



Bilingual and English as a Second Language Academic Performance Executive Summary, 2017–2018

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the academic performance of English learners (ELs) in the Austin Independent School District (AISD). This document summarizes academic course performance, graduation and dropout rates, performance on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) tests and performance on the end-of-course (EOC) tests, by bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) program, and student characteristics.

AISD ELs' dropout rates have been steadily declining over the last 5 years. During the 2012–2013 and 2013–2014 school years, increasing graduation rates were seen for ELs; however, between 2014–2015 and 2016–2017, the rates did not change, consistently staying just under 80%.

The Dual Language (DL) Program was expanded to 11 middle schools in the 2017–2018 school year resulting in increased participation. Of the students enrolled in the DL Program at the middle school level, 82% had been enrolled at the elementary level, as well. The program requires enrollment in an advanced-level Spanish course and one content course taught in Spanish for each semester of the school year. Of the students who took Spanish for Spanish Speakers I, end-of-year course grades showed that 91% passed the course and 71% had an annual average grade of an A or B. Of the students who took Spanish for Spanish Speakers II, again 91% passed the course, however, the percentage of students receiving an A or B for the EOC grade was slightly lower at 65%.

ELs' enrollment in advanced placement (AP) courses was underrepresented as compared with their non-EL peers, at both the middle school and high school levels. Non-ELs tended to perform slightly better than ELs in these courses; however, monitored (former EL) students' performance was comparable to that of their non-EL peers.

In addition to the academic performance just highlighted, ELs were assessed in academic subject areas on state-required assessments, such as the STAAR and EOC exams. The minimum passing standard for STAAR and EOC exams is referred to as *approaches grade level*. Students achieving this performance level are likely to succeed in the next grade or course with some targeted intervention. There are two higher performance levels recognized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The next performance level from *approaches* is *meets grade level*, which indicates that students are likely to succeed in the next grade or course with minimal interventions. The highest performance level a student can achieve is *masters grade level* and indicates that students are expected to succeed in the next grade or course without any interventions.

When compared with ELs across the state, AISD ELs had higher passing rates on many STAAR assessments. For example, AISD ELs outperformed Texas ELs in reading in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades; in math at 4th and 5th grades; in writing at 4th grade; in science at 5th grade; and in social studies at 8th grade. Additionally, depending on the subject and the grade level, between 12% and 23% of 5th-grade ELs, 4% and 15% of 8th-grade ELs, and 4% and 24% of high school ELs not only passed the STAAR/EOC tests but also reached the highest benchmark (masters grade level).

Focusing on a group of ELs and non-ELs who were enrolled in AISD for 6 consecutive years and who were matched by socioeconomic status, for STAAR math, ELs had slightly higher passing rates than did non-ELs from grade 4 to grade 8. For reading, non-ELs' passing rates were slightly higher than those of ELs in grades 3 through 6. This gap in reading decreased as grade level increased and was no longer observed in grade 7, although a slight gap returned at 8th grade.

As students become English proficient, they begin to exit EL status. As a result, exited students' performance on STAAR and EOC assessments is included with non-ELs' performance, although exited ELs are monitored by the state for 2 years. As ELs become proficient in English, their academic performance improves on tests that are in English only, as are the STAAR tests after 5th grade and all EOC tests. Thus, as ELs exit, the performance of current ELs appears lower due to the exclusion of the performance of the exited ELs. Examination of the academic performance of students who ever had an EL status (ever ELs) and former ELs (who have exited EL status) is needed. As anticipated, as grade level increases and ELs exit, a performance gap appears between ever ELs, current ELs, and former ELs, with former ELs outperforming both current and ever ELs. In fact, former ELs' performance on STAAR surpassed that of all AISD students by 4th or 5th grade, depending on the subject, and this trend also was observed in EOC performance.

Students in all bilingual and ESL programs performed better on STAAR assessments at the elementary level than at the middle school level. ELs in the DL program performed similarly to all ELs on most tests. **Non-ELs in DL performed better than ELs in DL and better than all ELs across all grades and subjects; however, once ELs in DL exited EL status, their performance was similar to that of their non-EL DL peers and in some subjects surpassed the performance of non-ELs in DL.** For all grades and subjects, ELs in the Transitional/Late Exit Program (T/LE) had similar performance on STAAR as that of all ELs. ELs in the ESL Program displayed a STAAR math performance pattern that was slightly different from that of the other programs, with a steady increase in passing rates at the elementary grade levels, rather than a dip in passing rates at 4th grade. ELs in ESL displayed similar performance trends as did ELs in bilingual programs for the other tested subjects.

For all courses, AISD ELs passed EOC tests at higher rates than did ELs across the state. AISD ELs' passing rates on the EOC English I and II improved slightly from 2017 to 2018. **AISD ELs who had exited EL status and were being monitored had high STAAR and EOC passing rates in all courses, showing their continued academic success after having been served by these programs in earlier years.** Lastly, regardless of monitoring status, former ELs' performance on EOC tests surpassed that of all AISD students, indicating that after exiting the EL programs, they sustained high academic achievement levels.

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September, 2018

DRE Publication 17.42