

College Readiness, Advanced Course, and Enrollment Outcomes of Graduates Who Were Ever Classified as English Learners, Class of 2018

This report provides outcomes for Austin Independent School District (AISD) graduates from the Class of 2018 who were ever classified as English learners (eELs) in terms of advanced coursework, college readiness assessments, and postsecondary enrollment.

Demographics

The 2017–2018 AISD graduating class was composed of 929 eELs and 3,623 students who grew up speaking English and consequently were not categorized as English learners (referred to in this report as English speakers). A larger percentage of eELs (87%) than English speakers (38%) were economically disadvantaged; 89% of eELs were Hispanic, and 48% were still classified as English learners at the time of graduation (Table 1).

Table 1
2017–2018 Graduating Class Demographics

	eELs	English speakers
Asian	5%	4%
African American	1%	10%
Hispanic	89%	45%
Other	2%	4%
White	3%	37%
Economically disadvantaged	87%	38%
English learner	48%	0%
Special education	12%	9%
Total count	929	3,623

Source. 2017–2018 AISD student records

* $p < .0001$

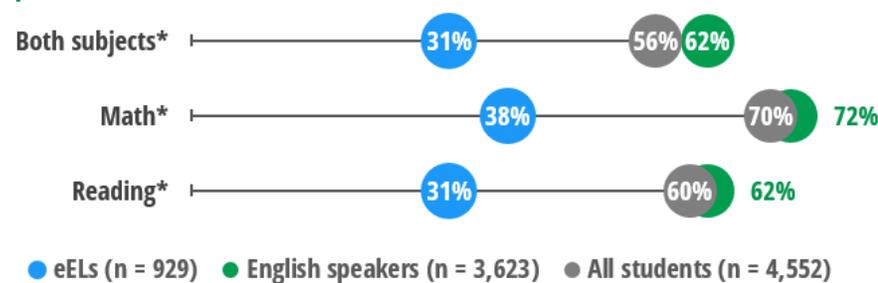
College Readiness

Of the eELs in the 2017–2018 graduating class, 31% met criteria on the reading and 38% met criteria on the math college-ready assessments (Figure 1). These percentages were significantly lower than what was observed for English speakers (62% and 72%, respectively). For more information about college-ready assessments, see the side-bar on page 2.

When economic status was taken into consideration by examining assessment outcomes for economically disadvantaged students from each group, English speakers still met college-ready criteria in both subjects at significantly higher rates than did eELs. However, this difference was smaller than what was observed overall (Figure 2).

Figure 1

Lower percentages of eELs met college ready criteria in reading and math than English speakers.

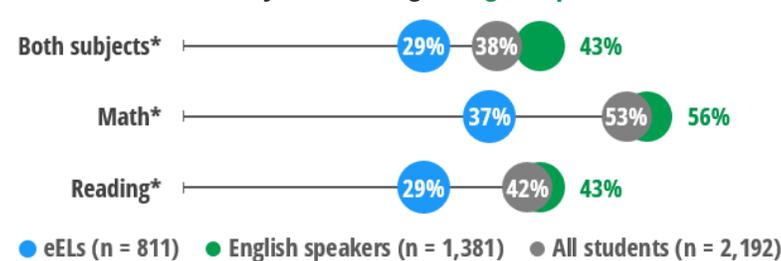


Source. 2017–2018 AISD student records

* $p < .0001$

Figure 2

Economically disadvantaged eELs met college ready criteria in reading and math at lower rates than economically disadvantaged English speakers.



Source. 2017–2018 AISD student records

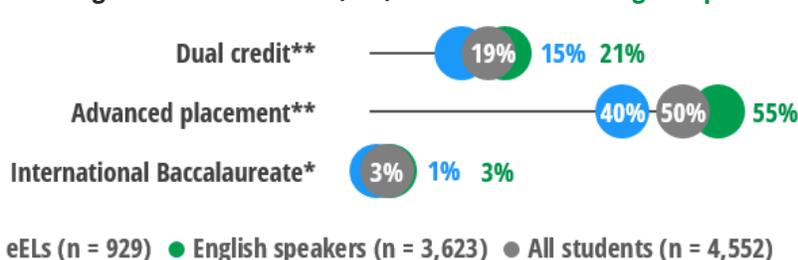
* $p < .0001$

Advanced Courses

Similarly, significantly higher percentages of English speakers than of eELs earned credits in advanced courses (Figure 3). The difference was more pronounced for advanced placement (AP) than for dual credit (DC) or international baccalaureate (IB) courses. However, when economic status was taken into consideration, no significant differences were observed between percentages of economically disadvantaged eELs and of economically disadvantaged English speakers who earned credit in AP, DC, or IB courses (Figure 4).

Figure 3

Lower Percentages of eELs earned DC, AP, or IB credits than English speakers.



Source. 2017–2018 AISD student records

* $p < .0001$

** $p < .001$

College and Career Ready Indicators

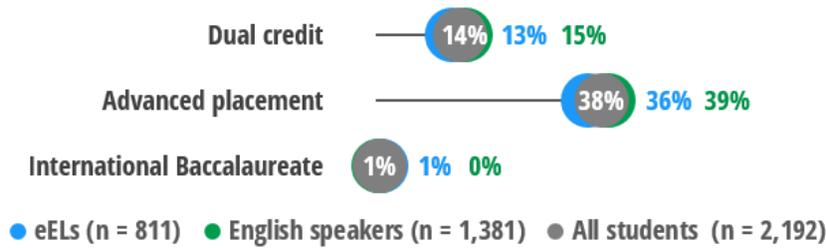
AISD high school students are encouraged to meet college-ready criteria for reading and math on one of three assessments: the ACT, SAT, or Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessment. In this report, the percentage of students who met college-ready criteria includes results from the ACT, SAT, and TSI assessments. The analysis used students' highest outcome across assessments and dates. Students who met college ready criteria for a subject in more than one assessment were counted once in the analysis.

Students are required to meet college-ready criteria in reading and math before enrolling in DC courses that are college-credit bearing. Enrollment in AP or IB courses does not have such requirements.

AISD's Core Belief One is that all students will graduate college, career, and life-ready. To this effect, AISD has established several indicators for college, career, and life-readiness, such as the number of students completing industry licensures/certifications, the percentage of high school students submitting college applications, the percentage of students enrolling directly in college (within one year of graduation), percentage of high school students in grades 9-12 completing AP/DC courses (more information about AISD's strategic plan and core beliefs can be found at [https://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dept/strategic-plan/docs/2015 StratPlan FINAL ENGv2.pdf](https://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dept/strategic-plan/docs/2015%20StratPlan_FINAL_ENGv2.pdf)).

Figure 4

When economic status was taken into account, similar percentages of economically disadvantaged eELs and English speakers earned DC, AP, and IB credits.



Source. 2017–2018 AISD student records

Industry Certifications

By graduation in 2018, eELs had earned certifications at a higher rate (12%) than had students who had never been classified as English learners (8%). The largest group of certifications earned by eELs was in the field of hospitality (21%), followed by law (15%), business (13%), education (13%), and arts (11%) (Table 2). It is possible that industry certification may indicate an intention by students to join the workforce immediately after high school instead of going directly to college. However, similar percentages of graduating eELs with industry certifications (40%) and without industry certifications (41%) enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the first year after graduation.

Table 2

Career Cluster of Certifications Earned by eELs

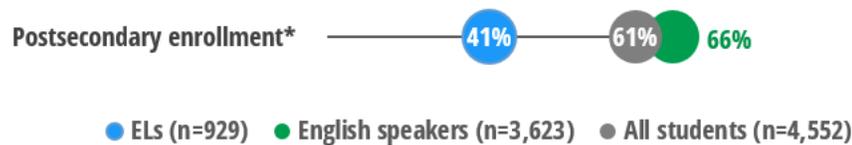
Career cluster	% Certifications
Hospitality	21%
Law	15%
Business	13%
Education	13%
Arts	11%
Agriculture	9%
Health science	9%
Transportation	7%
STEM	1%
Information technology	1%

Source. 2017–2018 AISD student records

Postsecondary Enrollment

Significantly higher percentages of English speakers (66%) than of eELs (41%) enrolled in postsecondary institutions in 2018–2019, the year after graduation (Figure 5). This difference was smaller, but still significant, when economic status was taken into consideration (Figure 6).

Figure 5
Lower percentages of students who were eELs enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the year after high school than did English speakers.

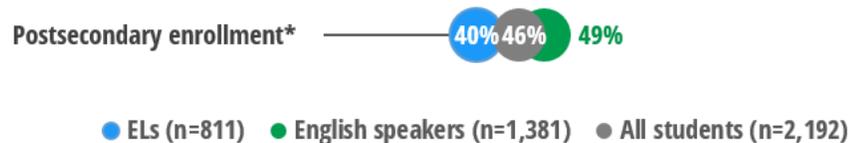


Source. 2017–2018 AISD student records

Note. Postsecondary institutions include 2 and 4 year colleges and universities

* $p < .0001$

Figure 6
Similarly, when economic status was taken into account, lower percentages of students who were eELs enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the year after high school than did English speakers.



Source. 2017–2018 AISD student records

Note. Postsecondary institutions include 2 and 4 year colleges and universities

* $p < .0001$

Lower postsecondary enrollment rates are not unique to AISD eELs. The High School Longitudinal Study, conducted from 2009 to 2013, followed high school students into postsecondary education. Results from that study showed that English learners were less involved in college preparation activities (e.g., college entrance exams and financial aid applications) and were less likely to enroll in postsecondary institutions than were their English-speaking peers (Dalton et al., 2018).

In addition, it is important to note that eELs and English speakers who graduated in 2018 were drastically different in terms of their economic status. The majority of eELs (87%), as opposed to the minority of English speakers (38%), were classified as economically disadvantaged. It is possible that economic status had an impact on graduating eELs' choices about advanced courses while in high school and about postsecondary education in the year after graduation. Studies indicate that economic status affects the type of activities and/or education pursued by young adults after high school graduation (Baker & Velez, 1996; Frempong et al., 2012; Garland, 2007; Nam & Huang, 2008). In a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, students in the highest economic category were 30% more likely to enroll in college than were their counterparts in the lowest economic category (NCES, 2019).

Postsecondary Data

Understanding the data

This report represents postsecondary enrollment outcomes for AISD graduates based on National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data. The NSC database consists of 98% nationwide enrollment in both public and private postsecondary institutions. In accordance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations, data from NSC were linked to AISD graduate records on the following variables: student's first and last name, date of birth, and zip code.

Limitations

The results in this report may be an underestimation of actual postsecondary enrollment. Discrepancies in a student's name or a change in zip code are common reasons an enrollment record may not be found. Also, the NSC data do not include all postsecondary institutions within or outside the United States. Students may opt out of sharing their enrollment data with external agencies, thus their records might not be reported to the NSC and/or to the school district. If a student's enrollment information is shared with the NSC but the student declines to share the information with his or her former school district, the NSC includes this student's information in aggregate reporting. Thus, enrollment counts and percentages may not match across NSC aggregate reports and district generated reports using student-level data. Even with these limitations, the NSC postsecondary enrollment database is the most comprehensive source available at this time.

Summary and Recommendations

It has been estimated that 10% of the nearly 5 million students in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) public schools are English learners. If students who have reached English proficiency are taken into consideration, this percentage becomes even higher (NCES, 2019). Yet, the literature indicates that these students lag behind English speakers in college access and attainment (Kanno and Cromley, 2013). Educational policies, academic requirements, and economic and social strains create obstacles that hinder eELs' opportunities to engage in college preparation activities and enroll in postsecondary education.

For example, after eELs enter the K-12 school system, language acquisition takes precedence over academic content. Many eELs end up being tracked into less rigorous curricula that leads them away from college preparation activities and advanced courses in high school (Perez & Morrison, 2016). In addition, participation in advanced courses is contingent on students meeting criteria on content exams that are administered in English. However, eELs may not yet be fully proficient in English. Thus, inability to meet criteria in content exams may indicate eELs are still mastering the English language and not that they lack content knowledge (Cook et al., 2015). Lastly, eELs, especially those from lower economic means, may have a variety of responsibilities outside school, such as caring for siblings, serving as interpreters to their limited English-speaking parents, and working to help provide for the family (Perez, 2009). Compounding these concerns, the cost of higher education may affect eELs' choices as they approach high school graduation (Kanno & Grosik, 2012).

Students are required to meet college readiness on TSI, ACT, or SAT assessments before taking DC courses. Lower percentages of eELs than of English speakers met criteria on reading and math college-ready assessments, which likely affected eELs' opportunities to take DC courses in high school. Consequently, it is recommended that academic support (e.g., from Austin Partners In Education) be provided to eELs to help them prepare and meet college-ready criteria in reading and math.

Lower percentages of eELs than of English speakers participated in advanced courses while in high school and enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the year immediately after graduation. Advanced courses are designed to support high school students with more challenging content likely to be encountered in college classes and to create a path to postsecondary enrollment.

Participating in higher education has been associated with better economic outcomes and better health than not participating in higher education (Kanno & Grosik, 2012); thus, it is important for all students to be encouraged to engage in postsecondary education. It is recommended that special attention be paid to encouraging and supporting eELs in taking part in advanced courses (e.g., DC or AP) while in high school. It is also important to support eELs in completing college applications and financial aid applications (especially because many eELs come from lower-income families).

Lastly, a higher percentage of eELs (12%) than of English speakers (8%) earned industry certifications, an indicator for career readiness. The majority of eELs' certifications were in hospitality, law, business, and education. Such certifications are developed by industry leaders to reflect the needs of real-world career expectations and therefore distinguish individuals with certifications from their peers when applying for jobs and increase earning potential. Programs such as the Early College High School and the Pathways in Technology Early College High School support students in developing industry skills and participating in DC coursework. These students graduate from high school with work experience (through internships while in high school), industry certifications, and an associate's degree, and can join the work-force and / or continue taking college courses toward a bachelor's degree. Therefore, it is recommended that eELs be encouraged to enroll in such programs when entering high school.

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