A photograph of a student's hands working with colorful letter cards on a table. The image is overlaid with a dark blue and green gradient. The text is white and positioned over the upper left portion of the image.

The characteristics of long-term English language learner students and struggling reclassified fluent English proficient students in Utah

AUTHORS:

Eric Haas, WestEd
Min Huang, WestEd
Loan Tran, WestEd

This report, and the research on which it is based, were produced on behalf of REL West's English Learner Alliance, whose membership consists of the Arizona State Department of Education, the Nevada State Department of Education, the Utah State Office of Education, and the West Comprehensive Center.

June 2014

This report was prepared for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under Contract ED IES-12-C-0002 by Regional Educational Laboratory West administered by WestEd. The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

These materials are in the public domain. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, it should be cited as:

Haas, E., Huang, M., & Tran, L. (2014). *The characteristics of long-term English language learner students and struggling reclassified fluent English proficient students in Utah*. San Francisco: REL West @ WestEd.

This report is available on the REL West @ WestEd website: <http://relwest.wested.org/>



Summary

Across the United States, and in the states served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) in particular, there is widespread concern about how to successfully educate the growing number of English language learner (ELL) students, especially those identified as long-term ELL students and those identified as reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students who struggle to score at passing levels on state English language arts (ELA)/reading content tests (Horwitz et al., 2009; Olsen, 2010; Quality Counts, 2009).

This study, which focuses on ELL students in Utah, is one of a series of three companion studies that seek to help Arizona, Nevada, and Utah identify the characteristics of long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students. For this study, we defined *long-term English language learner students* as students who, during the six school years of the study, never scored at or above the levels required on Utah's English language proficiency (ELP) test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient. We compared these long-term ELL students to their ELL peers who did score at or above the levels required on Utah's ELP test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient, whom we refer to as *reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students*. *Struggling RFEP students* were defined as ELL students who met the state's ELP requirements for RFEP but did not pass the state ELA or reading content test by the end of year 6 of the study. We compared these Struggling RFEP students to their RFEP peers who did pass the state ELA or reading content test, whom we refer to as *Transitioned RFEP students*.

The study examined student data from 2006/07–2011/12 to address three research questions:

- » What proportion of ELL students fit the study's definition of long-term ELL students by the end of the six years? What proportion of ELL students fit the study's definition of Struggling RFEP students by the end of the six years?
- » What are the characteristics of long-term ELL students? How are these characteristics different from those of RFEP students?
- » What are the characteristics of Struggling RFEP students? How are these characteristics different from those of the RFEP students who passed their ELA content test at least once by the end of the six years?

The study followed three cohorts of ELL students in Utah: a grade K cohort, who started kindergarten in 2006/07; a grade 3 cohort, who started grade 3 in 2006/07; and a grade 6 cohort, who started grade 6 in 2006/07. By examining these three cohorts in Utah over six years (2006/07–2011/12), this study found the following:



Subgroup proportions

- » At least two-thirds of the ELL students scored at or above Utah's required ELP level to meet RFEP criteria.
- » Among RFEP students, across all three grade-level cohorts, at least 90 percent passed their ELA content test at least once (thereby becoming Transitioned RFEP students).
- » Among long-term ELL students, at least 30 percent from each of the three grade-level cohorts passed the ELA content test at least once.

Subgroup characteristics

- » Long-term ELL students, when compared to their more successful RFEP peers, had higher percentages of eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), eligibility for individualized education program (IEP) services, and male students.
- » In general, Struggling RFEP students, when compared to their more successful Transitioned RFEP peers, had higher percentages of eligibility for FRL, eligibility for IEP services, and male students.
- » Compared to their more successful RFEP and Transitioned RFEP peers, long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students also had higher percentages of students with lower ELP levels during the first study year.

This report's findings on Utah ELL students suggest several additional questions worth further investigation. For example, why did this study see patterns that differ from other research regarding the achievement of reclassification as fluent English proficient by grade levels? Findings from the research literature generally show that it is harder for older students to progress to English proficiency and to pass content tests than for younger students to do so. Yet, in Utah, the percentages of students across grade-level cohorts who scored at the level required for RFEP and of the RFEP students who passed the ELA content test at least once (Transitioned RFEP) were close to constant. Another question is what can be done, or what has been found effective, in assisting the lower-achieving ELL student subgroups to close the achievement gaps? Further exploration of these questions would help identify which groups of ELL students take longer than expected to reach English language proficiency and how interventions could be targeted to assist them.



Contents

- Summary..... i
 - Subgroup proportions..... ii
 - Subgroup characteristics..... ii
- Why this study?..... 1
 - ELL achievement and student characteristics 2
 - Characteristics examined in this study..... 4
- What the study examined 6
- What we learned 9
 - Subgroup proportions..... 9
 - Subgroup characteristics..... 12
- Implications and next steps 21
- Limitations of the study 23
- Appendix A. Methodology 25
 - Data sources 25
 - Methods 25
 - Criteria for analytic sample 26
- Appendix B. Details on analytic samples 27
- Appendix C. Detailed tables on student characteristics 28
- References 30
- Notes..... 34



List of boxes

Box 1. Defining categories of English language learner students for this study	2
Box 2. Utah’s testing process	8

List of figures

Figure 1. Criteria for analytic sample, Utah, 2006/07–2011/12.....	7
Figure 2. Overall, over 90 percent of RFEP students passed the ELA CRT, Utah, 2006/07–2011/12.....	11
Figure 3. The majority of ELL students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 2006/07 (percent).....	13
Figure 4. More than half of long-term ELL students were male, Utah, 2006/07 (percent)	14
Figure 5. The vast majority of ELL students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts had an initial ELP level of Developing, Utah, 2006/07 (percent).....	15
Figure 6. Forty percent of long-term ELL students in grade 6 cohort were eligible to receive IEP services, Utah, 2006/07 (percent).....	16
Figure 7. The majority of RFEP students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, Utah, 2006/07 (percent).....	17
Figure 8. More than half of Struggling RFEP students across all cohorts were male, Utah, 2006/07 (percent).....	18
Figure 9. The highest percentage of both Struggling RFEP and Transitioned RFEP students had an initial ELP level of Developing, Utah, 2006/07 (percent).....	19
Figure 10. A higher percentage of Struggling RFEP students received IEP services compared to Transitioned RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, Utah, 2006/07 (percent).....	20



List of tables

Table 1. Less than one-third of ELL students became long-term ELL students, 2006/07–2011/12.....	10
Table B1. Steps to get analytic samples in Utah	27
Table C1. Characteristics of long-term ELL students and RFEP students for kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, Utah	28
Table C2. Characteristics of Struggling RFEP students and Transitioned RFEP students who passed their ELA content test for kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, Utah.....	29



Why this study?

Across the United States, and in the states served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) in particular, there is widespread concern about how to successfully educate the growing number of English language learner (ELL) students, especially those identified as long-term ELL students and those identified as reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students who struggle to score at passing levels on state English language arts (ELA)/reading content tests (Horwitz et al., 2009; Olsen, 2010; Quality Counts, 2009). The members of REL West’s English Learner Alliance—the state departments of education from Arizona, Nevada, and Utah—requested a study of the characteristics of long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students in each alliance state (resulting in a series of three companion state reports) in order to better understand how these two groups of low-performing ELL students may differ from the ELL student population as a whole in each state. In this study, *Struggling RFEP students* are defined as ELL students who met the state’s English language proficiency (ELP) requirements for RFEP, but who did not pass the state ELA or reading content test during the course of the study.

Currently, the English Learner Alliance states of Arizona, Nevada, and Utah have not analyzed the characteristics of their long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students, but they are eager to do so. Specific requests have come from staff in each of the three state departments of education, who, individually and as a group, developed this research agenda with REL West.

The English Learner Alliance members intend to use the study’s findings to inform early interventions targeted at ELL students whose characteristics fit patterns of ELL students who are more likely to become long-term ELL students or to remain Struggling RFEP students. Further, they would like to develop a shared understanding of their long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students, in order to promote cross-state collaboration in developing effective interventions and programs. The English Learner Alliance would also like to use this project as an initial model for similar follow-up projects, including longitudinal analyses of ELL student progress in ELP tests and academic subject-matter tests.

While there is widespread concern about how to successfully educate the growing number of ELL students, especially those identified as long-term ELL students and/or Struggling RFEP students, there do not appear to be any studies of the characteristics of these two groups of students that might enable states to better target existing programs and interventions (see, e.g., Burr, Haas, & Geary, 2013) by basing them on the particular needs of those two groups. This Utah study, along with the two companion state reports from Arizona and Nevada, will provide this needed information, based on data from all three states.

Box 1. Defining categories of English language learner students for this study

Long-term English language learner students

Students who never scored at or above the required levels on their state English language proficiency (ELP) test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient during the six years of the study.

Reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students

Students who scored at or above the required levels on their state ELP test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient during the six years of the study.

Struggling RFEP students

RFEP students who met the ELP classification requirements as fluent English proficient, but did not pass their state's English language arts (ELA) or reading content test during the six years of the study.

Transitioned RFEP students


RFEP students who passed their state's ELA or reading content test at least once during the six years of the study.

ELL achievement and student characteristics

ELL students, as a group, tend to lag behind native English speakers in their rates of academic achievement (Kindler, 2002; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012; Olsen, 2010; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). This is due, in large part, to the need of ELL students to simultaneously learn English and content knowledge (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). However, both ELL students and former ELL students (i.e., RFEP students) are diverse groups with different strengths and needs, depending on a number of characteristics (Kindler, 2002).

Most states and districts collect data on several characteristics that appear to be related to academic achievement for ELL students specifically and students generally. These characteristics include

- » poverty status (Goldenberg, 2008; Mulligan, Halle, & Kinukawa, 2012; Rathbun & West, 2004; Roberts & Bryant, 2011);
- » disability status (Liasidou, 2013; McCardle, McCarthy-Mele, Cutting, Leos, & D'Emilio, 2005; Nguyen, 2012);
- » gender (Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005);
- » initial ELP when ELL students first enroll in school (Cook, Linqunti, Chinen, & Jung, 2012; Collier, 1989, 1992; Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012); and
- » grade level (Genesee et al., 2005).



At present, the research literature describes the impact of each of these student characteristics in the following ways.

Poverty status


Research on ELL students generally shows that their socioeconomic status (SES) has an impact on academic achievement. For instance, ELL students from homes with lower SES generally score lower on academic content tests and are less likely to score proficient on ELP tests than their higher-SES peers. Two analyses of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey from the kindergarten class of 1998/99 support these conclusions about the impact of SES on ELL students' academic achievement. A greater percentage of kindergarten students whose primary language was not English than of students who entered kindergarten as English proficient came from families whose incomes were below the federal poverty threshold; in addition, ELL students who came from families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold scored lower on reading, mathematics, and science tests than ELL students whose families had incomes above the federal poverty threshold (Mulligan et al., 2012). A similar conclusion was reached by Roberts and Bryant (2011), who found that SES was more salient than primary language in explaining the mathematics achievement of ELL students; they found that ELL students with higher SES scored higher on mathematics assessments than ELL students with lower SES.

ELL students with disabilities

There do not appear to be any studies that address the impact of specific disabilities on an ELL student's academic progress in the United States. However, one meta-analysis review describes the likely impact in Canada (Lipka, Siegel, & Vukovic, 2005). The authors of this meta-analysis reviewed published studies of ELL students in Canada, with the goal of understanding the reading development of ELL students and the characteristics of reading disabilities in this population. Phonological processing, syntactic awareness, and working memory of ELL students with and without reading disabilities were compared to those of native English-speaking students with and without reading disabilities. For each of the three ELL native language-specific (Portuguese, Italian, and Arabic) studies, students (ages 9–14) with and without reading disabilities were compared within their native-language groups and to their native English-speaking peers (AbuRabia & Siegel, 2002; Da Fontoura & Siegel, 1995; D'Angiulli, Siegel, & Serra, 2001). The findings were consistent across the three studies: within each native-language group, ELL students with reading disabilities had much lower scores than ELL students without reading disabilities, while ELL students with reading disabilities had similar levels of performance to native English-speaking students with reading disabilities.

Gender

There do not appear to be any studies that examine the impact of gender on an ELL student's academic progress. However, there are studies that describe differences in academic achievement by gender among the K–12 general population. Over the past decade, results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have shown small but persistent mathematics gender disparities favoring males at grades 4, 8, and 12, with gaps of roughly 0.1 standard deviations, or the equivalent of a few months of schooling (McGraw,



Lubienski, & Strutchens, 2006; Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005); in contrast, reading achievement data from the 2005 and 2007 NAEPs reveal that females outscored males by less than 0.2 standard deviations at grade 4 but more than 0.3 standard deviations at grades 8 and 12 (Perie et al., 2005). A more recent study (Robinson & Theule, 2011) found generally similar patterns. Using K–8 national longitudinal data, the authors investigated males’ and females’ achievement in mathematics and reading, including when gender gaps first appeared, whether the appearance of gaps depended on the metric used, and where the achievement distribution gaps were most prevalent. The authors found no mathematics gender gap in kindergarten, except at the top of the distribution; however, females throughout the distribution lost ground in elementary school and regained some in middle school. In reading, gaps favoring females generally narrowed as the grade level increased, but widened among low-achieving students.


Initial English language proficiency and grade level

Research generally shows that ELL students tend to make greater year-to-year ELP and academic content improvement in the lower grades than they do in the higher grades, when both age groups start at the same ELP (Cook, Wilmes, Boals, & Santos, 2008; Grissom, 2004; Kieffer, 2008, 2010, 2011; Salazar, 2007). Thus, ELL students are more likely to take longer to progress from the Intermediate ELP level to the fully Proficient ELP level in higher grades, such as high school, than ELL students starting at the same ELP level in the elementary school grades. In addition, this difference in lower and higher grade levels’ rate of progress in ELP tends to become greater as the level of ELP increases (Cook et al., 2008; Garcia, 2003; Halle et al., 2012). In other words, a student at a low grade level and a low ELP level (such as a kindergarten student at the Pre-emergent ELP level) would typically have a much higher rate of progress in achieving RFEP (that is, scoring Proficient on the ELP test) than a student at a high grade level and high ELP level (such as a grade 11 student at the Intermediate ELP level).

For progress on subject-matter content tests, there do not appear to be any research studies that specifically describe the characteristics of Struggling RFEP students. There are, however, related research studies that provide partial insights into the characteristics associated with the achievement of ELL students on academic content tests. For example, the length of time for initially designated ELL students to reach the 50th percentile on academic achievement tests ranged from four to ten years and depended on several factors: the level of the student’s schooling in his or her first language; the student’s initial level of English proficiency; the type of language program (for example, two-way bilingual, sheltered English immersion); and the subject being tested (for example, mathematics knowledge appeared to transfer into the English language assessments more readily than reading and writing skills) (Collier, 1989, 1992).

Characteristics examined in this study

This study describes several characteristics of Struggling RFEP students—initial level of ELP, as well as gender, eligibility for FRL, eligibility for IEP services, and grade level—as they relate to achievement on Utah’s ELA content test. State-level data were not available in Utah (or in Nevada or Arizona) on ELL students’ proficiency in their first language, or on the types of language programs that ELL students are participating in.



This study addresses the gaps in the research literature by providing descriptions of the initial characteristics¹ of Utah ELL students who became either long-term ELL students or Struggling RFEP students and of any differences in the initial characteristics between these groups and their more successful counterparts, RFEP students as a whole, and Transitioned RFEP students.

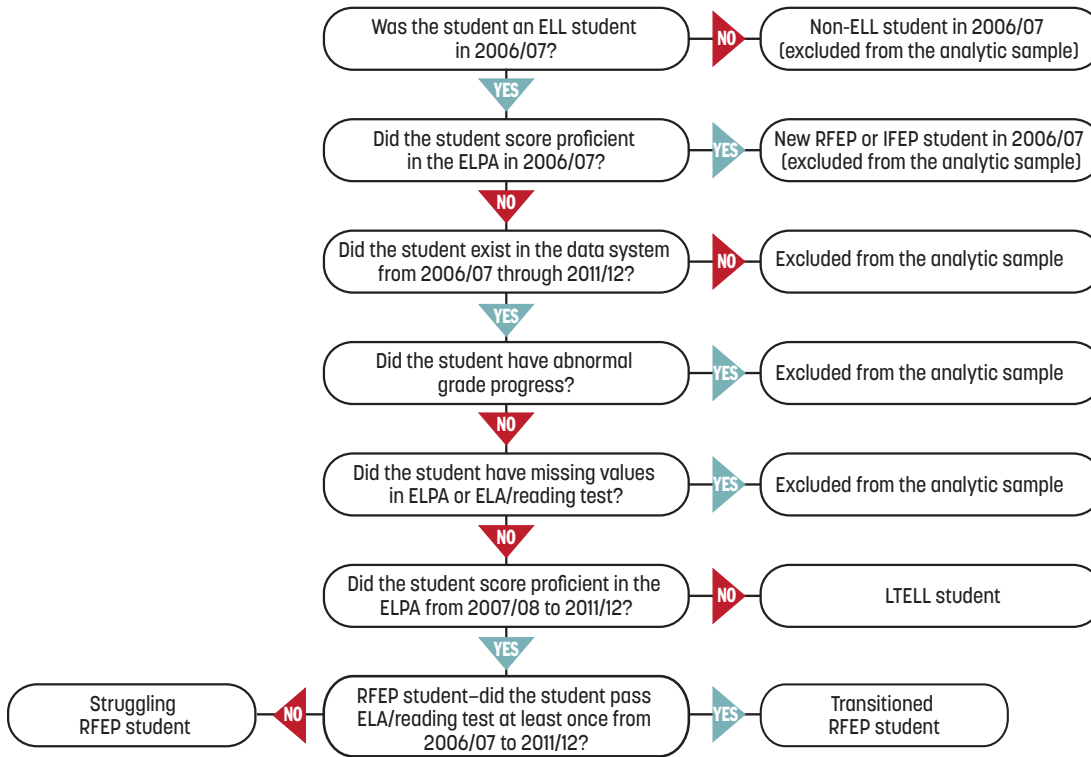
What the study examined

This study on ELL students in Utah—like its two companion reports on ELL students in Nevada² and Arizona—is a descriptive analysis of the progress on state assessments and characteristics of four categories of ELL students: *long-term ELL students*, *RFEP students*, *Struggling RFEP students*, and *Transitioned RFEP students*. Utah’s state testing process is described in box 2.

In this study, *long-term ELL students* were defined as ELL students who never scored at or above the required ELP level on their state ELP test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) during the six years of the study (see, e.g., Olsen, 2010). *RFEP students*, in contrast to long-term ELL students, were defined as those ELL students who did score at or above the required ELP level on their state ELP test to achieve RFEP status. *Struggling RFEP students* were defined as those ELL students who met the ELP requirements for RFEP but did not pass the state ELA or reading content test at least once by the end of the sixth year of the study. We used the descriptor “Struggling” because this group of ELL students had moved from full success in their ELL support programs (i.e., passing their ELP test to achieve RFEP status) but had not yet achieved one of the minimum expected levels of success for all students (i.e., passing the state ELA or reading content test) during the six years of the study. This study also examines *Transitioned RFEP students*, who, in contrast to the Struggling RFEP students, were defined as RFEP students who passed the state ELA or reading content test at least once during the study period.

The analytic sample for this study was purposefully limited to ELL students who had attended school for at least six years, in order to focus on the characteristics of ELL students who had participated in a state educational program for an extended period of time. The criteria for the analytic sample for each of the four ELL subgroups are described in figure 1. For each of the study’s four ELL student subgroups, we examined and compared the following characteristics: eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), eligibility for receipt of individualized education program (IEP) services, gender, and ELP level during the first year of the study. We analyzed and compared the patterns of characteristics of students within and across the three grade-level cohorts: the grade K cohort, who started kindergarten in 2006/07; the grade 3 cohort, who started grade 3 in 2006/07; and the grade 6 cohort, who started grade 6 in 2006/07. Specifically, we compared long-term ELL students versus all RFEP students, and we compared Struggling RFEP students versus Transitioned RFEP students.

Figure 1. Criteria for analytic sample, Utah, 2006/07–2011/12



ELPA is English language proficiency assessment.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Box 2. Utah's testing process

The Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (UALPA) was developed to determine English language learner (ELL) students' progress in English language proficiency (ELP), in compliance with the NCLB Act of 2001. Prior to 2010/11, the five ELP proficiency levels determined by the UALPA were *Pre-Emergent*, *Emergent*, *Intermediate*, *Advanced*, and *Fluent*. During that time, the Utah State Department of Education (USOE) used both the UALPA and the English language arts criterion-referenced test (described below) to identify an ELL student's level of English language fluency and to reclassify them as fluent English proficient (RFEP). To be reclassified, ELL students had to achieve an overall UALPA score of Advanced or above and an ELA 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, the UALPA began using new labels for the five ELP levels and also changing their reclassification assessment criteria. The new ELP level labels became *Entering* (formerly Pre-Emergent), *Beginning* (formerly Emergent), *Developing* (formerly Intermediate), *Expanding* (formerly Advanced), and *Bridging* (formerly Fluent). These two versions of Utah's ELP levels are equivalent to each other. For clarity, this study uses the new ELP level labels.

Beginning in 2010/11, the USOE has used only the UALPA to reclassify ELL students as fluent English proficient. If students achieve an overall score at the Bridging level, then they achieve RFEP and exit the ELL program.

In Utah, the ELA content tests are grade-specific tests that assess the knowledge and skills of students in grades 2–11³ in reading, writing, and listening—resulting in a single overall ELA score. The CRT has four proficiency levels: *Minimal*, *Partial*, *Sufficient*, and *Substantial*. To pass, students must score at the Sufficient level or above.

What we learned



The study's findings revealed key patterns across Utah's three grade-level cohorts in relation to (1) the proportions of ELL students that met the study's definitions of long-term ELL students, RFEP students, Transitioned RFEP students, and Struggling RFEP students; and (2) the characteristics of each of these subgroups of ELL students.

Subgroup proportions

The study examined the following questions in relation to ELL student subgroup proportions:

- » What proportion of ELL students fit the study's definition of long-term ELL student by the end of the six years?
- » What proportion of ELL students fit the study's definition of Struggling RFEP student by the end of the six years?

Long-term ELL students and RFEP students

By the end of the study period, at least two-thirds of the sample of ELL students scored at or above the required ELP level to meet RFEP criteria (table 1, figure 2). In other words, one-third or less of the ELL students were long-term ELL students at the end of the study period. The kindergarten cohort had the largest percentage of students who achieved RFEP (74 percent); 26 percent of the kindergarten cohort became long-term ELL students.

Over 90 percent of the RFEP students in each grade-level cohort passed their ELA content test at least once (figure 2). Among long-term ELL students, at least 25 percent from each of the three grade-level cohorts passed the ELA content test at least once. Higher percentages of long-term ELL students passed the ELA content test in the grade 3 cohort (48 percent) and grade 6 cohort (42 percent) than in the kindergarten cohort (25 percent). Overall, a higher proportion of RFEP students passed their ELA content test compared to long-term ELL students.

Table 1. Less than one-third of ELL students became long-term ELL students, 2006/07–2011/12

Category	Grade K cohort (N = 3,160)	Grade 3 cohort (N = 1,975)	Grade 6 cohort (N = 965)
Transitioned RFEP	69	63	60
Struggling RFEP	5	4	7
Long-term ELL	26	33	33
Total	100	100	100

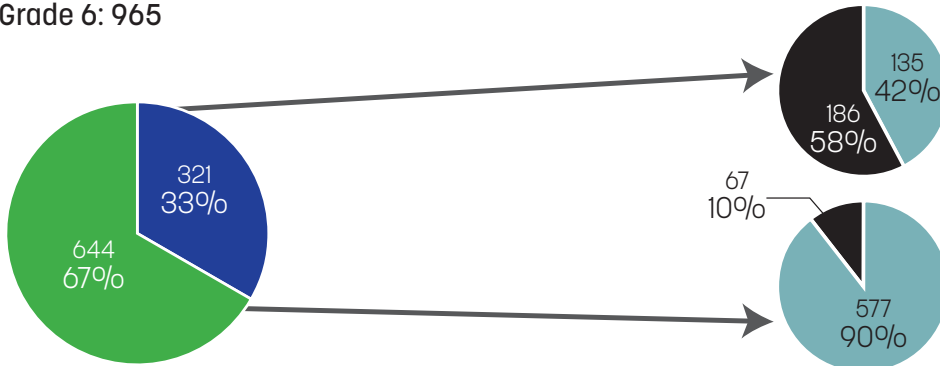
Transitioned RFEP is reclassified as fluent English proficient and passed the English language arts content test at least once. Struggling RFEP is reclassified as fluent English proficient and never passed the English language arts content test during the study period.

Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

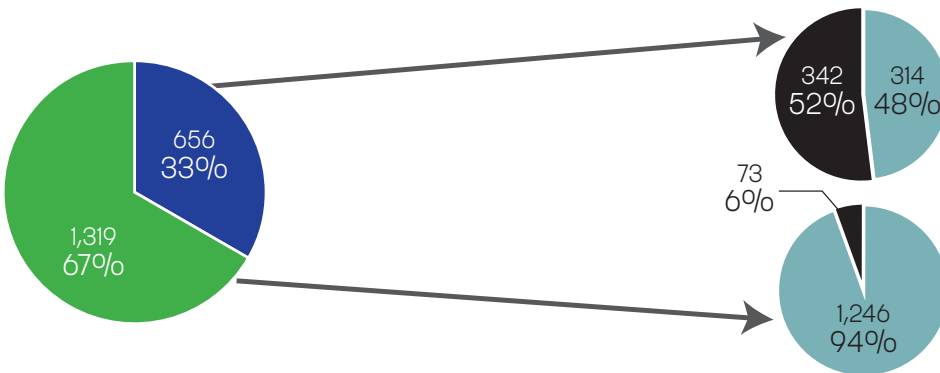
Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah State Office of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Figure 2. Overall, over 90 percent of RFEP students passed the ELA CRT, Utah, 2006/07–2011/12

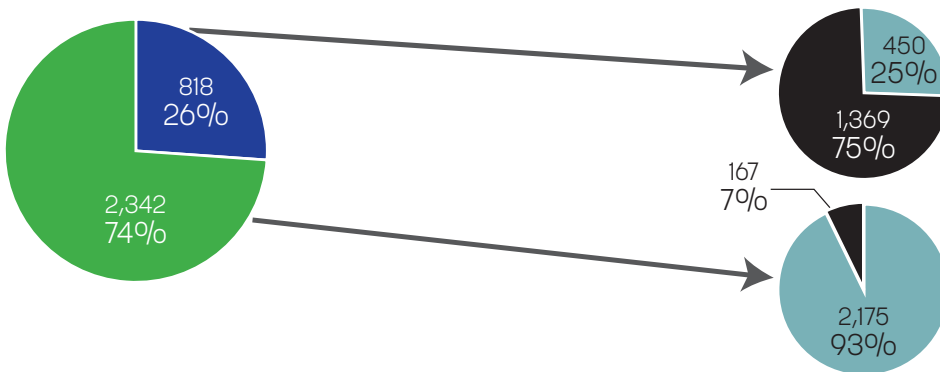
Grade 6: 965



Grade 3: 1,975



Grade K: 3,160



■ LTELL ■ RFEP ■ AIMS Passed ■ AIMS Failed

Note 1: RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. CRT is English language arts criterion-referenced test. LTELL is long-term English language learner.



Note 2: The lower right-side circle in each grade cohort's box represents the percentage of Struggling RFEP students (black wedge) and Transitioned RFEP students (light blue wedge).

Note 3: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Struggling RFEP students and Transitioned RFEP students

Across all three cohorts, over 90 percent of RFEP students became Transitioned RFEP students (see figure 2). In other words, less than 10 percent of the RFEP students remained as Struggling RFEP students at the end of the study. For example, out of the RFEP students in the kindergarten cohort, 7 percent were Struggling RFEP students and 93 percent were Transitioned RFEP students.

Subgroup characteristics

To understand the characteristics of each of the ELL student subgroups, the study examined the following questions:

- » What are the characteristics of long-term ELL students? How are these characteristics different from those of all RFEP students?
- » What are the characteristics of Struggling RFEP students? How are these characteristics different from those of the Transitioned RFEP students (that is, those who passed their ELA content test at least once by the end of the six years)?

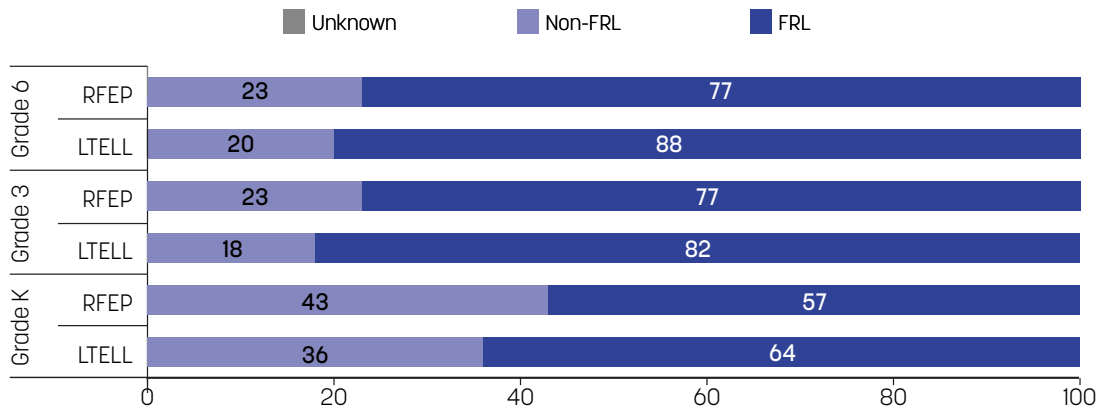
Long-term ELL students and RFEP students

Overall and without exception, in each grade-level cohort a greater percentage of long-term ELL students compared to their RFEP peers were eligible for FRL (figure 3), were male (figure 4), began the study at one of the two lowest ELP levels (Entering or Beginning; figure 5), and were eligible for receipt of IEP services (figure 6). Further, the majority of long-term ELL students across all three grade-level cohorts were eligible for FRL (between 64 and 82 percent; see figure 3) and were male (between 58 and 59 percent; see figure 4).

Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch

In all three grade-level cohorts, the majority of long-term ELL and RFEP students (between 57 to 82 percent) were eligible for FRL (see figure 3). A larger proportion of long-term ELL students were eligible for FRL compared to RFEP students. For example, in the kindergarten cohort, 64 percent of long-term ELL students were eligible for FRL as compared to 57 percent of RFEP students.

Figure 3. The majority of ELL students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 2006/07 (percent)



RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

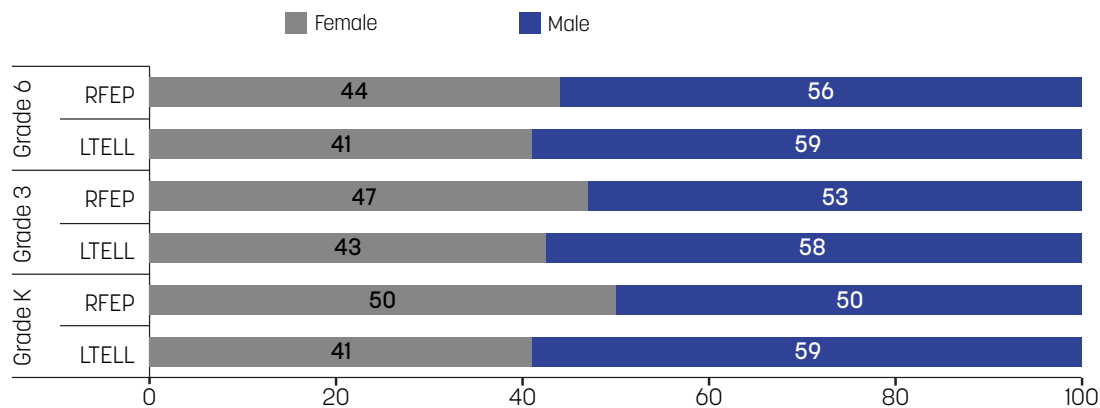
Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Gender

Most of the long-term ELL students across all three grade-level cohorts were male (59 percent for the kindergarten cohort, 58 percent for the grade 3 cohort, and 59 percent for the grade 6 cohort; see figure 4). Half or more of the RFEP students across all three grade-level cohorts also were male (50 percent for the kindergarten cohort, 53 percent for the grade 3 cohort, and 56 percent for the grade 6 cohort). For each grade-level cohort, long-term ELL students had a greater percentage of male students than their RFEP student peers.

Figure 4. More than half of long-term ELL students were male, Utah, 2006/07 (percent)



RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

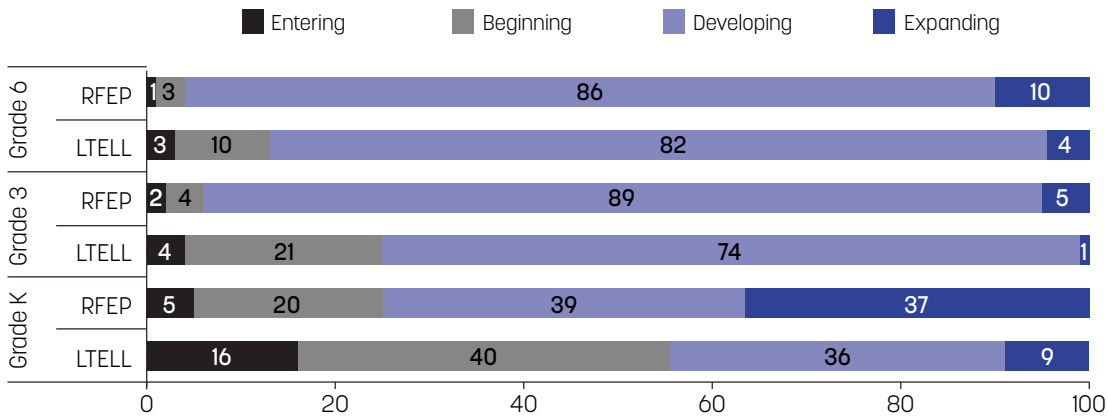
Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Initial English language proficiency level

For the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, the vast majority of ELL students—both those that became long-term ELL students and those that became RFEP students—had an initial ELP level of Developing (level 3 out of 5; see figure 5). The percentage of students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts who started at the Expanding level (level 4) was much smaller (see figure 5) than in the kindergarten cohort. In the kindergarten cohort, the distribution of ELP levels was different than in the higher grade-level cohorts. The largest percentage (40 percent) of long-term ELL students were classified as Beginning (level 2), while the largest percentage (39 percent) of RFEP students were classified as Developing (level 3). Thirty-seven percent of the RFEP students were classified as Expanding (level 4). Across all three grade-level cohorts, the RFEP group had greater percentages of students initially at Developing (level 3) and Expanding (level 4) than did their long-term ELL peer group; correspondingly, the long-term ELL students in each grade-level cohort had greater percentages of students initially at the lowest two ELP levels (Entering and Beginning) compared to their RFEP peers.

Figure 5. The vast majority of ELL students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts had an initial ELP level of Developing, Utah, 2006/07 (percent)



RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

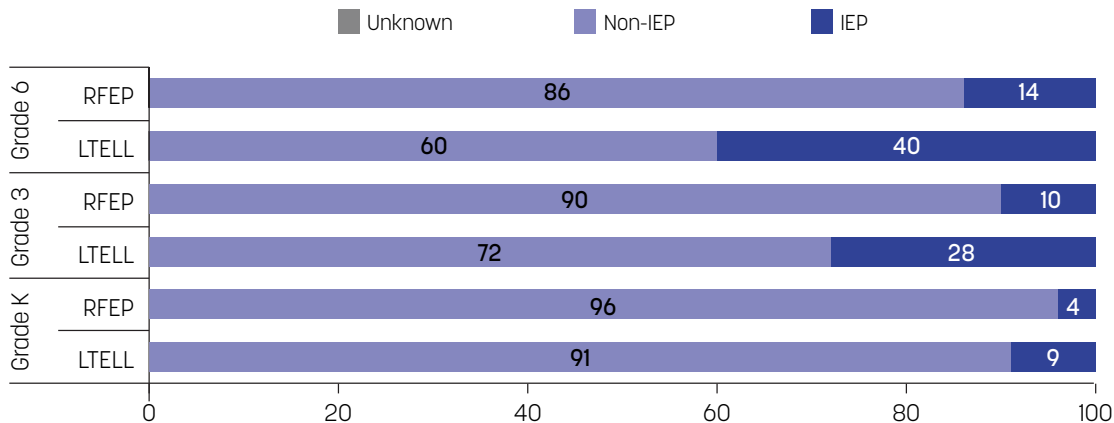
Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Eligibility to receive individualized education program services

The percentage of long-term ELL students who were eligible to receive IEP services at the start of the study was greater in the higher grade-level cohorts than in the lower grade-level cohorts: 40 percent of long-term ELL students in the grade 6 cohort were eligible to receive IEP services, compared to 28 percent in the grade 3 cohort and 9 percent in the kindergarten cohort (see figure 6). A higher percentage of long-term ELL students (between 9 and 40 percent) than their RFEP student peers (between 4 and 14 percent) were eligible to receive IEP services.

Figure 6. Forty percent of long-term ELL students in grade 6 cohort were eligible to receive IEP services, Utah, 2006/07 (percent)



RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program. LTELL is long-term English language learner.

Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

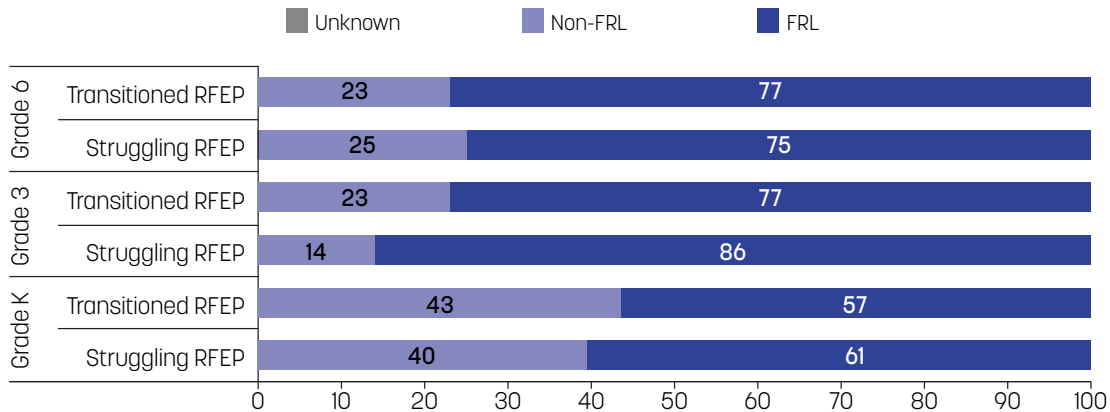
Struggling RFEP and Transitioned RFEP students

With two exceptions, a greater percentage of Struggling RFEP students were eligible for FRL (figure 7), were male (figure 8), began the study at one of the two lowest ELP levels (Entering or Beginning) (figure 9), and were eligible to receive IEP services (figure 10), compared to their Transitioned RFEP student peers. Overall, the majority of the Struggling RFEP students across all three grade-level cohorts were eligible for FRL (see figure 7), were male (see figure 8), and started in one of the two highest ELP levels below Proficient (Basic or Intermediate) on their initial ELP assessment (see figure 9). Further, the vast majority of the Struggling RFEP students across all three grade-level cohorts were not eligible to receive IEP services (see figure 10).

Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch

The vast majority of Struggling RFEP students were eligible for FRL (between 61 and 86 percent; see figure 7). In the kindergarten and grade 3 cohorts, a higher percentage of Struggling RFEP students than Transitioned RFEP students were eligible for FRL (61 versus 57 percent and 86 versus 77 percent, respectively). In contrast, in the grade 6 cohort, a slightly higher percentage of Transitioned RFEP students (77 percent) than Struggling RFEP students (75 percent) were eligible for FRL.

Figure 7. The majority of RFEP students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, Utah, 2006/07 (percent)



RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch.

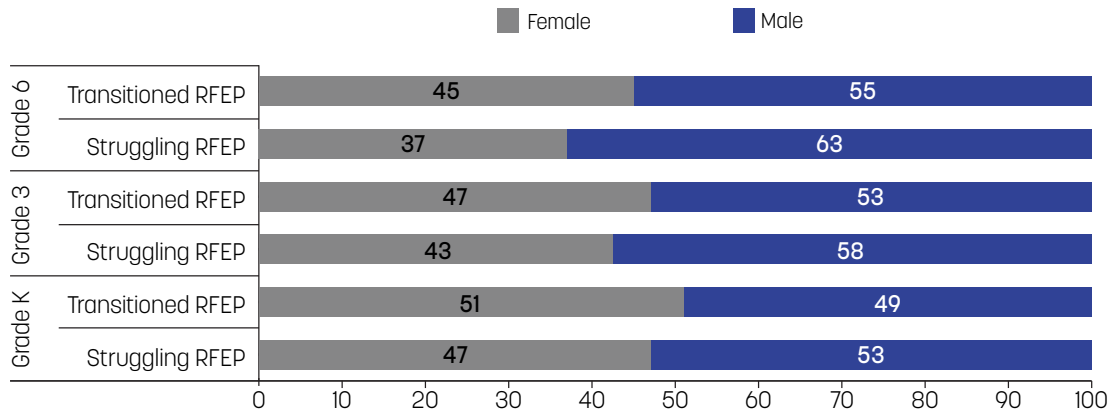
Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Gender

For the kindergarten cohort, 53 percent of Struggling RFEP students were male, while 49 percent of Transitioned RFEP students were male (see figure 8). Similar proportions were also seen for grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts: a higher percentage of the Struggling RFEP group was male compared to the Transitioned RFEP group. Further, between 53 and 63 percent of the Struggling RFEP students across all three grade-level cohorts were male.

Figure 8. More than half of Struggling RFEP students across all cohorts were male, Utah, 2006/07 (percent)



RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten.

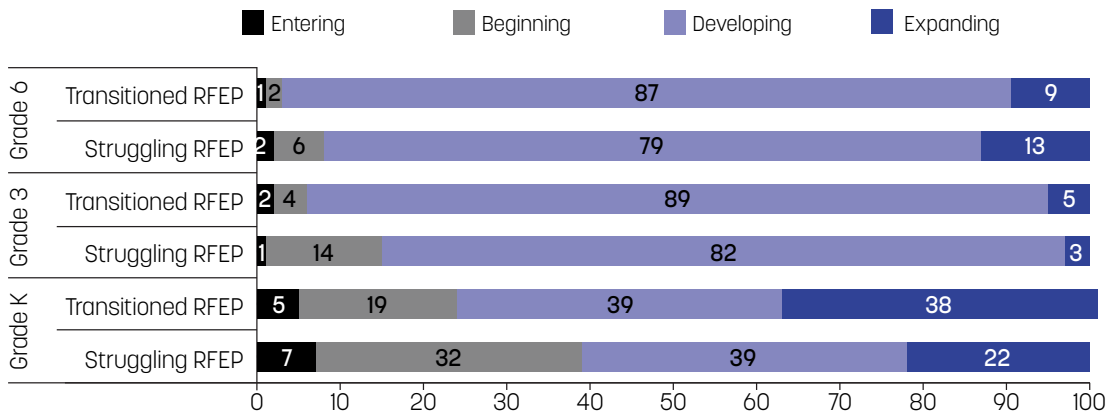
Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Initial English language proficiency level

At the start of the study period, the highest percentage of students across all three cohorts in both the Struggling RFEP and Transitioned RFEP group were classified as Developing (level 3 of 5) on the ELP assessment (see figure 9). For example, in the grade 3 cohort, the vast majority of both Struggling RFEP students (82 percent) and Transitioned RFEP students (89 percent) started at the Developing level (see figure 9). At the same time, a greater percentage of Struggling RFEP students began the study at one of the two lowest ELP levels (Entering or Beginning) compared to their Transitioned RFEP peers.

Figure 9. The highest percentage of both Struggling RFEP and Transitioned RFEP students had an initial ELP level of Developing, Utah, 2006/07 (percent)



RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten.

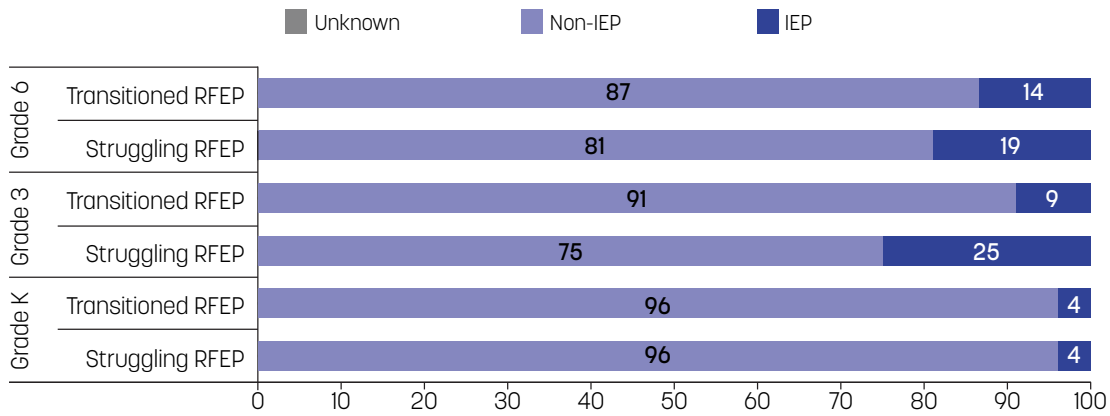
Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.

Eligibility to receive individualized education program services

In the kindergarten cohort, both Struggling RFEP students and Transitioned RFEP students had the same percentage of students who were eligible to receive IEP services (4 percent; see figure 10). For the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, a higher percentage of Struggling RFEP students (25 and 19 percent, respectively) were eligible to receive IEP services compared to their Transitioned RFEP student peers (9 and 14 percent, respectively).

Figure 10. A higher percentage of Struggling RFEP students received IEP services compared to Transitioned RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, Utah, 2006/07 (percent)



RFEP is reclassification as fluent English proficient. K is kindergarten. IEP is individualized education program.

Note 1: Percentages might not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis of student-level data from Utah Department of Education, for ELL students, 2006/07 through 2011/12.




Implications and next steps

This study describes the progress and characteristics of four groups of Utah’s ELL students—long-term ELL students, RFEP students, Struggling RFEP students, and Transitioned RFEP students—across three grade-level cohorts. The findings suggest three areas for further research.

First, the percentages of ELL students who achieved the necessary ELP scores to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) during the study period remained close to constant across the three cohorts in Utah—from 74 percent in the kindergarten cohort to 67 percent in both the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts. These results differ from the general findings of the research literature, which show that progressing in fluent English proficient status is generally more difficult for older ELL students than for younger ELL students (Cook, Wilmes, Boals, & Santos, 2008; Garcia, 2003). Conducting further research to examine possible reasons why this study’s ELP results differ from the general findings of the research literature could provide more accurate or targeted understandings of (1) why, in contrast to the general research findings, this study’s higher-grade-level ELL students were almost as successful as the lower-grade-level ELL students on the ELP test and (2) why between one quarter and one third of the ELL students still took longer than expected to reach English language proficiency.

Second, the percentage of Struggling RFEP students in Utah remained closer to constant across the three grade-level cohorts than what might be expected based on the research literature. The percentage of Struggling RFEP students in Utah was 7 percent in the kindergarten cohort, 6 percent in the grade 3 cohort, and then 10 percent in the grade 6 cohort. The results from Utah—a range from 6 to 10 percent across the three grade-level cohorts—appear to be at least somewhat inconsistent with the research literature that suggests that reclassified former ELL students generally have lower achievement in academic subjects in the higher grades, at least initially, than they do in the lower grades (Grissom, 2004; Kieffer, 2011, 2010, 2008; Salazar, 2007). Further research designed to examine why Utah’s percentages of Struggling RFEP students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts were lower than might be expected based on the research literature could provide insights into more effective practices for improving the achievement of RFEP students at the secondary level.

Finally, across all cohorts, more long-term ELL students and Struggling RFEP students were eligible for FRL, eligible to receive IEP services, and male, compared to their more successful peers in the RFEP and Transitioned RFEP groups, respectively. These findings are consistent with the research literature on the negative relationship between poverty/eligibility for FRL and academic achievement (Berliner, 2006; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; Parrish et al., 2006; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004) and the negative relationship between disabilities/eligibility for IEP services and academic achievement (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sirin, 2005; Sullivan, 2011; Vellutino et al., 1996). These findings are also consistent with studies on gender and its relationship to academic achievement, which have shown that boys are more likely than girls to have lower academic achievement in reading (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007;



Perie et al., 2005; Robinson & Theule, 2011); however, no studies that specifically examined gender and academic achievement for ELL students have been located. Further research should continue exploring ways to assist these subgroups of ELL students (i.e., those who are eligible for FRL, those who are eligible to receive IEP services, and those who are male) to help them achieve greater academic success.



Limitations of the study


A major strength of this study is that Utah provided six years of data on all students who were in kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 in 2006/07 who had ELP test results and available subject-matter content test results in ELA or reading.

There are three limitations of this study. The first limitation relates to the scope of the sample. The study addresses the characteristics of three cohorts of ELL students who were in Utah's data system for each school year over the six-school-year period of the study (2006/07–2011/12) and who advanced a grade level each year. Thus, the sample excludes mobile students who left and/or entered Utah during the study period. This stable ELL cohort was designed in response to the English Learner Alliance states' interest in the performance of ELL students who had been in their school systems for an extended period of time, which, for this study, was defined as six years. As a result, the study sample is a more geographically stable group of ELL students than is present in most schools, so the proficiency rates and passing rates could be higher for these students than for the ELL population as a whole. The sample also excludes students who repeated or skipped a grade, due to difficulties tracking students who did not progress with the rest of their grade-level cohort. As a result, this sample does not include some ELL students who would be present in Utah's schools on a given day.

The percentages of students in the study samples, out of all of the ELL students in the cohort grade in the first year of each cohort, were 68 percent for the kindergarten cohort, 65 percent for the grade 3 cohort, and 49 percent for the grade 6 cohort (table B1).

The second limitation relates to comparisons among cohorts based on differences in sample characteristics and in content test-taking opportunities. For instance, there are likely to be differences in the characteristics of the students in the kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, especially related to initial ELP levels. For ELL students in the kindergarten cohort samples, kindergarten was their initial enrollment year in the state and, thus, their ELP level was their initial ELP level when they started school (which was when the study began for the kindergarten cohort). For ELL students in the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts, grade 3 and grade 6 were their current enrollment grades, respectively, at the start of the study, and their ELP level was their current one at the start of the study; we do not know when these ELL students started in the state and we do not know their initial ELP level when they started school. Furthermore, the composition of the kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts could differ across cohorts due to differences in student mobility and grade repetition.

Finally, the cohort samples could also be different from one another in that, compared to the kindergarten cohort, the grade 3 and grade 6 cohorts are likely composed of the students who have the most difficulty learning English, since faster learners will have already achieved RFEP; in kindergarten, these faster English-language learners will have not yet been given a chance to achieve RFEP. Differences in ELL student achievement percentages across the three cohorts are also likely influenced by differences in the content of the tests because Utah, like the other states in the English Learner Alliance, increases the difficulty



of its ELP and ELA content tests as the grade level increases. Further, students in the kindergarten cohort have fewer opportunities to take, and therefore have fewer opportunities to pass, Utah's ELA content test, as it is first administered in grade 3. However, while these factors are all limitations of the study, they also reflect the actual experience of ELL students, over time, in these state systems.

Appendix A. Methodology

This study is a descriptive analysis of the characteristics of four categories of English language learner (ELL) students in Utah—*long-term English language learner students*, *reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) students*, *Struggling RFEP students*, and *Transitioned RFEP students*. In this study (and in the two companion reports on ELL students in Arizona and Nevada), *long-term ELL students* were defined as students who never scored at or above the required English language proficiency (ELP) level on their state ELP test to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) during the six years of the study. In contrast to the long-term ELL students, *RFEP students* were defined as those ELL students who did score at or above the required ELP level on their state ELP test to achieve RFEP status. *Struggling RFEP students* (part of federal Title III accountability in annual measurable achievement objective 3) were defined as those ELL students who met the ELP requirements for reclassification as fluent English proficient but did not pass the state ELA or reading content test by the end of the six-year study period. In contrast to the Struggling RFEP students, *Transitioned RFEP students* were defined as RFEP students who passed the state ELA or reading content test at least once during the study period.


Data sources

The data source for this study was Utah's statewide data system. All of the data files used in the study contained student-level information from school year 2006/07 through school year 2011/12. Each file had anonymous, unique student identification numbers, which allowed for matching of students across different files. The data were analyzed in three parallel grade-span cohorts: kindergarten through grade 5, grade 3 through grade 8, and grade 6 through grade 11.

Methods

The study used descriptive statistics to describe patterns of characteristics of long-term ELL students and RFEP students, with particular attention to those RFEP students who did not pass their ELA or reading content tests during the study period (referred to in this study as Struggling RFEP students).

The analysis resulted in tables and figures that compare the percentages of certain characteristics of long-term ELL students to those of RFEP students and compare the percentages of certain characteristics of Struggling RFEP students to those of Transitioned RFEP students. The study focused on the following ELL student characteristics: eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), eligibility for receipt of individualized education program (IEP) services, gender, and initial ELP level. These characteristics were characteristics that students possessed during the first year of the study, 2006/07. The study focused on these particular characteristics because they were identified by research literature as being linked with long-term ELL status and low academic achievement in general, and because data on these characteristics were available in the state data system. Differing patterns of student achievement based on gender have also been described for ELL students, as well



as for students in general (Dunn, Griggs, & Price, 1993; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Restak, 1979). Overall, eligibility for FRL and learning disabilities (such as a reading disability) that result in eligibility for IEP services have consistently been found to be highly associative with student achievement (Sirin, 2005; Vellutino et al., 1996).

Criteria for analytic sample

Students were included in the analytic sample based on meeting all of the following criteria (the same criteria were used across all three companion reports):

- » Had an initial ELP level lower than Proficient in school year 2006/07.
- » Were in the agency's data system for all six years of the study (i.e., in the data files of each school year, from 2006/07 to 2011/12).
- » Began in the cohort grade (K, 3, or 6) in school year 2006/07, with normal grade progress through school year 2011/12.⁴
- » Achieved the ELP level required for RFEP status during the study period or took the ELP test in the last school year, 2011/12.
- » Passed the state ELA or reading content test at least once, or had a state ELA or reading content test result in each year, when available, during the study period.⁵

Please note that the analytic samples in each grade-level cohort included all ELL students who met all of the above criteria, not just ELL students who were new to the state in 2006/07.

Appendix B. Details on analytic samples

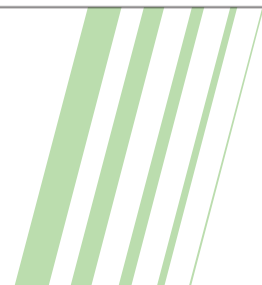


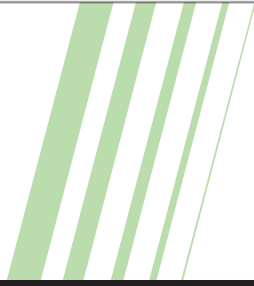
Table B1. Steps to get analytic samples in Utah

Steps	Sample category	Grade K cohort		Grade 3 cohort		Grade 6 cohort	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Start point	English language learner students in 2007 (initial ELP level lower than Bridging)	4,678	100	3,048	100	1,969	100
Step 1	Students excluded because not present in all 6 years	1,015	22	648	21	490	25
Step 2	Students excluded because of abnormal grade progress	77	2	20	1	23	1
Step 3	Students excluded because of missing values	426	9	405	13	491	25
End point	Analytic sample	3,160	68	1,975	65	965	49

ELL is English language learner. ELP is English language proficiency. K is kindergarten.

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

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



Appendix C. Detailed tables on student characteristics

Table C1. Characteristics of long-term ELL students and RFEP students for kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, Utah

Characteristics	Grade K cohort						Grade 3 cohort						Grade 6 cohort					
	Long-term ELL		RFEP		Overall		Long-term ELL		RFEP		Overall		Long-term ELL		RFEP		Overall	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender																		
Female	335	41.0	1,179	50.3	1,514	47.9	279	42.5	621	47.1	900	45.6	133	41.4	285	44.3	418	43.3
Male	483	59.0	1,163	49.7	1,646	52.1	377	57.5	698	52.9	1,075	54.4	188	58.6	359	55.7	547	56.7
IEP in 2007																		
Unknown	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Non-IEP	743	90.8	2,243	95.8	2,986	94.5	471	71.8	1,185	89.8	1,656	83.8	192	59.8	553	85.9	745	77.2
IEP	75	9.2	99	4.2	174	5.5	185	28.2	134	10.2	319	16.2	129	40.2	91	14.1	220	22.8
FRL in 2007																		
Unknown	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Non-FRL	293	35.8	1,011	43.2	1,304	41.3	120	18.3	298	22.6	418	21.2	65	20.2	148	23.0	213	22.1
FRL	525	64.2	1,331	56.8	1,856	58.7	536	81.7	1,021	77.4	1,557	78.7	256	79.8	496	77.0	752	77.9
Initial ELP level in 2007																		
Entering	129	15.8	114	4.9	243	7.7	24	3.7	21	1.6	45	2.3	10	3.1	8	1.2	18	1.9
Beginning	323	39.5	460	19.6	783	24.8	136	20.7	57	4.3	193	9.8	33	10.3	17	2.6	50	5.2
Developing	291	35.6	911	38.9	1,202	38.0	488	74.4	1,172	88.9	1,660	84.1	264	82.2	556	86.3	820	85.0
Expanding	75	9.2	857	36.6	932	29.5	8	1.2	69	5.2	77	3.9	14	4.4	63	9.8	77	8.0
Total	818	100.0	2,342	100.0	3,160	100.0	656	100.0	1,319	100.0	1,975	100.0	321	100.0	644	100.0	965	100.0

ELL is English language learner. ELP is English language proficiency. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. IEP is individualized education program. K is kindergarten. RFEP is reclassified fluent English proficient.

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

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

Table C2. Characteristics of Struggling RFEP students and Transitioned RFEP students who passed their ELA content test for kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 6 cohorts, Utah

Characteristics	RFEP in grade K cohort				RFEP in grade 3 cohort				RFEP in grade 6 cohort			
	Struggling		Transitioned		Struggling		Transitioned		Struggling		Transitioned	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender												
Female	78	46.7	1,101	50.6	31	42.5	590	47.4	25	37.3	260	45.1
Male	89	53.3	1,074	49.4	42	57.5	656	52.6	42	62.7	317	54.9
IEP in 2007												
Unknown	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Non-IEP	160	95.8	2,083	95.8	55	75.3	1,130	90.7	54	80.6	499	86.5
IEP	7	4.2	92	4.2	18	24.7	116	9.3	13	19.4	78	13.5
FRL in 2007												
Unknown	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Non-FRL	66	39.5	945	43.4	10	13.7	288	23.1	17	25.4	131	22.7
FRL	101	60.5	1,230	56.6	63	86.3	958	76.9	50	74.6	446	77.3
Initial ELP level in 2007												
Entering	12	7.2	102	4.7	1	1.4	20	1.6	1	1.5	7	1.2
Beginning	54	32.3	406	18.7	10	13.7	47	3.8	4	6.0	13	2.3
Developing	65	38.9	846	38.9	60	82.2	1,112	89.2	53	79.1	503	87.2
Expanding	36	21.6	821	37.7	2	2.7	67	5.4	9	13.4	54	9.4
Total	167	100.0	2,175	100.0	73	100.0	1,246	100.0	67	100.0	577	100.0

ELP is English language proficiency. FRL is free or reduced-price lunch. IEP is individualized education program. K is kindergarten. RFEP is reclassified fluent English proficient. Struggling RFEP students are those RFEP students who did not pass the ELA content test during the course of the study. Transitioned RFEP students are those RFEP students who passed the ELA content test at least once during the course of the study.

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.


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

References

- Abu-Rabia, S., & Siegel, L. S. (2002). Reading, syntactic, orthographic, and working memory skills of bilingual Arabic-English speaking Canadian children. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 31*, 661–678.
- Artiles, A. J., Rueda, R., Salazar, J., & Higareda, I. (2005). Within-group diversity in minority individualized education disproportionate representation: The case of English language learners in California's urban school districts. *Exceptional Children, 71*, 283–300.
- Berliner, D. (2006). Our impoverished view of educational reform. *Teachers College Record, 108*, 949–995.
- Burr, E., Haas, E., & Geary, S. (2013). *Promising instructional practices for improving the academic outcomes of long-term English learners: A description of programs and practices in the research and policy literature*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
- Collier, V. P. (1989). How long? A synthesis on academic achievement in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly, 23*(3), 509–531.
- Collier, V. P. (1992). A synthesis of studies examining long-term language minority student data on academic achievement. *Bilingual Research Journal, 16*(1 & 2), 187–212.
- Cook, G., Linquanti, R., Chinen, M., & Jung, H. (2012). *National evaluation of Title III implementation supplemental report—Exploring approaches to setting English language proficiency criteria and monitoring English learner progress*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.
- Cook, H. G., Wilmes, C., Boals, T., & Santos, M. (2008). *Issues in the development of annual measurable achievement objectives for WIDA Consortium states* (WCER Working Paper No. 2008-2). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Center for Education Research.
- Da Fontoura, H. A., & Siegel, L. S. (1995). Reading, syntactic and working memory skills of bilingual Portuguese-English Canadian children. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 7*, 139–153.
- D'Angiulli, A., Siegel, L. S., & Serra, E. (2001). The development of reading in English and Italian in bilingual children. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 22*, 479–507.
- Dunn, R., Griggs, S., & Price, G. E. (1993). Learning styles of Mexican American and Anglo American elementary students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 21*, 237–247.
- Entwisle, D., Alexander, K. L., & Olson, L. S. (2007). Early schooling: The handicap of being poor and male. *Sociology of Education, 80*(2), 114–138.
- Gándara, P., Rumberger, R., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Callahan, R. (2003). English learners in California schools: Unequal resources, unequal outcomes. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives, 11*(36). Retrieved from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v11n36/>.

- Garcia, G. E. (2003). The reading comprehension development and instruction of English-language learners. In C. E. Snow & A. Sweet (Eds.), *Rethinking reading comprehension* (pp. 30–50). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W., & Christian, D. (2005). English learners in U.S. schools: An overview of research findings. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, 10(4), 363–385.
- Goldenberg, C. (2008). Teaching English language learners: What the research does—and does not—say. *American Educator*, 32(2), 8–23.
- Grissom, J. B. (2004). Reclassification of English learners. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 12(36). Retrieved from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n36/>.
- Hakuta, K., Butler, Y. G., & Witt, D. (2000). *How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency?* Berkeley, CA: University of California, Linguistic Minority Research Institute.
- Halle, T., Hair, E., Wandner, L., McNamara, M., & Chien, N. (2012). Predictors and outcomes of early versus later English language proficiency among English language learners. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 27(1), 1–20.
- Holmes, C. T. (1989). Grade level retention effects: A meta-analysis of research studies. In L. A. Shepard & M. L. Smith (Eds.), *Flunking grades: Research and policies on retention* (pp. 16–33). London, England: Farmer Press.
- Horwitz, A. R., Uro, G., Price-Baugh, R., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., Lewis, S., & Casserly, M. (2009). *Succeeding with English language learner students: Lessons learned from the Great City Schools*. Washington, DC: Council of Great City Schools. Retrieved from http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/dc00001581/centricity/domain/4/ell_report09.pdf.
- Kieffer, M. (2008). Catching up or falling behind? Initial English proficiency, concentrated poverty, and the reading growth of language minority learners in the United States. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(4), 851–868.
- Kieffer, M. (2010). Socioeconomic status, English proficiency, and late-emerging reading difficulties. *Educational Researcher*, 39(6), 484–486.
- Kieffer, M. (2011). Converging trajectories: Reading growth in language minority learners and their classmates, kindergarten to grade 8. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(5), 1187–1225.
- Kindler, A. L. (2002). *Survey of the states' limited English proficient students and available educational programs and services 2000–2001: Summary report*. Washington, DC: George Washington University, National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs.
- Klingner, J. K., Artiles, A. J., & Barletta, M. L. (2006). English language learners who struggle with reading: Language acquisition or LD? *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 39, 108–128.
- Liasidou, A. (2013). Bilingual and special educational needs in inclusive classrooms: Some critical and pedagogical considerations. *Support for Learning*, 28(1), 11–16.
- Lipka, O., Siegel, L. S., & Vukovic, R. (2005). The literacy skills of English language learners in Canada. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 20(1), 39–49.

- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012). *Transitioning English language learners in Massachusetts: An exploratory data review*. Malden, MA: Author.
- McCardle, P., McCarthy-Mele, J., Cutting, L., Leos, K., & D’Emilio, T. (2005). Learning disabilities in English language learners: Identifying the issues. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 20(1), 1–5.
- McGraw, R., Lubienski, S. T., & Strutchens, M. E. (2006). A closer look at gender in NAEP mathematics achievement and affect data: Intersections with achievement, race and socio-economic status. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 37(2), 129–150.
- Mulligan, G., Halle, T., & Kinukawa, A. (2012). *Reading, mathematics, and science achievement of language-minority students in grade 8*. (Issue brief, NCES 2012-028). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- Nguyen, H. T. (2012). General education and special education teachers collaborate to support English language learners with learning disabilities. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 21(1), 127–152.
- No Child Left Behind Act. (2001). 20 U.S.C. §§ 6301 et seq.
- Olsen, L. (2010). *Reparable harm: Fulfilling the promise of educational opportunity for California’s long term English learners*. Long Beach, CA: Californians Together.
- Parrish, T., Merickel, A., Perez, M., Linquanti, R., Socia, M., Spain, A., Speroni, C., Esra, P., Brock, L., & Delancey, D. (2006). *Effects of the implementation of Proposition 227 on the education of English language learner students, K–12: Findings from a five-year evaluation*. Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research.
- Perie, M., Moran, R., & Lutkus, A. D. (2005). *NAEP 2004 trends in academic progress: Three decades of student performance in reading and mathematics* (NCES 2005-464). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Quality Counts. (2009). Portrait of a population: How English language learner students are putting schools to the test. *Education Week*, 28(17).
- Rathbun, A., & West, J. (2004). *From kindergarten through third grade: Children’s beginning school experiences* (NCES 2004-007). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- Restak, R. M. (1979). The other differences between boys and girls. *Educational Leadership*, 37, 232–235.
- Roberts, G., & Bryant, D. (2011). Early mathematics achievement trajectories: English-language learner and native English-speaker estimates, using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey. *Developmental Psychology*, 47(4), 916–930.
- Robinson, J. P., & Theule, L. S. (2011). The development of gender achievement gaps in mathematics and reading during elementary and middle school: Examining direct cognitive assessments and teacher ratings. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(2), 268–302.
- Ruiz-de-Velasco, J., & Fix, M. (2000). *Overlooked & underserved: Immigrant students in U.S. secondary schools*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

- 
- Rumberger, R., & Gándara, P. (2004). Seeking equity in the education of California's English learners. *Teachers College Record*, 106(10), 2032–2056.
- Salazar, J. J. (2007). *Master plan evaluation report for English learners—2005/2006*. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Unified School District, Program Evaluation and Assessment Branch.
- Samson, J., & Lesaux, N. (2009). Language-minority learners in individualized education: Rates and predictors of identification for services. *Journal of Language Difficulties*, 42(2), 148–162.
- Short, D. J., & Fitzsimmons, S. (2007). *Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English language learners*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation.
- Sirin, S. R. (2005). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A meta-analytic review of research. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 417–453.
- Sullivan, A. L. (2011). Disproportionality in individualized education: Identification and placement of English language learners. *Exceptional Children*, 77(3), 317–334.
- Vellutino, F. R., Scanlon, D., Sipay, E., Small, S., Pratt, A., Chen, R., & Denkla, M. (1996). Cognitive profiles of difficult to remediate and readily remediated poor readers: Early intervention as a vehicle for distinguishing between cognitive and experiential deficits as basic causes of specific reading disability. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88, 601–638.



Notes

1 The ELL student characteristics reported in this study—eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, eligibility to receive individualized education program services, and English language proficiency level—are characteristics that students possessed during the first year of the study, 2006/07.

2 For Nevada, the analysis was done using data on ELL students from the state’s two largest school districts: Washoe County and Clark County.

3 Prior to 2008, Utah administered its CRT in grades 1 through 11. In spring 2008, Utah began administering its CRT in grades 2 through 11. And, in spring 2011, Utah began administering its CRT in grades 3 through 11. For the study period, which began in 2006/07, only the kindergarten cohort was affected. Student progress on the CRT in the kindergarten cohort will be described beginning in grade 2 in spring 2009.

4 Students who repeated or skipped a grade, and thus no longer progressed with the vast majority of peers in their grade-level cohort, were excluded due to difficulties in tracking these students once they were out of step with their cohort.

5 All ELL students in these states were required to take their ELA/reading content tests each year the tests were administered. ELL students were not exempted from this testing requirement.