Austin Independent School District
Department of Program Evaluation

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BILINGUAL/ESL PROGRAMS EVALUATION SUMMARY: 2006–2007

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Texas law requires that every student with a primary home language other than English, who is identified as limited English proficient (LEP), be provided with a full opportunity to participate in a bilingual education (BE) or English as a second language (ESL) program. To ensure educational equity, the law also states that districts must seek certified teaching personnel and assess these students' achievement in the state-mandated Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum. Austin Independent School District (AISD) provides two programs to serve LEP students or English language learners (ELL): BE, which provides instruction in English and the native language (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean) in the content areas; and ESL, which provides intensive English instruction. ESL is both a component of BE and a stand-alone program. The goal of the BE program is to enable ELL students to become competent in comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing through the development of literacy and academic skills in the students' primary language. The goal of the ESL program is to develop students' literacy through the integrated use of second-language instructional methods.

In compliance with state law, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) on each campus makes instructional placement and testing decisions intended to assure that students will be served by the program that can best address their language needs. At each school, the roles of the LPAC members are to evaluate the academic progress and language of instruction of ELL students and to determine if ELL students will take the state assessments in English or in Spanish. The program in which a particular student participates depends on the student's home language, grade level, language dominance, and program availability. Parental permission is required for an ELL student to participate in either language program. If parental permission for program participation is not granted, the student participates in an all-English classroom without BE or ESL services provided.

EVALUATION MANDATE

In reference to program evaluation, Chapter §89.1256, of the 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC, 1996) states the following:

> a) all districts required to conduct a bilingual education or English as a second language program shall a) all districts required to conduct a bilingual education or English as a second language program shall shall conduct periodic assessment and continuous diagnosis in the languages of instruction to determine program impact and student outcomes in all subject areas; and (b) annual reports of educational performance shall reflect the academic progress in either language of the limited English proficient students, the extent to which they are becoming proficient in English, and the number of students who have been exited from the bilingual education and English as a second language programs (TEA, 2005).

The purposes of this report are to provide information to district program decision makers and staff, as well as to comply with the legal mandate. This report presents a brief description of the demographics pertaining to AISD ELL students and summarizes their academic achievement in English and Spanish on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and their acquisition of English on the Texas English Proficiency Language Assessment System (TELPAS). Unless otherwise noted, all student data summarized in this report were obtained from the district's student data systems. The student demographic data were part of the district's fall report to the state-required Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

DESCRIPTION OF THE AISD ELL STUDENT POPULATION

During the 2006–2007 school year, program staff identified 20,782 ELL students (25.3% of the AISD student population). The numbers and percentages of ELL students served in each program and the number and percentage of students whose parents did not approve program services are as follows:

- The BE program served 13,162 (63.3%) students.
- The ESL program served 5,280 (25.4%) students, as well as 1,519 (7.3%) ELL students whose parents did not approve of their participation in the BE program, but approved of their participation in the ESL program.
- Parents of 821 (4.0%) ELL students did not approve services by either the BE or ESL program.

The number of ELL students served in the 2006–2007 BE/ESL programs increased from the previous year by 1,426 students. The number of students whose parents did not approve of their children's BE/ESL program participation in 2006–2007 decreased by 13, compared with the prior year.

Of the 19,961 (96.0%) ELL students who participated in the district's BE/ESL programs:

- 15,331 (76.8%) were in grades pre-K through 6 (elementary school);
- 2,467 (12.4%) were in grades 6 through 8 (middle school); and
- 2,163 (10.8%) were in grades 9 through 12 (high school).

The ethnic distribution of all ELL students (n = 20,782) shows that most (93.7%, n = 19,470) were of Hispanic origin, and the next largest group (4.1%, n = 854) were of Asian origin. The ethnicity of the remaining ELL students (2.2%, n = 458) included

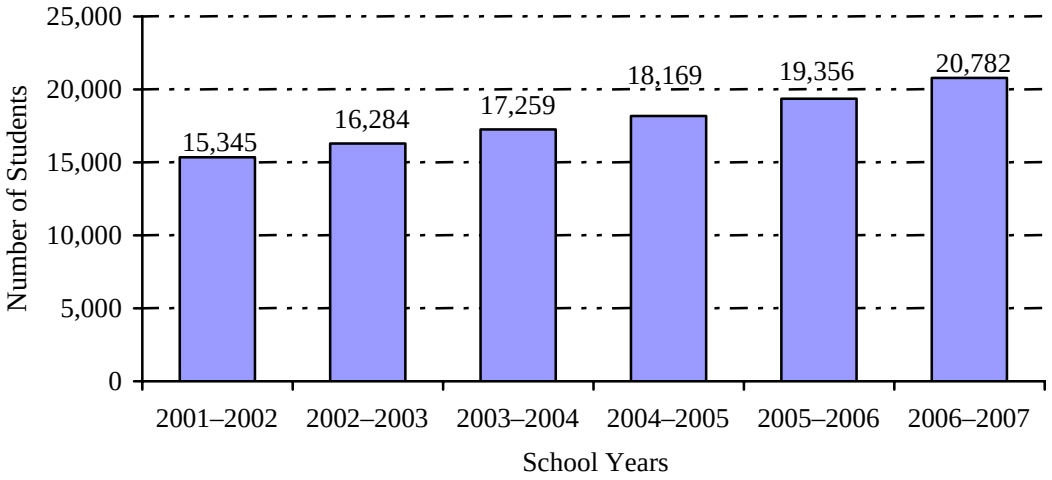
American Indian, Alaskan Native, African American, and White (not of Hispanic origin) students.

In 2006–2007, most AISD ELL students were native Spanish speakers (93.0%, n = 19,342). Speakers of Vietnamese comprised the next largest segment of AISD ELL students (1.3%, n = 271), followed by Korean (<1%, n = 175). The remaining ELL students (4.8%, n = 994) included speakers of other native languages, including Arabic, Urdu, French, Farsi (Persian), Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, Hindu, Gujarati, Telegu, Mandarin, and Pilipino/Tagalog.

GROWTH IN AISD ELL STUDENT POPULATION

The AISD ELL student population has increased incrementally for the past 19 years (González, 1995, 1999, 2006a, 2006b). Between 2001–2002 and 2006–2007, the population of AISD ELL students increased by 35.4% (n = 5,437) (see Figure 1). The largest year-to-year increase of AISD ELL students occurred from 2005–2006 to 2006–2007 (n = 1,426), and the smallest occurred from 2003–2004 to 2004–2005 (n = 910). ELL students became an increasingly large percentage of the total AISD student population during this same period. In 2001–2002, ELL students comprised 19.9% of the district's students, and by 2006–2007 the percentage had risen to 25.3% (see Table 1).

Figure 1: Growth of AISD ELL Student Population from 2001–2002 Through 2006–2007



Source: AISD PEIMS student records, 2000–2001 through 2006–2007

Table 1: Numbers and Percentages of AISD ELL Students Compared with the Total AISD Student Population, 2001–2002 Through 2006–2007

School Year	Number of AISD ELL Students	Number of AISD Students	Percentage of AISD Students Who Are ELL Students
2006–2007	20,782	82,140	25.3%
2005–2006	19,356	81,155	23.8%
2004–2005	18,169	79,950	22.7%
2003–2004	17,259	79,007	21.8%
2002–2003	16,284	78,608	20.7%
2001–2002	15,345	77,128	19.9%

Source: AISD PEIMS student records 2003–2004 through 2006–2007; AISD student attendance records, 1999–2000 through 2002–2003

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

During the 76th Texas legislature, Senate Bill 103 mandating a new statewide student assessment program, known as TAKS, was passed. TAKS has been administered since the 2002–2003 school year and is anchored in the state-mandated curriculum, TEKS. The State Board of Education set the TAKS passing standards for each test.

The TAKS tests are administered in reading to students at grades 3 through 9; in writing to students at grades 4 and 7; in English language arts (ELA) to students in grades 10 and 11; in science to students in grades 5, 8, 10, and 11; and in social studies to students in grades 8, 10, and 11. The TAKS are administered in Spanish and English to students in grades 3 through 6. The Spanish TAKS assesses the academic progress of ELL students who receive academic instruction in Spanish while they are learning English.

Satisfactory performance on the TAKS in grade 11 became a prerequisite to earning a high school diploma for students in the class of 2005. Exit level tests for grades 11 and 12 are offered at different times throughout the year for students who have not yet passed in one or more subject areas. Students in grades 3 and 5 must pass certain subject areas to be promoted to the next grade as part of the state's Student Success Initiative (SSI) (TEA, 2006b). For school year 2006–2007, SSI allowed for three administrations of the Spanish or English TAKS in reading for students in grades 3 and 5, and in mathematics for students in grade 5.

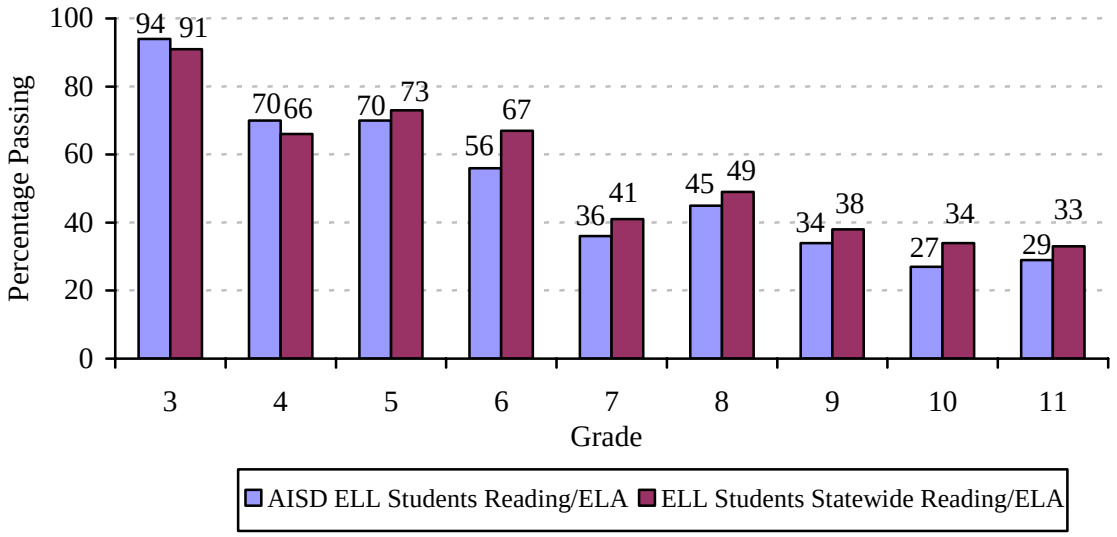
AISD ELL STUDENTS' ENGLISH TAKS RESULTS

Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 present the English TAKS results for AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide for students in grades 3 through 11, by subject area, for the 2006–2007 school year (AISD, 2007a, 2007b; TEA, 2007d, 2007e). In general, in all five TAKS subject areas, greater percentages of ELL students in the elementary grades passed TAKS than did ELL students in the middle or high school grades. With respect to TAKS reading and mathematics for students in grade 3, greater percentages of AISD ELL students (94% and 77%, respectively) passed TAKS,

compared with ELL students statewide. In TAKS mathematics for students in grade 4, the same percentage from each group (77%) passed. In TAKS writing for students in grade 4, a greater percentage of AISD ELL students (86%) passed TAKS than did ELL students statewide (83%). However, at all other grade levels, across all subject areas, lesser percentages of AISD ELL students than percentages of ELL students statewide passed TAKS.

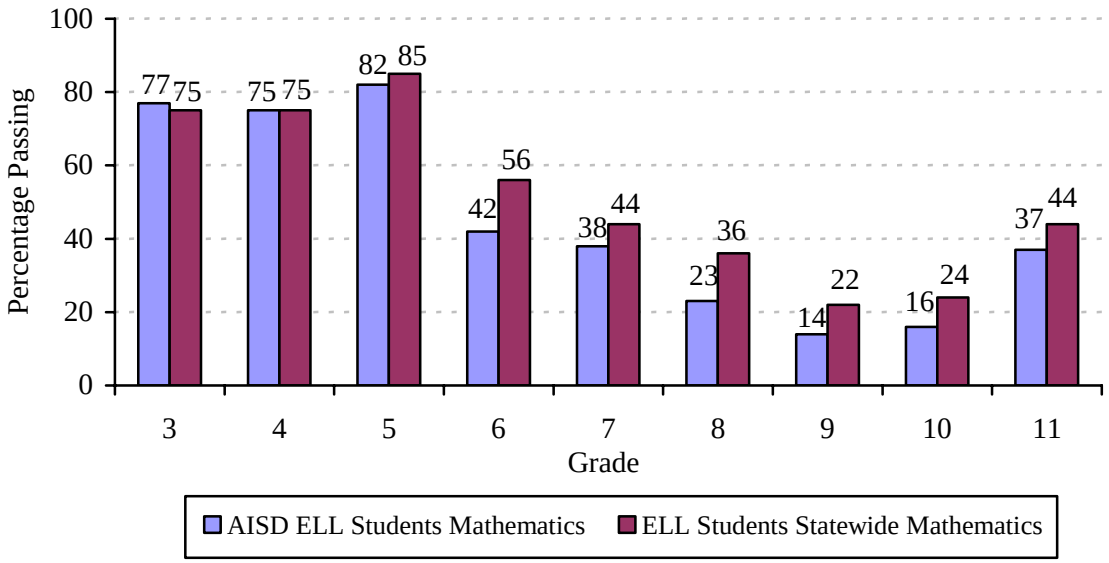
The greatest disparities for TAKS reading/ELA occurred in grade 6, where passing percentages of AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide differed by 11 percentage points. With respect to TAKS mathematics, the greatest difference (14 percentage points) was at grade 6, where 42% of AISD ELL students passed TAKS, compared with 56% of ELL students statewide. The largest difference with respect to TAKS social studies occurred in grade 8, with 38% of AISD ELL students passing TAKS, compared with 53% of ELL students statewide. In TAKS science, the greatest difference was in grade 5, where 38% of AISD ELL students passed the test, compared with 49% of ELL students statewide.

Figure 2: Percentages of AISD ELL Students and ELL Students Statewide Passing English TAKS Reading/ELA, by Grade Levels, 2006–2007



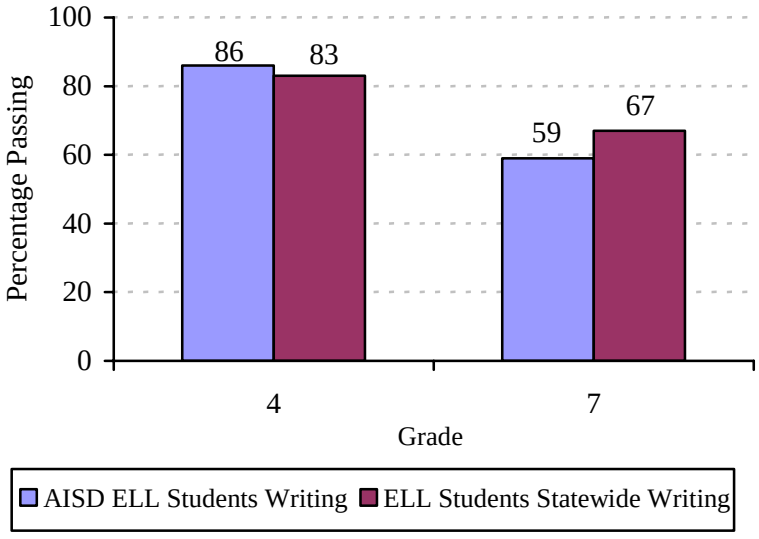
Sources: AISD TAKS District Summary Reports, May 2007; AISD TAKS District Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007; TEA TAKS Statewide Summary Reports, May 2007; TEA TAKS Statewide Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007

Figure 3: Percentages of AISD ELL Students and ELL Students Statewide Passing English TAKS Mathematics, by Grade Levels, 2006–2007



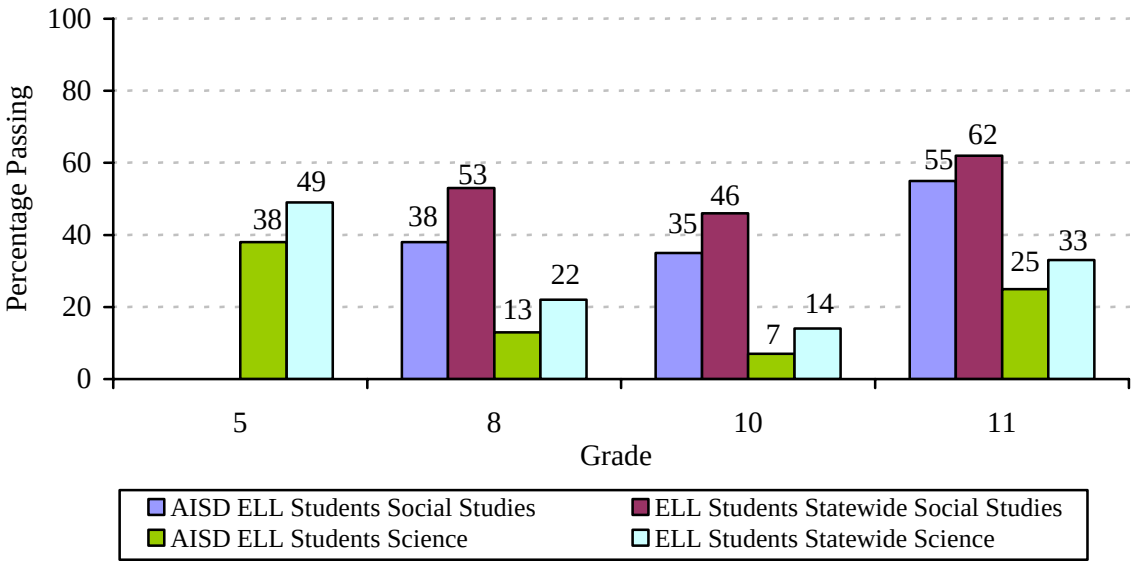
Sources: AISD TAKS District Summary Reports, May 2007; AISD TAKS District Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007; TEA TAKS Statewide Summary Reports, May 2007; TEA TAKS Statewide Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007

Figure 4: Percentages of AISD ELL Students and ELL Students Statewide Passing English TAKS Writing, by Grade Levels, 2006–2007



Sources: AISD TAKS District Summary Reports, May 2007; TEA TAKS Statewide Summary Reports, May 2007

Figure 5: Percentages of AISD ELL Students and ELL Students Statewide Passing English TAKS Social Studies and Science, by Grade Levels, 2006–2007



Sources: AISD TAKS District Summary Reports, May 2007; TEA TAKS Statewide Summary Reports, May 2007

The percentages of AISD ELL students who passed English TAKS in all subject areas in school years 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 are presented in Tables 2 and 3 (AISD, 2007a, 2007b; González, 2006b). A comparison of the percentages passing by grade level shows that out of 27 possible comparisons, improvements were evident in 19, declines in 5, and in 3 cases the percentages passing were unchanged. The largest gain from 2005–2006 to 2006–2007 was on TAKS reading in grade 7, while the largest loss during that same period was on TAKS science in grade 8. All gains in percentages passing from 2005–2006 to 2006–2007 are in bold text in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Differences in Percentages of AISD ELL Students Passing English TAKS Reading/ELA and Mathematics, 2005–2006 and 2006–2007

Grade	Reading/ELA			Mathematics		
	2006	2007	Difference	2006	2007	Difference
3	94	94	0	75	77	**+2**
4	59	70	**+11**	69	75	**+6**
5	65	70	**+5**	79	82	**+3**
6	49	56	**+7**	40	42	**+2**
7	20	36	**+16**	24	38	**+14**
8	30	45	**+15**	19	23	**+4**
9	34	34	0	12	14	**+2**
10	26	27	**+1**	17	16	-1
11	36	29	-7	36	37	**+1**

Sources: González, 2006b; AISD TAKS District Summary Reports, May 2007; AISD TAKS District Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007

Table 3: Differences in Percentages of AISD ELL Students Passing English TAKS Writing, Social Studies, and Science, 2005–2006 and 2006–2007

Grade	Writing			Social Studies			Science		
	2006	2007	Difference	2006	2007	Difference	2006	2007	Difference
4	79	86	**+7**	**	**	**	**	**	**
5	**	**	**	**	**	**	34	38	**+4**
7	47	59	**+12**	**	**	**	**	**	**
8	**	**	**	38	38	0	21*	13	-8
10	**	**	**	28	35	**+7**	6	7	**+1**
11	**	**	**	61	55	-6	26	25	-1

Sources: González, 2006b; AISD TAKS District Summary Reports, May 2007; AISD TAKS District Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007
**Note: The first administration of TAKS science at grade 8 was in 2006.*
***Grades not tested*

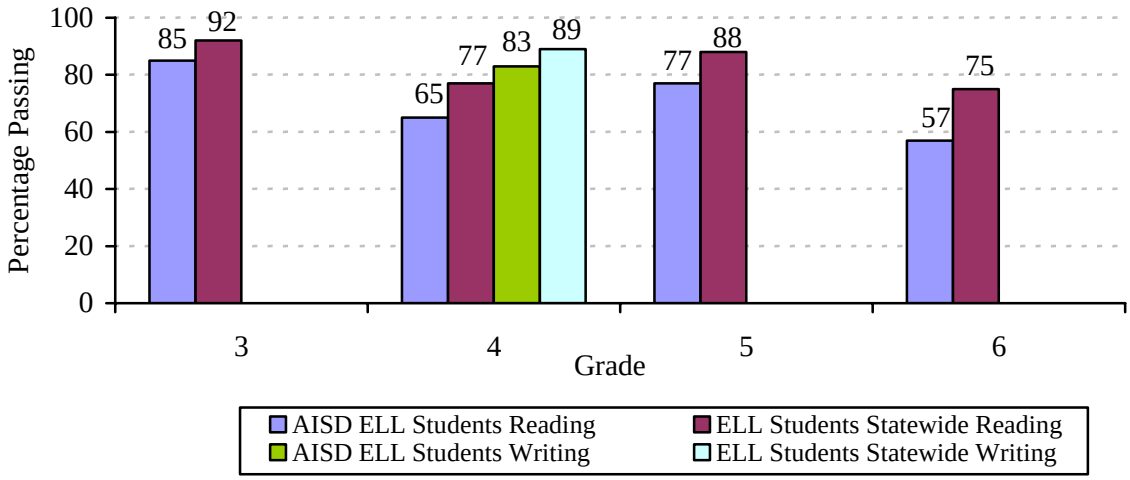
AISD ELL Students' Spanish TAKS Results

The Spanish TAKS, also based on the TEKS, is available in grades 3 through 6 for measuring student knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics, writing, and science among ELL students for whom the Spanish test is appropriate. The LPAC determines whether the English or Spanish TAKS would more appropriately measure the academic knowledge of individual ELL students, based on their native/primary language development, instructional program, and immigrant status.

Figures 5 and 6 present the results of the spring 2007 Spanish TAKS in reading, writing, mathematics, and science for AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide (AISD, 2007a, 2007b; TEA, 2007d, 2007e).

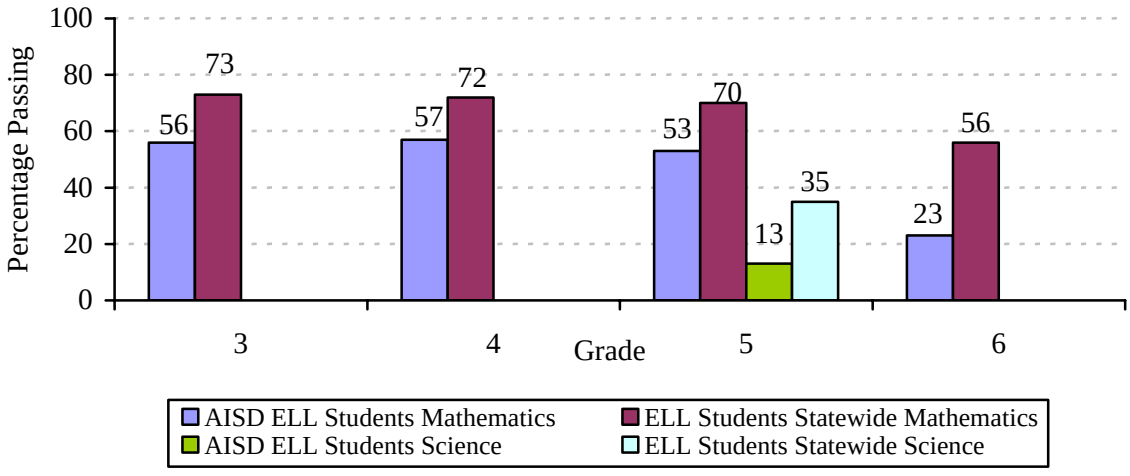
The percentages of AISD ELL students who passed TAKS were greater than 80% for students in grade 3 in reading, and for students in grade 4 in writing. However, lesser percentages of AISD ELL students passed TAKS in all four subjects on the Spanish TAKS, compared with percentages for ELL students statewide. The greatest disparity in percentages passing between AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide occurred in grade 6 on TAKS mathematics with a difference of 33 percentage points. The second greatest disparity between AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide occurred in TAKS science in grade 5, with a difference of 22 percentage points between AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide.

Figure 5: Percentages of AISD ELL Students and ELL Students Statewide Passing Spanish TAKS Reading and Writing, by Grade Levels, 2006–2007



Sources: AISD TAKS District Summary Reports, May 2007; AISD TAKS District Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007; TEA TAKS Summary Reports, May 2007; TEA TAKS Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007

Figure 6: Percentages of AISD ELL Students and ELL Students Statewide Passing Spanish TAKS Mathematics and Science, by Grade Levels, 2006–2007



Sources: AISD TAKS District Summary Reports, May 2007; AISD TAKS Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007; TEA TAKS Summary Reports, May 2007; TEA TAKS Cumulative Summary Reports, July 2007

TEXAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (TELPAS)

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 has very specific requirements and objectives that pertain to all states that receive federal funds for LEP students as part of the Title III, Part A grant. TELPAS was developed by TEA to address some of these requirements, known as annual

measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs), mandated by Title III, Part A. These objectives address English language proficiency and the progress ELL students are making toward meeting state academic standards. The first federal AMAO is based on the percentage of *ELL students who are making progress in attaining English language proficiency*, as measured by annual gains. The second AMAO is based on *the percentage of ELL students who attain English language proficiency* each year. The third AMAO measures the academic performance of ELL students relative to the academic standards defined by the state for compliance with federal accountability provisions, often referred to as adequately yearly progress (AYP). Since the passing of NCLB (2001), all public school districts, campuses, and states have been evaluated annually for AYP.

NCLB identified the following student groups for comparison purposes: all students, African American, Hispanic, White, economically disadvantaged, special education, and LEP students. Because ELL students have been included in the AYP rating system since 2002–2003, the third AMAO was the first to be addressed by the state. Final AYP results from TEA indicate that AISD met AYP standards for 2006–2007 (TEA, 2007a).

In 2006–2007, TEA set targets for the AMAOs and used them to address the progress ELL students were making toward meeting the first and second AMAOs (TEA, 2007f). The targets for ELL students who were making progress in attaining English language proficiency (i.e., the first AMAO) were set at 17.0% for grades K through 2 and 44.0% for grades 3 through 12. The targets for ELL students who met the percentages for students attaining English language proficiency (i.e., the second AMAO) were set at 2.5% for grades K through 2 and 26.0% for grades 3 through 12. AISD ELL students met the TEA targets for both AMAOs, as follows:

- First AMAO (progress): 37.7% of ELL students in grades K through 2 and 60.1% of ELL students in grades 3 through 12 improved their performance level
- Second AMAO (percent proficient): 7.8% of ELL students in grades K through 2 and 32.3% of ELL students in grades 3 through 12 attained English language proficiency

The Title III, Part A grant of NCLB requires states to assess the progress of ELL students in the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while they are learning English. The TELPAS measures progress in the four domains and consists of two major components: the Reading Proficiency Tests in English (RPTE) and the Texas Observation Protocols (TOP). These assessments are administered annually to students in grades K through 12 who have been identified as ELL students, including students who may not be participating in a BE or ESL program. ELL students are administered the TOP at grades K through 2 to assess all four language domains and at grades 3 through 12 to assess listening, speaking, and writing. ELL students in grades 3 through 12 are administered the RPTE to assess reading (TEA, 2007b).

On April 4, 2006, TEA sent a letter to school districts that delineated the agency's expectations for the TOP holistic training components for the 2006–2007 school year. The letter specified that, in developing the training plan, the goal of TEA "has been to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessment process while keeping the training requirements manageable" (TEA, 2006a). During the previous school year, TEA established an online rater qualification system to assess the impact of the training. The teachers who administer the TOP must hold teaching credentials, have the student in their class, and be knowledgeable of the student's ability to use English in an instructional and informal setting. The teachers must be appropriately trained and must rate the student in all eligible language domains; a teacher is not permitted to assess only particular domains (e.g., only speaking or listening). Because of the qualifying component, raters for grades 2 and higher participate in training appropriate to their grade assignment and training needs. The training groups in the 2006–2007 school year consisted of teachers not trained in 2005–2006 who needed in-depth training; teachers who had been trained the previous school year, but had not been qualified; and teachers who had been trained and had successfully completed the qualifying component of their training. Teachers who qualified the previous school year took an online refresher course. Teachers/raters for students in grades K and 1 participated in training, but they did not have a qualifying component at the completion of their training.

In spring 2005, TEA fully implemented the TOP and adopted the TELPAS composite ratings by assigning weights to the language domains. The weights used in spring 2007 remained the same as in the 2005–2006 school year: 5% each for listening and speaking, 75% for reading, and 15% for writing. The language proficiency ratings were beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. The composite score was obtained by multiplying each language proficiency rating by the appropriate weight and taking the sum. The composite score became a composite rating, according to the values in Table 4 (TEA, 2007c).

Table 4: Conversion Table for TELPAS Composite Scores, 2007

TELPAS Composite Scores	TELPAS Composite Rating
1.0 – 1.5	Beginning
1.6 – 2.5	Intermediate
2.6 – 3.5	Advanced
3.5 – 4.0	Advanced high

Source: TEA, 2007c

Of the 18,560 AISD TELPAS documents submitted to TEA in 2007, 17,934 (96.6%) included ratings in all four language domains (AISD, 2007c). The Admissions, Review, and Dismissal Committees (ARDs) exempted 132 students (<1.0%) because data were not available in at least one language domain, and 494 (2.7%) students were not rated.

An analysis of AISD TELPAS results for 2007 showed that most bilingual ELL students in grades K (96%), 1 (90%), and 2 (70%) achieved beginning or intermediate proficiency ratings. In grade 3, percentages of bilingual ELL students were more evenly

dispersed across the proficiency ratings: 23% beginning, 26% intermediate, 23% advanced, and 28% advanced high. In grades 4, 5, and 6, more than half of the ELL students achieved advanced or advanced high proficiency ratings. Thus, as grade level increased, the percentages of bilingual students at the beginning proficiency level decreased, while the percentages of these students achieving the advanced proficiency level increased. The average composite ratings for bilingual ELL students by grade level were as follows:

- beginning in grades K and 1;
- intermediate in grades 2 and 3; and
- advanced in grades 4, 5, and 6.

These results reflect the fact that, in the early grades (K through 2), bilingual ELL students are developing their first language and learning content in their first language while they are receiving some instruction in English. In the upper elementary grades (3 through 6), more of the content instruction is delivered in English, and students are beginning to make the transition into all-English instruction.

The AISD TELPAS data for ESL students indicated that 56% of students in grade K, 38% of students in grade 1, and 34% of students in grade 2 achieved beginning or intermediate proficiency ratings. More than 79% of ESL students in grades 3 through 8, 11, and 12 achieved advanced or advanced high proficiency ratings. ELL students in grades 9 and 10 achieved advanced and advanced high proficiency ratings of 60% and 67%, respectively. ELL students in ESL programs receive their instruction primarily in English using ESL methodology; thus, their advanced and advanced high proficiency ratings reflect the use of English at all grade levels.

Finally, a comparison of the TELPAS data for AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide presented some similarities between these student groups. In grade K, 88% of AISD ELL students and 80% of ELL students statewide in BE programs achieved beginning proficiency levels. In grade 1, 71% of AISD ELL students and 54% of ELL students statewide in BE programs achieved beginning proficiency levels. By grade 2, 78% of AISD ELL students and 63% of ELL students statewide in BE programs achieved beginning or intermediate proficiency levels. Most AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide in ESL programs achieved intermediate, advanced, or advanced high proficiency levels at all grade levels. The largest percentage of AISD ELL students in ESL programs who obtained that proficiency level (87%) was in grades 5, and the smallest percentage (44%) was in grade K. The largest percentage of ELL students statewide in ESL programs who obtained that proficiency level (86%) was in grades 8, and the smallest percentage (36%) was in grade K.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both BE and ESL programs emphasize the mastery of English language skills, as well as the mastery of skills in mathematics, science, and social studies, as critical parts of the academic goals for all students to achieve in school. Through the years, an increasing number of ELL students have participated in the state's student assessment

system because the state's rules guiding student exemptions have become more rigorous. NCLB requires ELL students to be one of the groups examined for AYP measures and has very specific requirements that pertain to ELL students who participate in programs funded by Title III, Part A. Academic performance standards for ELL students are the same as they are for all students. While they are becoming academically proficient in English, ELL students must participate in the state's assessment program. Thus, in some situations, their academic performance can affect school and district accountability ratings. As the number of ELL students continues to increase in schools, their English language acquisition and general academic success in the state's assessment programs have become an important concern for all educators and administrators.

In recent years, the academic performance of AISD ELL students on TAKS has improved at certain grade levels and in some subject areas, but a persistent achievement gap remains between AISD ELL students and ELL students statewide, especially beyond grade 5. Therefore, the following recommendations are offered to AISD decision makers.

- District and campus staff should provide more comprehensive academic support to AISD ELL students at middle and high schools where the percentages passing TAKS have been low.
- Along with English language development for ELL students, instruction in all academic subjects must be explicit and concentrate on subject-specific vocabulary as well as broad literacy skills.
- ELL students should be taught how to assess their own academic progress so they can recognize when additional academic support is needed.
- ELL students must have opportunities to participate in any program or service on campus that supports students who are struggling academically.
- The LPACs' role of monitoring the academic achievement of ELL students is most important. Because of this role, the LPAC members should recommend that appropriate academic interventions and support be provided to ELL students that will enhance their progress toward their English language acquisition and academic achievement in general.
- Finally, when necessary, LPACs can intervene on behalf of ELL students by being their advocates. For instance, if the LPAC members determine from their work with ELL students that teachers at a campus are not familiar with ESL methodology or sheltered instruction, the LPAC members can recommend that campus professional development sessions be dedicated to such topics for the benefit of all ELL students.

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