Exploring Longitudinal Outcomes and Trajectories of English Language Learners

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What is ELOTE?

ELOTE is a Researcher-Practitioner Partnership between WestEd and the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD). ELOTE addresses a key gap in knowledge about the outcomes and trajectories of immigrant newcomers who enroll in the ninth grade. The purpose of the partnership is to identify promising programs and practices that will improve graduation outcomes for newcomer students.
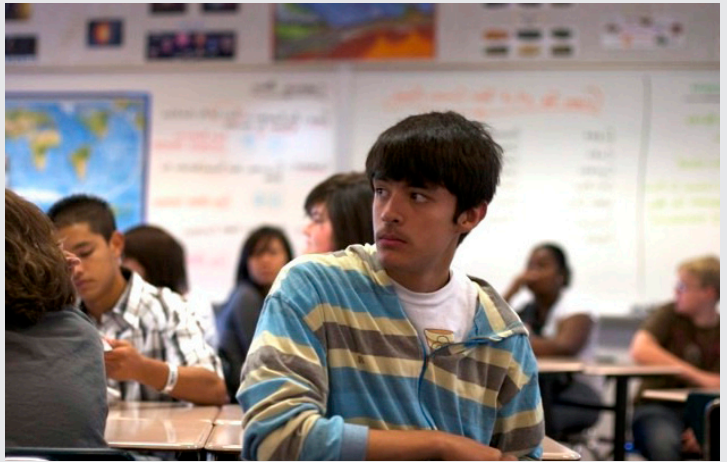
What did Phase One Analyze?

Phase One focused on a cohort of ninth graders who enrolled in the FWISD in the 2009-2010. All newcomer immigrant students in FWISD in the ninth grade first enroll at the International Newcomer Academy (INA). Phase One was the first longitudinal analysis of this cohort as they move from INA to other campus-based Language Centers in FWISD. Analyses included progress on state English proficiency exams, graduation outcomes, and demographic differences. In order to identify students to target for additional supports, predictor variables were analyzed. Phase One also compared newcomer ninth graders to other English language learners (ELLs) in the district, including long-term ELLs enrolled in FWISD since elementary school.
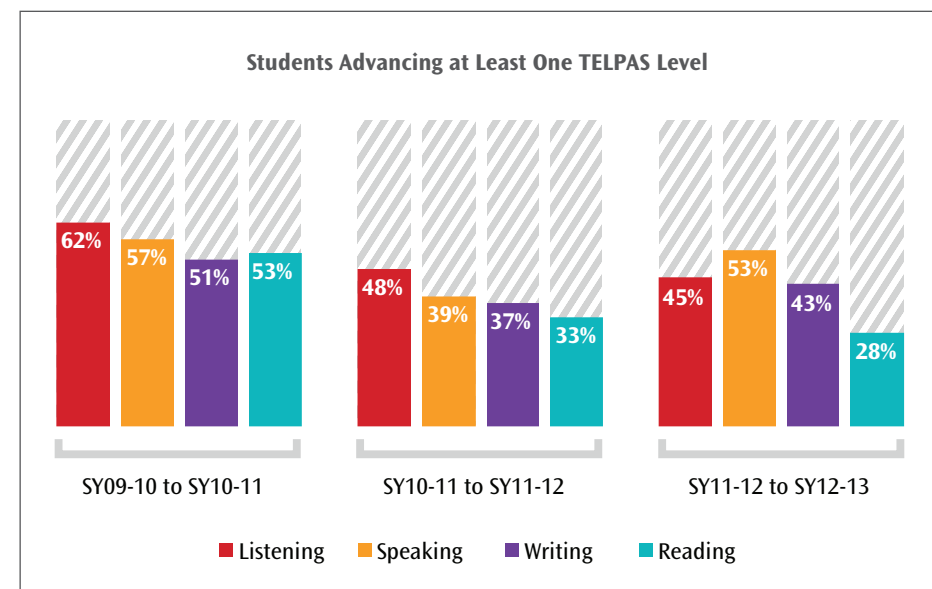
Who are Ninth Grade Newcomers?

The 275 ninth graders who attended the International Newcomer Academy in 2009-2010 were more linguistically diverse than ninth grade English language learners in Texas at large. More males (55 percent) were in the cohort than females (45 percent).

Home Language	INA	Texas
Spanish	50%	91%
Other	16%	9%
Nepali	12%	
Burmese	10%	
Arabic	8%	
Somali	5%	

Note: The statewide figures are for all ninth graders in 2011-2012.

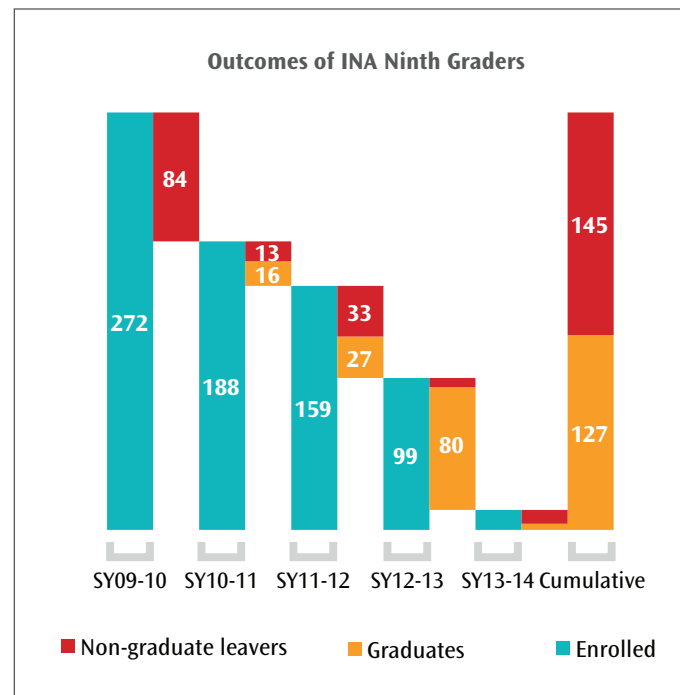## How do Newcomers Make Progress in English Proficiency?

Among newcomers who were in the district for four years, the percentage of students scoring Advanced or higher on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) increased from 22 percent in the ninth grade to 71 percent in the twelfth grade. At the level of individual students, more than one quarter of all students advanced at least one TELPAS level in each of the individual domains of Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading. Despite this progress, only 24 newcomers were reclassified as English proficient.

Students Advancing at Least One TELPAS Level

	SY09-10 to SY10-11	SY10-11 to SY11-12	SY11-12 to SY12-13
Listening	62%	48%	45%
Speaking	57%	39%	53%
Writing	51%	37%	43%
Reading	53%	33%	28%

■ Listening   ■ Speaking   ■ Writing   ■ Reading

Note: Because of attrition, the number of matched students decreases from 174 to 129 to 74.

When do Newcomers Leave the District?

Although the data do not specifically identify dropouts, many newcomers leave the district without graduating. Attrition from the district was highest after the ninth grade year, at a rate of 31 percent.

Outcomes of INA Ninth Graders

	SY09-10	SY10-11	SY11-12	SY12-13	SY13-14	Cumulative
Non-graduate leavers	84	13	33			145
Graduates		16	27	80		127
Enrolled	272	188	159	99		

■ Non-graduate leavers   ■ Graduates   ■ Enrolled

Note: This figure excludes three students who left the district but then returned.
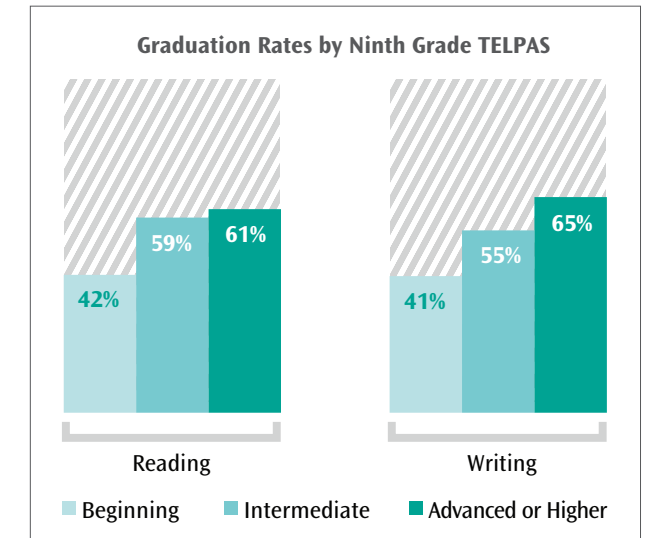
How do Newcomer Graduation Rates Vary?

Graduation rates did not vary by gender, but did vary by home language. Among Spanish speakers, those born in the United States graduated at a lower rate (42 percent) than those born in Mexico (72 percent).

Home Language	
Arabic	67%
Nepali	63%
Spanish	63%
Burmese	60%
Somali	30%

Note: This figure displays graduation rates for language subgroups with at least 10 ninth graders initially.
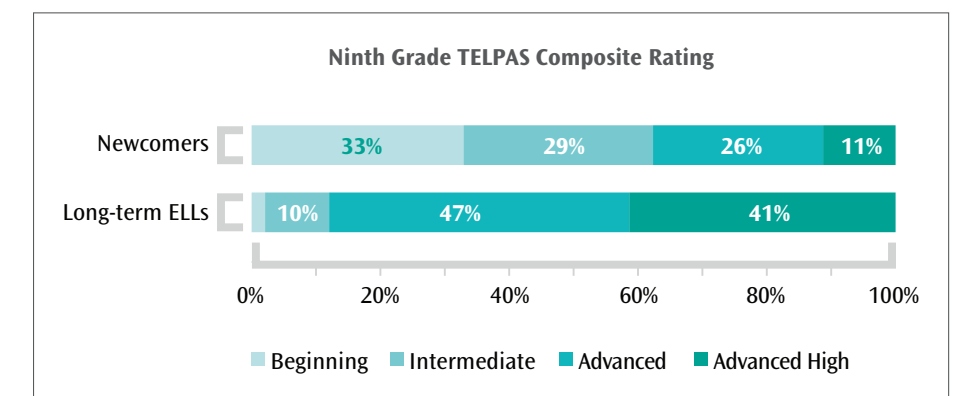
What Predicts Newcomer Graduation?

Ninth grade TELPAS Reading and Writing ratings were strongly associated with newcomer graduation outcomes. Students who were rated Advanced or higher in Writing had the highest graduation rate (65 percent).

Graduation Rates by Ninth Grade TELPAS

	Reading	Writing
Beginning	42%	41%
Intermediate	59%	55%
Advanced or Higher	61%	65%

■ Beginning   ■ Intermediate   ■ Advanced or Higher

Note: Among the 233 students who had TELPAS test scores in the first year, the graduation rate was 52%.

How do Newcomers Compare to Long-Term ELLs?

Ninth grade ELLs were identified as "long term" if they were initially classified in the elementary grades. There were 241 long-term ELLs, 90 percent of whom were Spanish speakers. Compared to long-term ELLs, newcomers started out with lower levels of TELPAS proficiency. The reclassification rate for long-term ELLs as English proficient was 48%, and the graduation rate of long-term ELLs was 61 percent.

Ninth Grade TELPAS Composite Rating

	Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced	Advanced High
Newcomers	33%	29%	26%	11%
Long-term ELLs	10%	47%	41%	

■ Beginning   ■ Intermediate   ■ Advanced   ■ Advanced High

Note: This figure compares the 191 long-term ELLs with ninth grade TELPAS scores to the 233 newcomers with scores.

Implications

Diversity. Newcomers may require more targeted academic and language supports, because they are linguistically much more diverse than other ninth grade ELLs within the district and state.

Progress. Greater focus may be required on writing and reading. Although newcomers make sustained progress in English proficiency over four years across all domains, their progress is slower in Writing and Reading, which are stronger predictors of graduation. Despite this progress, few students are reclassified as English proficient.

Attrition. Interventions may need to identify students while they are already at INA. Newcomers leave the district at a very high rate (31 percent) after their first year.

Reclassification. Additional attention may need to be placed on reclassification as English proficient. Newcomers were much less likely (9 percent) to be reclassified than long-term ELLs (48 percent).

Graduation. Somali students and Spanish speakers born in the United States may need additional supports because their graduation rates were lower than the overall average.

Next Steps to Phase Two

Phase Two consists of case studies of campus programs identified through Phase One as having better outcomes for newcomers. The case studies will triangulate student and teacher focus groups, staff interviews, and classroom observations to identify promising practices and practices.

For more reports, please visit: qtel.wested.org/elote

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