



# RESEARCH BRIEF

## Research Services

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Vol. 2308  
June 2024

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### **Immigrant students: 2023-2024 Academic Achievement and English Language Acquisition Results**

Title III is a federal entitlement through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that provides supplemental resources for English Language Learners (ELL) and immigrants students who have recently arrived to the U.S. More specifically, Title III funding supports student language acquisition and academic achievement.

In the 2023-2024 school year, M-DCPS was awarded a grant under Title III Immigrant Children and Youth funding (Title III IY) for a project titled “Enhanced Instructional Opportunities for Recently-Arrived Immigrant Children and Youth” based on the increase in the number of immigrant students. The funding provided by this grant is separate from federal Title III funding as it is specifically for immigrant students in the county. The federal definition of the term "immigrant children and youth" is provided in section 3301(6) of Title III and refers to individuals who: (A) are aged 3 through 21; (B) were not born in any State; and (C) have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than 3 full academic years.

The purpose of the Title III IY grant was to provide supplemental comprehensive academic opportunities to eligible immigrant students that support academic achievement through home language support for content and English language acquisition, acculturation, building confidence, and bridging the technology gap that most immigrant students experience.

In M-DCPS, about 32% of the 2023-2024 grant funds were allocated to supplemental textbooks that support home language content instruction and supplemental tutoring materials, workbooks, picture dictionaries, and classroom libraries, while 65% of the funds were allocated to supplemental annual software that supports increasing achievement of immigrant students. The software used for the students in M-DCPS was Imagine Learning (IL), which provides home language support for students in grades K-12 in over 15 languages. The remaining 3% of the budget was spent on indirect costs.

When a student enrolls in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) for the first time, a Home Language Survey is completed by the student’s parents/guardians. This survey inquires whether a student’s first language was a language other than English, whether a student’s primary language is a language other than English, and whether a language other than English is used at home. If at least one of the answers is Yes, the student is tested to determine their English proficiency. Based on the results of this assessment, the student is either classified as an ELL or deemed proficient in English.

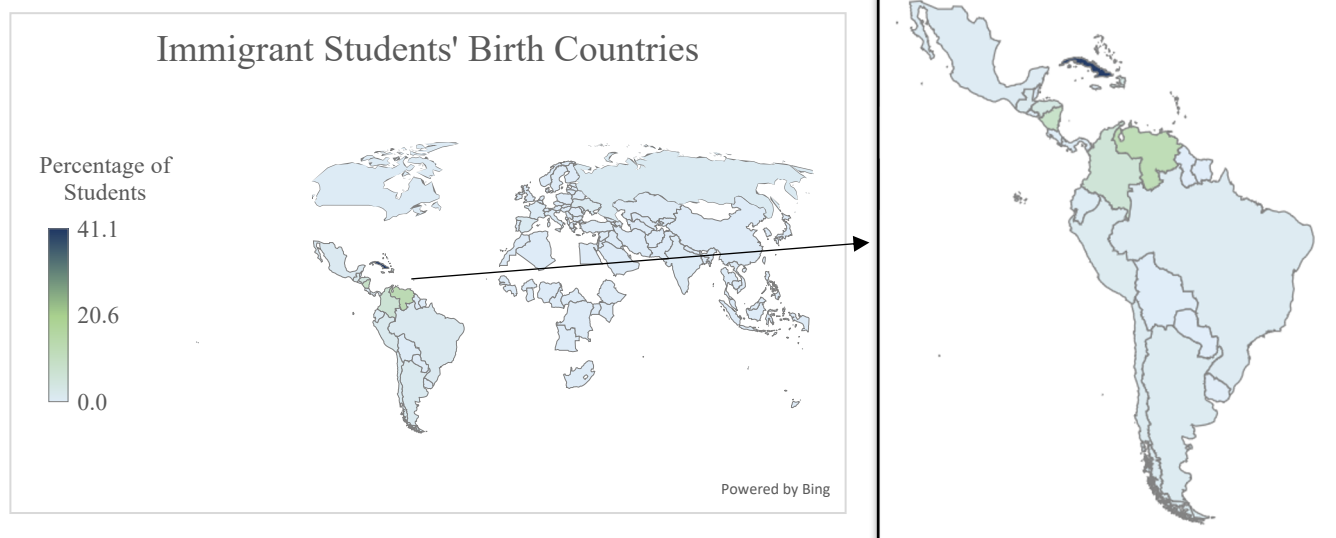
Depending on the English proficiency levels, ELL students are enrolled in specific English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses tailored to meet students’ language needs. English proficiency levels for ELL students in M-DCPS range from ESOL 1 (lowest) to ESOL 4 (highest). Students’ English proficiency levels are reassessed annually, and the appropriate ESOL placement is determined based on the results of that testing. ELLs are assessed on their English language acquisition through the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) for English Language Learners exam developed

through the multistate World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium, an assessment department within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. These are paper-based exams that involve components on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The assessment provides scale scores, proficiency levels in each domain, and an overall composite scale score and proficiency level. Proficiency levels vary from 1 to 6 and are labeled (1) Entering, (2) Emerging, (3) Developing, (4) Expanding, (5) Bridging, and (6) Reaching. Level 6, or Reaching, is considered by the WIDA consortium to indicate proficiency in a particular English language domain. Proficiency level determinations are grade-level specific; proficiency levels below level 6 are reported as decimals. For example, a proficiency level of 3.4 indicates that a student is at the Developing level of proficiency and has made four-tenths of the way to the Expanding level.

This report investigates the growth in English Language acquisition of ELL immigrant students based on their ACCESS exam scores (as compared to demographically similar non-immigrant ELL peers), as well as the growth in academic achievement from the last FAST ELA Reading and Mathematics assessments of the 2022-2023 school year (PM3) to the final assessments (PM3) of the 2023-2024 school year of immigrant students as compared to demographically similar non-immigrant peers. Furthermore, student assessment results on the Spring 2024 B.E.S.T. EOC assessments in Algebra 1 and Geometry are examined for immigrant students and their academically and demographically similar peers.

## DATA

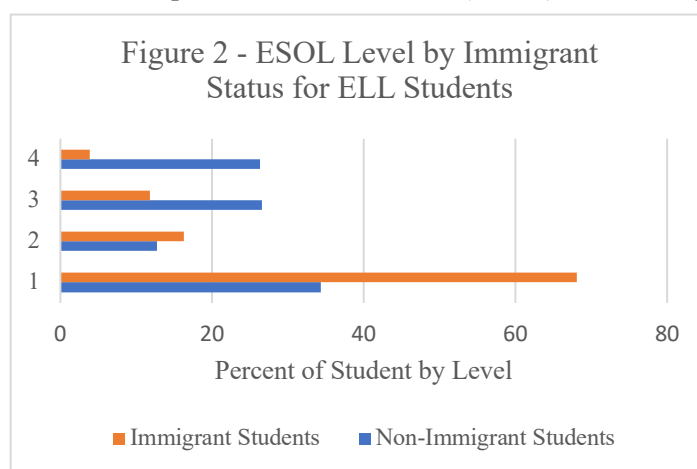
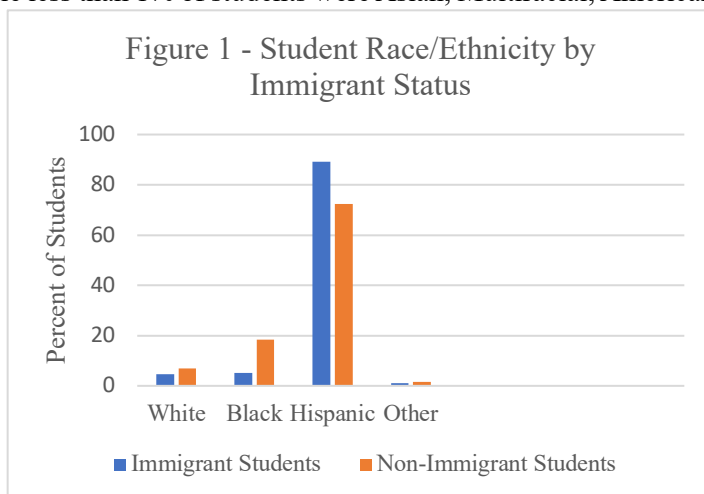
As of October 2023, there were 46,454 immigrant students in M-DCPS, which made up about 11% of the student population. The immigrant students in the district came from 145 different countries all over the world. The majority of immigrant students were from Cuba (41.1%), Venezuela (13.2%), Nicaragua (9.6%), Colombia (6.8%), Honduras (4.6%), and Haiti (3.5%).



The immigrant student population was almost evenly split by gender (50.7% male, and 49.3% female), similar to the non-immigrant population in M-DCPS. Most immigrant students were in second grade (10.4%), followed by first grade (9.3%), and kindergarten (8.3%), while the least amount of immigrant students were in twelfth grade (3.4%). The majority of immigrant students identified as Hispanic (89.3%), followed by 4.7% White and 5.1% Black, while less than 1% of students were Asian, Multiracial, American Indian/Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (combined into a group titled “Other”). The overall racial/ethnic makeup of the non-immigrant student population in the district followed a similar pattern, with slightly smaller percentage of Hispanic students and slightly higher percentage of Black students than the immigrant population (See Figure 1).

51.7% of immigrant students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), indicating that they came from a lower socioeconomic background, similar to students in the non-immigrant student population (55%). However, only 2.6% of immigrant students were identified as a student with a disability, as compared to 14.7% of students in the non-immigrant student population.

Lastly, 86.2% of the immigrant student population were identified as ELLs with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) levels of 1-4, as compared to 15% of the non-immigrant student population in M-DCPS (See Figure 2). Most immigrant students were placed in level 1 ESOL (68.1%) followed by Level 2 (16.3%), indicating that they were beginners in English. The majority of non-immigrant ELLs were also placed in Level 1 (34.3%), though many were also in either Level 3 (26.6%) or Level 4 (26.6%), indicating intermediate and advanced English proficiency, respectively. Level 5 indicates that students have been identified as proficient in English and have been exited from the ESOL program, therefore those students were excluded from this comparison.



## METHOD

The growth in English language acquisition and other academic outcomes of immigrant students from last year (2022-2023) to this year (2023-2024) was examined to evaluate the impact of the Title III IY grant. A demographically similar comparison group of non-immigrant peers was needed in order to make fair comparisons of immigrant student growth in terms of English language acquisition and other academic outcomes from last year to this year. Case control matching was used to create two groups (immigrant students and comparison peers) based on grade, race/ethnicity, disability status, socioeconomic status (using FRL codes), gender, and previous year's (2022-2023) test scores. This process ensures that two groups are balanced and reduces the influence of potential confounding variables. In other words, this method helps

us determine if student growth is related to the Title III IY grant rather than the influence of other variables, such as disability status, gender, or previous achievement. The 2022-2023 Composite scale score for the ACCESS exam was the test score used to create groups to compare English Language Acquisition, while FAST ELA Reading scale scores were used to create groups to compare reading achievement, and FAST math scores were used to compare math achievement on both this year's FAST Math assessment and the Algebra 1 EOC exam. Finally, 2022-2023 Algebra 1 EOC scale scores were used to compare math achievement on the Geometry EOC exam. See Tables 1-5 for the results of the matching process by grade span. ACCESS results are available for all ELLs in every grade, FAST ELA Reading results are available for students in grades 3-10, FAST Math results are available for students in grades 3-8, the Algebra 1 EOC exam is taken by students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and the Geometry EOC exam is taken by students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Tables 1-5 show the results of the matching process.

Once the matched groups were created, the growth in English Language Acquisition of immigrant students was determined based on the change in the percentage of students deemed proficient in English, achieving a Level 4 or above on the Reading portion and an overall composite proficiency level score of 4 or above on the ACCESS exam, from last year (2022-2023) to this year (2023-2024), as compared to demographically similar non-immigrant ELL peers. Similarly, to assess student growth/achievement in ELA and Math, the percentage of students who achieved a Level 3 or above on the exams were compared from last year to this year by immigrant status.

**Table 1**

*Case Control Matching Results of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Students by Grade Level Span for ACCESS*

	Immigrant				Non-Immigrant			
	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	51.3%	52.5%	54.6%	52.8%	51.3%	52.5%	54.6%	52.8%
Female	48.7%	47.5%	45.4%	47.2%	48.7%	47.5%	45.4%	47.2%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>								
White	3.6%	3.5%	2.3%	1.2%	3.6%	3.5%	2.3%	1.2%
Black	3.4%	3.4%	3.3%	3.5%	3.4%	3.4%	3.3%	3.5%
Hispanic	92.7%	92.7%	94.3%	95.2%	92.7%	92.7%	94.3%	95.2%
Other	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%
<b>Disability Status</b>								
No Disability	93.6%	95.2%	98.6%	99.5%	93.6%	95.2%	98.6%	99.5%
Disability	6.4%	4.8%	1.4%	0.5%	6.4%	4.8%	1.4%	0.5%
<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>								
FRL	41%	48.5%	46.6%	47.6%	41%	48.5%	46.6%	47.6%
No FRL	59%	51.5%	53.4%	52.4%	59%	51.5%	53.4%	52.4%
<b>Composite ACCESS Scale Score</b>								
Mean (SD)	220.64 (66.95)	295.73 (45.19)	335.9 (40.88)	356 (38.55)	220.70 (66.93)	295.81 (45.19)	335.96 (40.82)	356.1 (38.5)

**Table 2**

*Case Control Matching Results of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Students by Grade Level Span for FAST ELA*

	Immigrant			Non-Immigrant		
	3-5	6-8	9-10	3-5	6-8	9-10
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	51%	51.9%	51.6%	51%	51.9%	51.6%
Female	49%	48.1%	48.4%	49%	48.1%	48.4%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>						
White	5%	4.7%	3.1%	5%	4.7%	3.1%
Black	5%	4.6%	5.1%	5%	4.6%	5.1%
Hispanic	88.9%	90%	91.3%	88.9%	90%	91.3%
Other	1.1%	0.7%	0.5%	1.1%	0.7%	0.5%
<b>Disability Status</b>						
No Disability	96.8%	98.4%	99.3%	96.8%	98.4%	99.3%
Disability	3.2%	1.6%	0.7%	3.2%	1.6%	0.7%
<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>						
FRL	55.2%	47.2%	49.3%	55.2%	47.2%	49.3%
No FRL	44.8%	52.8%	50.7%	44.8%	52.8%	50.7%
<b>FAST ELA Scale Score</b>						
Mean (SD)	185.7 (22.24)	201.74 (22.37)	212.83 (23.94)	185.9 (22.19)	201.94 (22.3)	212.9 (23.92)

**Table 3**

*Case Control Matching Results of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Students by Grade Level Span for FAST Math*

	Immigrant		Non-Immigrant	
	3-5	6-8	3-5	6-8
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	52.5%	54.6%	52.5%	54.6%
Female	47.5%	45.4%	47.5%	45.4%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
White	3.5%	2.3%	3.5%	2.3%
Black	3.4%	3.3%	3.4%	3.3%
Hispanic	92.7%	94.3%	92.7%	94.3%
Other	0.4%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%
<b>Disability Status</b>				
No Disability	95.2%	98.6%	95.2%	98.6%
Disability	4.8%	1.4%	4.8%	1.4%
<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>				
FRL	48.5%	46.6%	48.5%	46.6%
No FRL	51.5%	53.4%	51.5%	53.4%
<b>FAST Math Scale Score</b>				
Mean (SD)	295.73 (45.19)	335.9 (40.88)	295.81 (45.19)	335.96 (40.82)

**Table 4***Case Control Matching Results of Grade 9 Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Students for Algebra 1 EOC*

	Immigrant	Non-Immigrant
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	50.7%	50.7%
Female	49.3%	49.3%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White	1.7%	1.7%
Black	3.6%	3.6%
Hispanic	94.4%	94.4%
Other	0.3%	0.3%
<b>Disability Status</b>		
No Disability	99.4%	99.4%
Disability	0.6%	0.6%
<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>		
FRL	54.9%	54.9%
No FRL	45.1%	45.1%
<b>FAST Math Scale Score</b>		
Mean (SD)	234.16 (24.84)	234.16 (24.84)

**Table 5***Case Control Matching Results of Grade 10 Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Students for Geometry EOC*

	Immigrant	Non-Immigrant
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	51.7%	51.7%
Female	48.3%	48.3%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White	2.6%	2.6%
Black	5%	5%
Hispanic	92.2%	92.2%
Other	0.2%	0.2%
<b>Disability Status</b>		
No Disability	99.4%	99.4%
Disability	0.6%	0.6%
<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>		
FRL	52.5%	52.5%
No FRL	47.5%	47.5%
<b>Algebra 1 Scale Score</b>		
Mean (SD)	386.01 (32.84)	386.01 (32.78)

## RESULTS

Immigrant students improved significantly in terms of English proficiency based on their ACCESS exam results between the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years in all grades (Table 6). Most notably, the biggest increase in percent proficient was for students in grades 3-5, as the percentage doubled, increasing from 16.1% in 2022-2023 to 32.3% in 2023-2024. Moreover, immigrant students saw more growth in English language proficiency between the two school years as compared to non-immigrant students at every grade level span.

**Table 6**

*Immigrant vs. Non-Immigrant student growth on the ACCESS Exams*

<i>ACCESS Proficiency (Level 4 or above on Reading and Composite)</i>		
	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>
<b><i>Immigrant</i></b>		
<i>K-2</i>	5.1%	14.7%
<i>3-5</i>	16.1%	32.3%
<i>6-8</i>	20.8%	24.9%
<i>9-12</i>	19.5%	22.7%
<b><i>Non-Immigrant</i></b>		
<i>K-2</i>	5.3%	10.2%
<i>3-5</i>	14.4%	16.4%
<i>6-8</i>	16.6%	8.8%
<i>9-12</i>	16.6%	9.6%

In terms of the ELA and Math outcomes, the percentage of both immigrant and non-immigrant students who reached a Level 3 achievement level on the FAST exams grew between the third progress monitoring period (PM3) at the end of the 2022-2023 school year, and PM3 at the end of the 2023-2024 school year, except for non-immigrant students in grades 6-8 on the FAST Math exam (Table 7). Both groups of students had similar rates of growth on the FAST ELA Reading exam from last year to this year at all grade levels, with students in grades 3-5 showing the most progress (+17.4 percentage points change for immigrant students and +16.1 percentage points change for non-immigrant students). However, immigrant students experienced a unique amount of growth on the FAST Math exam, especially in grades 3-5. For example, at PM3 in 2023, only 12.3% of immigrant students in grades 3-5 and were scoring at a level 3 or above on the exam, whereas 50.1% of immigrant students in grades 3-5 scored at or above a level 3 at PM3 in 2024. The percentage of immigrant students reaching an achievement level of 3 or above in grades 6-8 also increased slightly (+2.1 percentage points). In comparison, the percentage of non-immigrant students achieving a level 3 or above in grades 3-5 only grew by 4.4 percentage points between the two school years, and there was actually a decrease in passing scores for non-immigrant students in grades 6-8 between the two school years (-15.2 percentage points). Additionally, a higher amount of immigrant students scored at an achievement level of 3 or above on both the Algebra 1 and Geometry EOC exams compared to demographically similar non-immigrant peers (Table 8).

**Table 7***Immigrant vs. Non-Immigrant student growth on the FAST Exams*

	<i>FAST ELA Reading (Level 3 or above)</i>		<i>FAST Math (Level 3 or above)</i>	
	PM3 (2223)	PM3 (2324)	PM3 (2223)	PM3 (2324)
<b><i>Immigrant</i></b>				
3-5	15.9%	33.3%	12.3%	50.1%
6-8	14.8%	28.4%	39.1%	41.2%
9-10	13%	24.8%		
<b><i>Non-Immigrant</i></b>				
3-5	15.9%	32%	43.6%	48%
6-8	14.8%	28.2%	60.9%	45.7%
9-10	13.1%	27.7%		

**Table 8***Immigrant vs. Non-Immigrant student outcomes on the Algebra 1 and Geometry EOC Assessments*

	<i>Algebra 1 EOC (Level 3 or above)</i>	<i>Geometry EOC (Level 3 or above)</i>
	PM3 (23-24)	PM3 (23-24)
<b><i>Immigrant</i></b>	47%	44.8%
<b><i>Non-Immigrant</i></b>	41.2%	38.9%

## DISCUSSION

Although there was growth for both immigrant and non-immigrant students on the ACCESS exam, the FAST ELA Reading exam, and for most students on the FAST Math exam, immigrant students had larger rates of growth at all grade levels on the ACCESS exam, with the largest growth in grades 3-5, and slightly larger rates of growth in grades 3-5 on the FAST ELA Reading exam. Additionally, immigrant students in grades 3-5 demonstrated large gains on the FAST Math exam, and the percentage of immigrant students reaching an achievement level of 3 or above in grades 6-8 grew slightly as well, while the percentage of non-immigrant students passing in grades 6-8 actually decreased by a good amount. Lastly, more immigrant students achieved a level 3 or above on the Algebra 1 and Geometry EOC exams than demographically similar non-immigrant peers in 2024.

These results may indicate that immigrant students, specifically those in grades 3-5, are benefitting the most from the resources provided to them through the Title III IY grant, especially for English language proficiency and Math, as reflected in the growth of their ACCESS and FAST Math scores. Additionally, the fact that immigrant students are experiencing similar or higher growth on the state standardized assessments and EOC exams as compared to their non-immigrant peers may indicate that the support they are receiving is giving them the extra push that they need to meet the grade-level standards at the same rate as their non-immigrant peers, as it would be reasonable to expect that immigrant students may struggle to meet grade-level standards when they are adapting to an entirely new country and school system. Although we cannot state that this growth is due to the Title III IY grant-funded programs, these results are certainly promising and may suggest that immigrant students are benefitting from the services provided to them through the grant, and their academic outcomes are improving as a result.