achievement objective 1 progress differently depending on the English learner student’s English language proficiency level (Utah State Office of Education, 2014). For annual measurable achievement objective 1 purposes, beginning proficiency (level 2) and developing proficiency (level 3) are divided into two levels, A and B, creating the following annual minimum progress levels: entering proficiency (level 1), beginning A proficiency (level 2A), beginning B proficiency (level 2B), developing A proficiency (level 3A), developing B proficiency (level 3B), expanding proficiency (level 4), and bridging proficiency (level 5).

Thus, at Utah’s annual measurable achievement objective 1 rate of progress—an average of slightly less than one English language proficiency level per school year—Utah English learner students would be expected to achieve reclassification as fluent English proficient in one to six years, depending on their initial English language proficiency level. At the faster rate of one English language proficiency level per school year, English learner students would be expected to achieve reclassification as fluent English proficient within one to four years, depending on their initial English language proficiency level. Table A1 compares the percentage of students who were reclassified within Utah’s expected annual measurable achievement objective 1 timeline and those who reclassified over the longer course of the study period for each English language proficiency level. For example, for the English learner students who started at developing B proficiency (level 3B) in the kindergarten cohort, 41 percent were reclassified within two years as expected by annual measurable achievement objective 1, while 79 percent passed within the five years of the study period for the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment.

**Table A1. Percentage of English learner students achieving reclassification as fluent English proficient within the expected numbers of years and by actual number of years, by initial English language proficiency level, 2006/07–2011/12**

English language proficiency level in 2006/07	AMAO 1		Kindergarten cohort (percent)		Grade 3 cohort (percent)		Grade 6 cohort (percent)	
	Expected years to reclassification as fluent English proficient student	Target year	Cumulative passing rate by AMAO1 expected year	Actual cumulative passing rates at the end of the study	Cumulative passing rate by AMAO1 expected year	Actual cumulative passing rates at the end of the study	Cumulative passing rate by AMAO1 expected year	Actual cumulative passing rates at the end of the study
Entering (level 1)	6	2011/12	na	43	na	30	na	23
Beginning (level 2) <sup>a</sup>	5	2010/11	58	58	26	26	22	22
Developing A (level 3A)	3	2009/10	44	69	7	41	9	27
Developing B (level 3B)	2	2008/09	41	79	22	79	18	68
Expanding (level 4)	1	2007/08	na	92	28	88	17	71

AMAO 1 is annual measurable achievement objective 1, which sets an expectation of an average increase of slightly less than one English language proficiency level per school year for English learner students. na is not applicable.

**Note:** Prior to 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education used both the English language proficiency assessment and the English language arts content test to reclassify English learner students; beginning in 2010/11 only the English language proficiency assessment was used. The English learner students in the kindergarten cohort started to be reclassified from grade 2 since there was no English language arts content test for grade 1 in 2007/08.

**a.** There were no cutscores to determine level 2A (beginning A) and level 2B (beginning B) in 2006/07. Thus, in this table, it is assumed that the students at level 2 all started from level 2A. So the results are overestimated, with all level 2 students having five years to reach reclassification as fluent English proficient.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.



## **Appendix B. Data and methodology**

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This appendix describes construction of the analytic samples and explains how the data were analyzed.

### **Analytic sample**

Students were grouped into three analytic cohorts based on their grade level in 2006/07: kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6. Within each grade cohort students' initial English language proficiency level was determined based on the 2006/07 Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and, until 2010/11, Utah's English language arts content test (box B1). Thus, 2006/07 was the English learner baseline identification year, and English learner student proficiency progress was initially measured in 2007/08. For the English language arts and math content tests achievement progress for English learner students was measured from the first year of the study, 2006/07, with the exception of the students in the kindergarten cohort. Those students were first administered the English language arts and math content tests in grade 2, which was 2008/09 for the students in the kindergarten cohort.

For each grade cohort the analytic sample was based on the following criteria (students were included in the analytic sample if they met criteria 1–3 below, as well as either 4A, 4B, or 4C):

1. Was in the data system in all six years, 2006/07–2011/12.
2. Had an initial English language proficiency-level assessment score lower than proficient in 2006/07.
3. Started from the cohort grade (K, 3, or 6) in 2006/07 and had normal grade progress (no grade repeaters or grade skippers) through 2011/12.

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### **Box B1. Timing of Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and English language arts and math content tests**

The analytic period differed for the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the subject matter tests. For the English language proficiency analysis 2006/07 was the baseline year for the identification of the English language proficiency level subgroups. That year was chosen because there were no English language proficiency level data prior to 2006/07 across the three states, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah, which were required for parallel reports that were part of this analysis. English language proficiency progress was measured from that point. Thus, in the English language proficiency analysis 2007/08 was the first year of measured progress, and 2011/12 was the final year, for a total of five years. For the subject matter tests students that were classified as English learner students in 2006/07 were identified, and for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, their achievement levels from 2006/07 through 2011/12 were examined, for a total of six years. For students in the kindergarten cohort who were classified as English learner students in 2006/07, their first subject matter tests were administered in grade 2, which was in 2008/09. Subject matter achievement levels for the English learner students in the kindergarten cohort were examined for a total of four years, from 2008/09 through 2011/12.

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*and*

4A. For the English language proficiency-level assessment analysis achieved English language proficiency assessment level for reclassification as fluent English proficient or took the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment in the last school year (2011/12).

*or*

4B. For the English language arts analysis, had state English language arts content test results in each year the test was administered during the study period.

*or*

4C. For the math analysis, had state math content results in each year the test was administered during the study period.

In sum, the analytic sample included all students identified as English learner students who were enrolled in Utah public schools in the designated grade of the first year of the cohort, who progressed to the next grade level in each year of the study, and for whom the required test data were available for all six years being analyzed. Each cohort consisted of a separate sample of students. For example, the students in the grade 3 cohort were English learner students who enrolled in Utah public schools in grade 3 in 2006/07, progressed to the next grade level each year, and for whom the required Utah test score data were available through grade 8 in 2011/12.

Because of these criteria for inclusion, the sample excluded mobile students who left and entered each district during the study period. Grade repeaters or skippers were excluded because tests differ by grade level. Thus, it is not accurate to annually aggregate test results across a cohort of students when students are taking different grade-level tests, such as a second grade repeater and a third grader in the same year. Further, it is difficult to track students who did not progress with the rest of their grade cohort, which would have required districts providing additional years of data for only a small percentage of students.

The numbers and percentages for English learner students who did not make normal grade progress were as follows: kindergarten cohort, 77 (1.6 percent); grade 3 cohort, 20 (0.7 percent); and grade 6 cohort, 23 (1.2 percent; table B1).

Hence, because the final sample was a more geographically stable population, as well as one without grade repeaters and skippers, the proficiency rates and passing rates could be higher than for the English learner population as a whole. Limitations because of the characteristics of the analytic sample and other issues are described above and in the limitations section of the main report.

The steps for preparing the student samples for each of the three assessments (English proficiency, English language arts content, and math content) are described in table B1.

**Table B1. Steps to develop the analytic sample for each English learner student assessment, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cohort	Step	Sample category	Sample for Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment		Sample for English language arts content test		Sample for math content test	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Kindergarten	Start point	English learner students in 2006/07 (initial English language proficiency level < 5)	4,678	100.0	4,678	100.0	4,678	100.0
	Step 1	Students excluded because they were not in the data system all six years	1,015	21.7	1,015	21.7	1,015	21.7
	Step 2	Students excluded because of abnormal grade progress	77	1.6	77	1.6	77	1.6
	Step 3	Students excluded because of missing values	349	7.5	233	5.0	233	5.0
	End point	Analytic sample	3,237	69.2	3,353	71.7	3,353	71.7
Grade 3	Start point	English learner students in 2006/07 (initial English language proficiency level < 5)	3,048	100.0	3,048	100.0	3,048	100.0
	Step 1	Students excluded because they were not in the data system all six years	648	21.3	648	21.3	648	21.3
	Step 2	Students excluded because of abnormal grade progress	20	0.7	20	0.7	20	0.7
	Step 3	Students excluded because of missing values	292	9.6	354	11.6	394	12.9
	End point	Analytic sample	2,088	68.5	2,026	66.5	1,986	65.2
Grade 6	Start point	English learner students in 2006/07 (initial English language proficiency level < 5)	1,969	100.0	1,969	100.0	1,969	100.0
	Step 1	Students excluded because they were not in the data system all six years	490	24.9	490	24.9	490	24.9
	Step 2	Students excluded because of abnormal grade progress	23	1.2	23	1.2	23	1.2
	Step 3	Students excluded because of missing values	304	15.4	573	29.1	295	15.0
	End point	Analytic sample	1,152	58.5	883	44.8	1,161	59.0

**Note:** Percentages might not sum to 100 because of rounding.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

### Data analysis

The data include student-level data for 2006/07–2011/12. Data were analyzed in the three parallel six-year grade-span cohorts: kindergarten–grade 5, grades 3–8, and grades 6–11. Annual cumulative numbers and percentages of English learner students who met each progress criterion were calculated and grouped by grade cohort (an analytical method recommended by Cook et al., 2012). At the start of the study (2006/07) analyses were conducted for each English learner grade cohort as a whole, as well as by four student characteristics: English language proficiency level, eligibility for special education services, eligibility for the school lunch program, and gender. The similarities and differences across the three cohorts were also explored.

Note that Utah administers its state subject matter tests starting from grade 2. Therefore, the kindergarten cohort has results only for grades 2–5.

### Characteristics of students in the sample and the cohorts

Table B2 compares the characteristics of students in the analytic samples with the entire initial English learner student population and all analytic samples.

**Table B2. Characteristics of students in the analytic samples and the entire initial English learner population, 2006/07**

Grade cohort and characteristic	Student characteristic	Sample for Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment		Sample for English language arts content test		Sample for math content test		Initial English learner population in 2006/07		
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Kindergarten	Gender									
	Female	1,542	47.6	1,627	48.5	1,632	48.7	2,239	47.9	
	Male	1,695	52.4	1,726	51.5	1,721	51.3	2,439	52.1	
	Eligibility for the school lunch program in 2006/07									
	Eligible	1,913	59.1	1,996	59.5	1,996	59.5	2,813	60.1	
	Not eligible	1,324	40.9	1,357	40.5	1,357	40.5	1,865	39.9	
	Eligibility for special education services in 2006/07									
	Eligible	192	5.9	192	5.7	193	5.8	286	6.1	
	Not eligible	3,045	94.1	3,161	94.3	3,160	94.2	4,392	93.9	
	Initial English language proficiency level in 2006/07									
	Entering	267	8.2	246	7.3	245	7.3	440	9.4	
	Beginning	805	24.9	809	24.1	810	24.2	1,153	24.6	
	Developing	1,225	37.8	1,247	37.2	1,247	37.2	1,697	36.3	
	Expanding	940	29.0	1,051	31.3	1,051	31.3	1,388	29.7	
	Total number of students	3,237		3,353		3,353		4,678		
Grade 3	Gender									
	Female	946	45.3	923	45.6	898	45.2	1,382	45.3	
	Male	1,142	54.7	1,103	54.4	1,088	54.8	1,666	54.7	
	Eligibility for the school lunch program in 2006/07									
	Eligible	1,652	79.1	1,585	78.2	1,552	78.1	2,396	78.6	
	Not eligible	436	20.9	441	21.8	434	21.9	652	21.4	
	Eligibility for special education services in 2006/07									
	Eligible	366	17.5	350	17.3	321	16.2	544	17.8	
	Not eligible	1,722	82.5	1,676	82.7	1,665	83.8	2,504	82.2	
	Initial English language proficiency level in 2006/07									
	Entering	69	3.3	29	1.4	41	2.1	130	4.3	
	Beginning	224	10.7	200	9.9	198	10.0	356	11.7	
	Developing	1,715	82.1	1,719	84.8	1,674	84.3	2,429	79.7	
	Expanding	80	3.8	78	3.8	73	3.7	133	4.4	
	Total number of students	2,088		2,026		1,986		3,048		

(continued)

**Table B2. Characteristics of students in the analytic samples and the entire initial English learner population, 2006/07** (continued)

Grade cohort and characteristic	Student characteristic	Sample for Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment		Sample for English language arts content test		Sample for math content test		Initial English learner population in 2006/07		
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Grade 6	Gender									
	Female	501	43.5	362	41.0	506	43.6	875	44.4	
	Male	651	56.5	521	59.0	655	56.4	1,094	55.6	
	Eligibility for the school lunch program in 2006/07									
	Eligible	912	79.2	673	76.2	900	77.5	1,546	78.5	
	Not eligible	240	20.8	210	23.8	261	22.5	423	21.5	
	Eligibility for special education services in 2006/07									
	Eligible	288	25.0	235	26.6	275	23.7	487	24.7	
	Not eligible	864	75.0	648	73.4	886	76.3	1,482	75.3	
	Initial English language proficiency level in 2006/07									
	Entering	39	3.4	14	1.6	33	2.8	105	5.3	
	Beginning	76	6.6	44	5.0	61	5.3	163	8.3	
	Developing	940	81.6	755	85.5	972	83.7	1,537	78.1	
	Expanding	97	8.4	70	7.9	95	8.2	164	8.3	
	Total number of students	1,152		883		1,161		1,969		

**Note:** Percentages might not sum to 100 because of rounding.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

## Appendix C. Additional findings

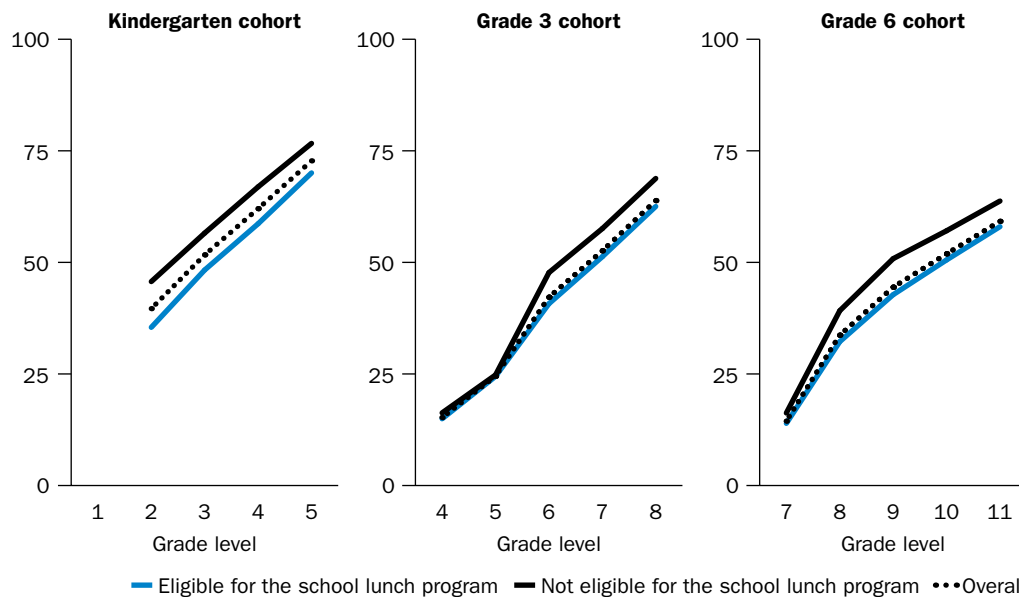
This appendix presents additional findings related to English learner students' cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient and cumulative passing rates on Utah's English language arts content test and math content test based on eligibility for the school lunch program (a proxy for low-income status) and gender.

### English language proficiency

*English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program at the start of the study had lower cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient students than their peers who were not eligible.* English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program had lower final cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient (that is, passing the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment) than their peers who were not eligible. The difference was 7 percentage points or less in each of the three grade cohorts (figure C1). For example, in the kindergarten

**Figure C1. For the kindergarten cohort the difference in progress in achieving reclassification as fluent English proficient narrowed over the course of the study between English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program and those who were not, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage reclassified as fluent English proficient



**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. Prior to 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education used both the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test to reclassify English learner students; beginning in 2010/11 only the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment was used. For the kindergarten cohort of English learner students reclassification started in grade 2 since there was no English language arts content test for grade 1 in 2007/08. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 1,913; not eligible for the school lunch program, 1,324. Grade 3 cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 1,652; not eligible for the school lunch program, 436. Grade 6 cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 912; not eligible for the school lunch program, 240.

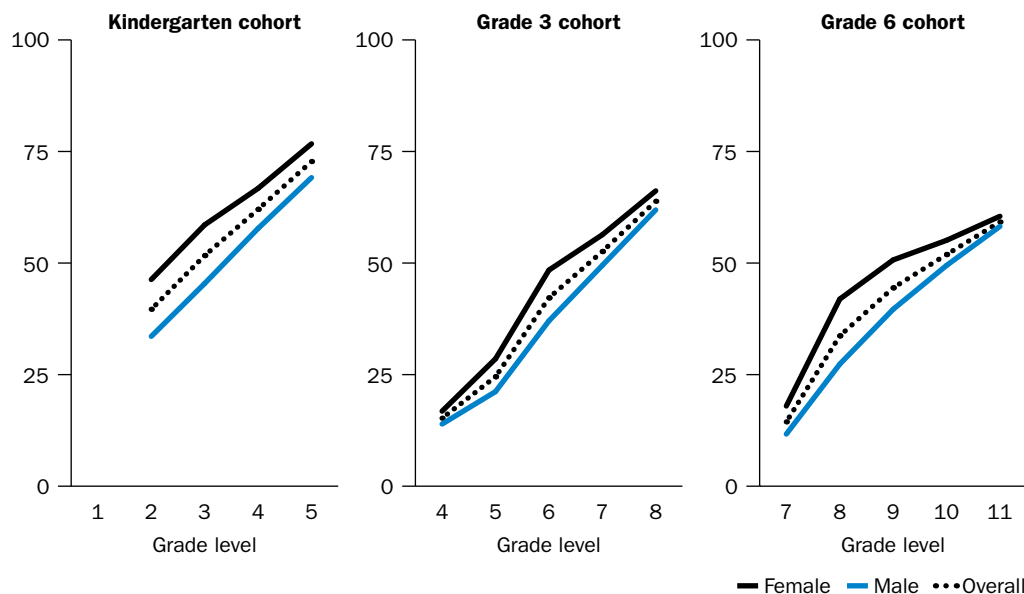
**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

cohort, which had the highest cumulative reclassification rate as fluent English proficient students for this characteristic, 70 percent of English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program achieved reclassification as fluent English proficient, and 77 percent of English learner students who were not eligible achieved reclassification. For the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program at the start of the study had similar cumulative reclassification rates as English learner students who were not eligible. However, after five years there was a small difference.

*For the three grade cohorts female English learner students had higher cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient than male English learner students, though after five years the differences were 8 percentage points or less.* Across all three grade cohorts female English learner students had higher cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient than male English learner students; however, the differences between the subgroups in the final cumulative reclassification rates were 8 percentage points or less (figure C2). For example, for the grade 6 cohort 61 percent of female English learner students achieved reclassification as fluent English proficient, while 58 percent of male English learner students did—a difference of 3 percentage points. The difference in the final cumulative reclassification rate between female and male English learner students

**Figure C2. Across all three grade cohorts female English learner students consistently achieved higher cumulative reclassification rates as fluent English proficient students than did male English learner students, 2006/07–2011/12**

Cumulative percentage reclassified as fluent English proficient



**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. Prior to 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education used both the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test to reclassify English learner students; beginning in 2010/11 only the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment was used. For the kindergarten cohort of English learner students reclassification started in grade 2 since there was no English language arts content test for grade 1 in 2007/08. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: female, 1,542; male, 1,695. Grade 3 cohort: female, 946; male, 1,142. Grade 6 cohort: female, 501; male, 651.

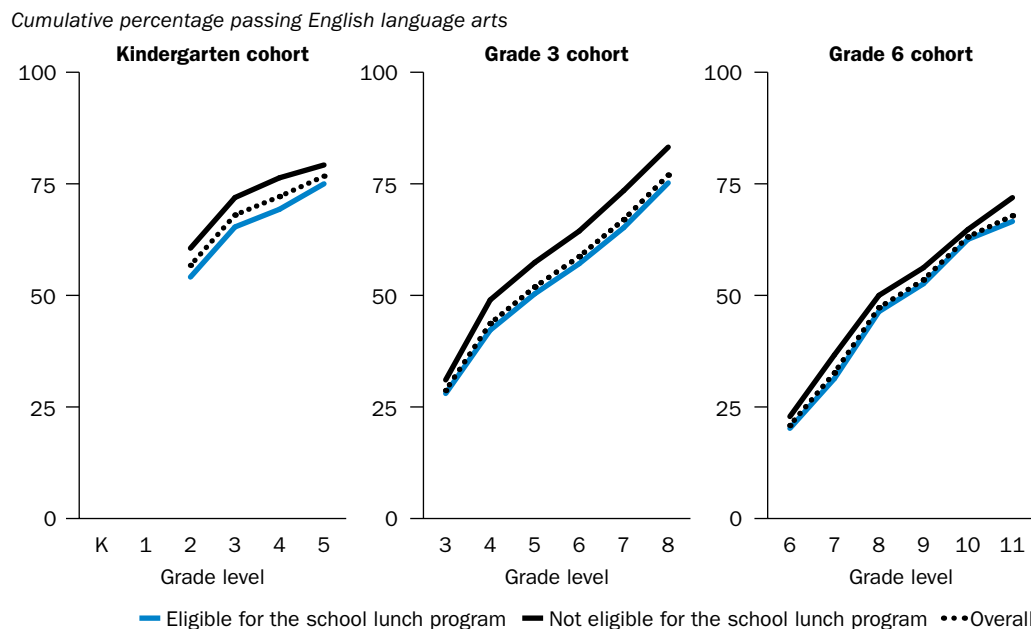
**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

as fluent English proficient was greatest in the kindergarten cohort, at 8 percentage points. For the grade 3 cohort the difference was 4 percentage points.

### English language arts content test

*For the three grade cohorts English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program at the start of the study had lower cumulative passing rates on Utah’s English language arts content test than did English learner students who were not eligible, a difference that remained after six years.* English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program had lower cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test than their grade peers who were not eligible for the school lunch program (figure C3). For example, in the kindergarten cohort the English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program had a final cumulative passing rate of 75 percent on the English language arts content test, while their peers who were not eligible had a final cumulative passing rate of 79 percent on the English language arts content test. For the kindergarten cohort the difference in the final cumulative passing rate between the two groups was 4 percentage points, while the initial difference—based on results from the first English language arts content test given to the kindergarten cohort students during grade 2—was 7 percentage points.

**Figure C3. English learner students who were not eligible for the school lunch program consistently had higher cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test than did students who were eligible, 2006/07–2011/12**



**Note:** Students’ English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take the English language arts content test in grades 2–11. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 1,996; not eligible for the school lunch program, 1,357. Grade 3 cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 1,585; not eligible for the school lunch program, 441. Grade 6 cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 673; not eligible for the school lunch program, 210.

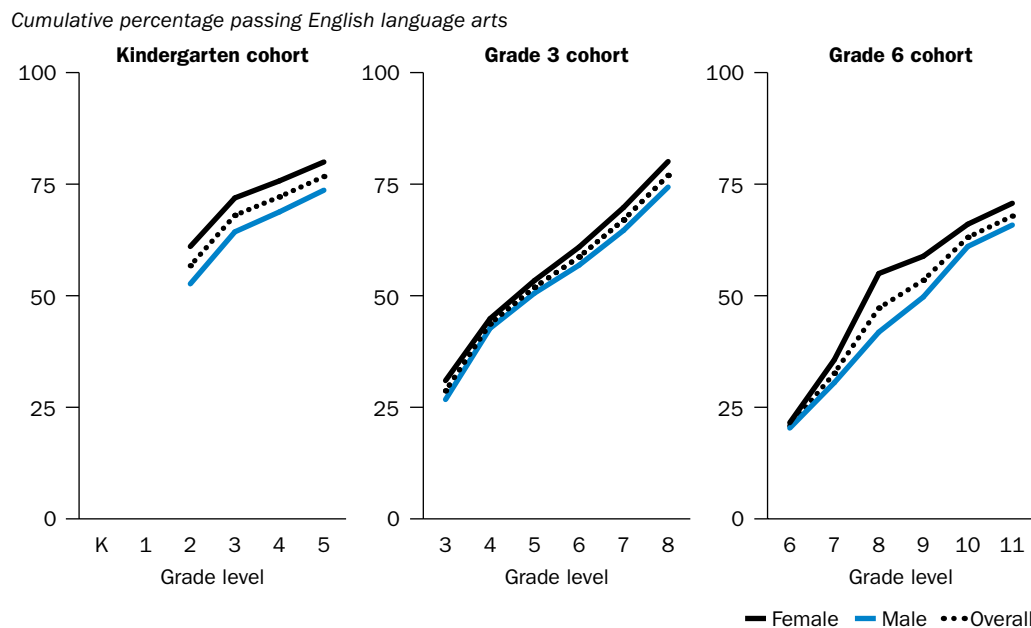
**Source:** Authors’ analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

For the three grade cohorts female English learner students had higher cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test than did male English learner students; after six years the differences remained similar for the kindergarten cohort and increased for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts. Across all three grade cohorts female English learner students had higher cumulative passing rates on the English language arts content test than did male English learner students (figure C4). For example, for the grade 3 cohort female English learner students had a final cumulative passing rate of 80 percent, while the male English learner students had a final cumulative passing rate of 74 percent, a difference of 6 percentage points. The initial difference was 4 percentage points. For the grade 6 cohort the difference between female and male students grew between the initial passing rate (2 percentage points higher for female students) and the third-year (grade 8) cumulative passing rate (13 percentage points higher for female students), before dropping back to 5 percentage points higher for female students for the final cumulative passing rate.

### Math content test

English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program had lower cumulative passing rates on Utah’s math content test than did students who were not eligible, a difference that remained constant over time for the kindergarten cohort but not for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts. English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program had lower cumulative passing rates on the math content test than did their grade-level peers who were not eligible (figure C5). For example, in the grade 3

**Figure C4. Female English learner students consistently had higher English language arts passing rates than did male English learner students, 2006/07–2011/12**



**Note:** Students’ English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take the English language arts content test in grades 2–11. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: female, 1,627; male, 1,726. Grade 3 cohort: female, 923; male, 1,103. Grade 6 cohort: female, 362; male, 521.

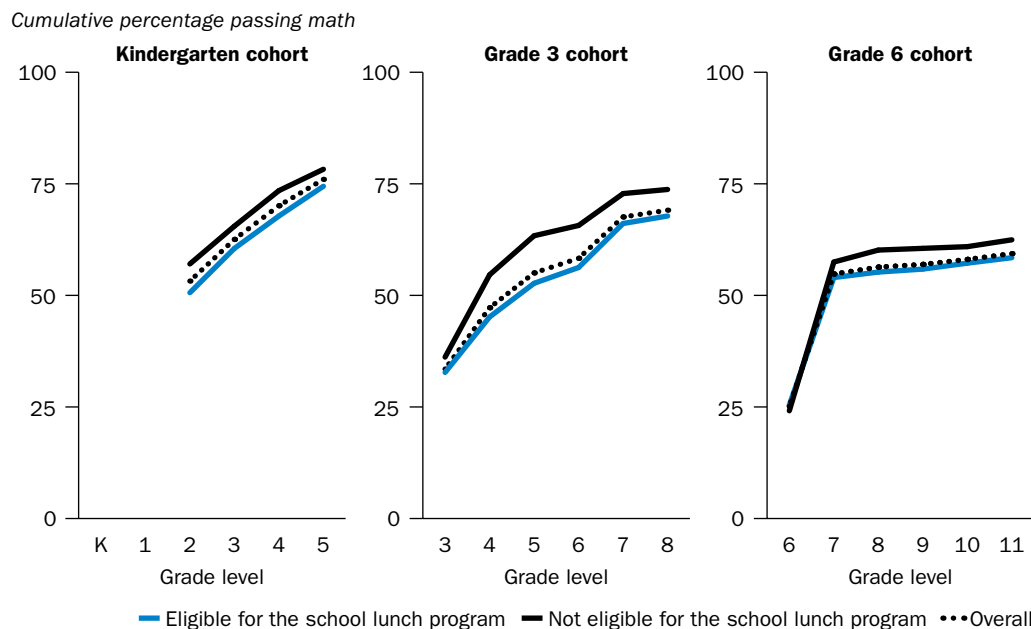
**Source:** Authors’ analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.



cohort, English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program had a cumulative passing rate of 68 percent on the math content test, while their peers who were not eligible for the school lunch program had a cumulative passing rate of 74 percent, a difference of 6 percentage points. The difference in the math passing rate at the start of the study for the grade 3 cohort was 3 percentage points. The differences ranged from 4 percentage points in the kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts to 6 percentage points in the grade 3 cohort.

*Across all three cohorts the difference in cumulative passing rates on the math content test for female English learner students and male English learner students ranged from 0 to 9 percentage points.* The difference between male and female students in cumulative passing rates on the math content test was never greater than 9 percentage points each year. That 9 percentage point difference occurred twice in the grade 6 cohort: first during the grade 6 cohort’s year 3 (grade 8), with a cumulative passing rate of 51 percent for female English learner students and a 60 percent rate for male English learner students, and again in the final year (grade 11), with a cumulative passing rate of 54 percent for female English learner students and a 63 percent rate for male English learner students (figure C6). In the grade 3 cohort female English learner students had a final cumulative passing rate of 68 percent on the math content test, while the male English learner students had a final

**Figure C5. English learner students who were eligible for the school lunch program had lower cumulative passing rates on the math content test than did students who were not eligible, a difference that remained constant over time for the kindergarten cohort but not for the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, 2006/07–2011/12**



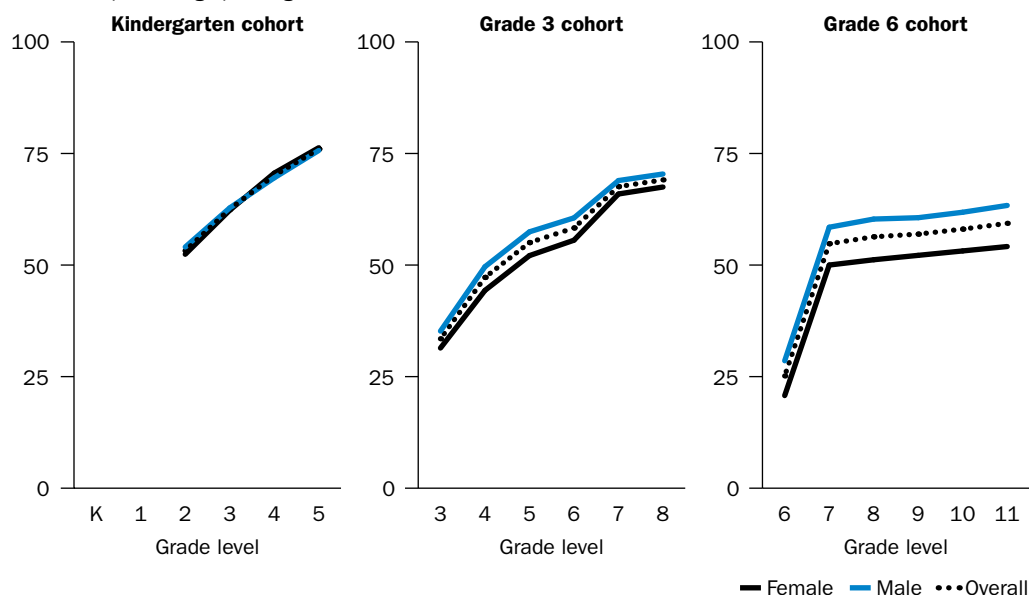
**Note:** Students’ English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 serves as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take grade-specific math content tests in elementary school and course-specific math content tests in secondary school. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 1,996; not eligible for the school lunch program, 1,357. Grade 3 cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 1,552; not eligible for the school lunch program, 434. Grade 6 cohort: eligible for the school lunch program, 900; not eligible for the school lunch program, 261.

**Source:** Authors’ analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

cumulative passing rate of 70 percent. In the kindergarten cohort both female and male English learner students had a final cumulative passing rate of 76 percent on the math content test.

**Figure C6. The difference in the final cumulative passing rates on the math content test for female and male English learner students was greatest for the grade 6 cohort and least for the kindergarten cohort, 2006/07–2011/12**

*Cumulative percentage passing math*



**Note:** Students' English language proficiency assessment in 2006/07 served as a baseline, defining the initial population of English learner students for this analysis. In Utah students take grade-specific math content tests in elementary school and course-specific math content tests in secondary school. The number of English learner students in each subgroup is as follows. Kindergarten cohort: female, 1,632; male, 1,721. Grade 3 cohort: female, 898; male, 1,088. Grade 6 cohort: female, 506; male, 655.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of student-level data from the Utah State Office of Education, 2006/07–2011/12.

## Notes

1. Utah no longer administers these tests. The Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment has been replaced by WIDA ACCESS, and the subject matter content tests in English language arts and math have been replaced by the Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence. See box 2 and appendix A for more details.
2. This report documents a study that was replicated in three states: Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. Thus, while the data and findings naturally differ from one report to the other, the explanation of why the study was done, the review of relevant literature, and the description of methods are nearly the same in each report.
3. Before 2010/11 the Utah State Office of Education used both the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment and the English language arts content test to identify English learner students' level of English language proficiency and to determine whether they would be reclassified as fluent English proficient; starting in 2010/11, only the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment was used.
4. The total number of cohort English proficiency level subgroups for which this study is measuring achievement gains ( $15 = 3 \text{ grade-level cohorts} \times 5 \text{ English language proficiency levels}$ ) differs from the total number of English proficiency progress subgroups for which annual measurable achievement objective 1 progress is calculated ( $18 = 3 \text{ grade-level cohorts} \times 6 \text{ English proficiency progress levels below the reclassification level of bridging}$ ). Utah used seven levels of progress for determining whether an English learner student met the annual measurable achievement objective by subdividing beginning (level 2) into 2A and 2B and developing (level 3) into 3A and 3B (six levels from entering to expanding, plus the seventh level of bridging). However, of these 18 possible English proficiency progress subgroups, only 14 could be measured due to limitations in the study data. First, the study period was only six years or five years past the year 1 initial English language proficiency determination. As a result, there was not sufficient time to determine the total percentage of students at the lowest English proficiency level (three progress subgroups, one for each grade level cohort at the entering level in year 1) who would make the annual measurable achievement objective rate until reclassification (six steps or years). Second, Utah did not test students in the kindergarten cohort in the full set of reclassification tests until year 3 of the study (second grade), so it was not possible to determine what percentage of kindergarten students at expanding proficiency, level 4 (one level below that needed to achieve reclassification as fluent English proficient) reclassified at the expected rate of one year (one progress subgroup, kindergarten English learner students at the expanding level in year 1).
5. This study performed no statistical tests. Hence, the small differences that were found in this study may not yield a statistically significant difference.

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