

English Learners' Growth towards English Proficiency in First through Fifth grade, 2018-19

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Introduction

Beginning in 2017-18, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) started measuring English Learner (EL) students' growth towards English proficiency to align with the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). PDE now sets annual ACCESS growth targets for each student. An annual growth target represents "the growth on the ACCESS assessment that a student must make in each of the years remaining before being expected to attain proficiency, which usually takes no more than six years."¹

To set annual growth targets, PDE uses a student's first ACCESS² assessment scale score to determine their baseline proficiency level. Then, a formula is applied that combines the student's grade level at the baseline and their baseline English proficiency level to calculate an attainment target score and target grade for achieving attainment. According to the formula from PDE, it should take no more than six years to achieve attainment (and fewer than six years if the student starts at a higher baseline level). For example, if a student has a scale score that corresponds to level 1.0 in Kindergarten, she would have until fifth grade to reach the attainment target that corresponds to 5.0, which is considered proficiency. If she was a level 2.0 in Kindergarten, she would have until fourth grade to reach proficiency.

About ACCESS

Who takes it? All English Learners (ELs) in kindergarten through 12th grade take the ACCESS assessment. In 2018-19, 97% of K-5 ELs were assessed.

What does it measure? The test rates students' English proficiency in four language domains: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

How are scores calculated? Students receive a scale score in each of the domains, which are then translated into levels (1.0-6.0) representing English Language Proficiency (ELP), with a 5.0+ considered proficient. A composite ACCESS score combines the domain scale scores and also ranges from 1.0 to 6.0.

The scale score required for students to reach proficiency varies by grade level.

When is it administered? Students take the ACCESS annually in January or February.

¹ For more on PDE's calculation of growth targets for EL's in alignments with ESSA requirements, see PA's ESSA Consolidated State Plan, page 12: <https://bit.ly/2VpYfNU>

² ACCESS stands for Assessing Communication and Comprehension in English State to State and was developed by World Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium at the University of Wisconsin. Visit PDE's website to read more about the ACCESS assessment: <https://bit.ly/2JW7d2v>

PDE then calculates annual growth targets to measure whether ELs are on track to reach their attainment target (proficiency) by their target grade. This is done by subtracting a student's baseline score from the ACCESS composite scale score required to achieve proficiency (attainment target) and dividing that number by the number of years allotted for each student to reach proficiency (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Annual Growth Target Calculation



Annual growth targets are recalculated each year to adjust for students' progress. To do this, the student's most recent scale score is subtracted from their attainment target, and the result is divided by years until their target grade for attainment. For example, if a student missed his growth target scale score by ten points and had two years left to attain proficiency, the scale score increase needed to meet the following year's annual growth target would increase by 5 points to reflect the points missed in the current year. Attainment targets do not change according to annual performance. Instead, they will always be the target scale score which was determined after the student's baseline year.

In future years, SDP's School Progress Reports (SPR) will include the percent of ELs meeting their annual growth target, meaning their Growth Toward Target (GTT) met or exceeded 100%.³

This brief provides an overview of how many ELs in 1st through 5th grade met their ACCESS growth target in the 2018-19 school year.

Research Questions

1. How many ELs met or exceeded their annual growth target in 1st through 5th grade in 2018-19?
2. How did the percentage of ELs meeting or exceeding their growth target differ by grade level and number of years classified as an EL?
3. How did the percentage of ELs meeting or exceeding their growth target differ by subgroups such as gender, race/ethnicity, and home language?

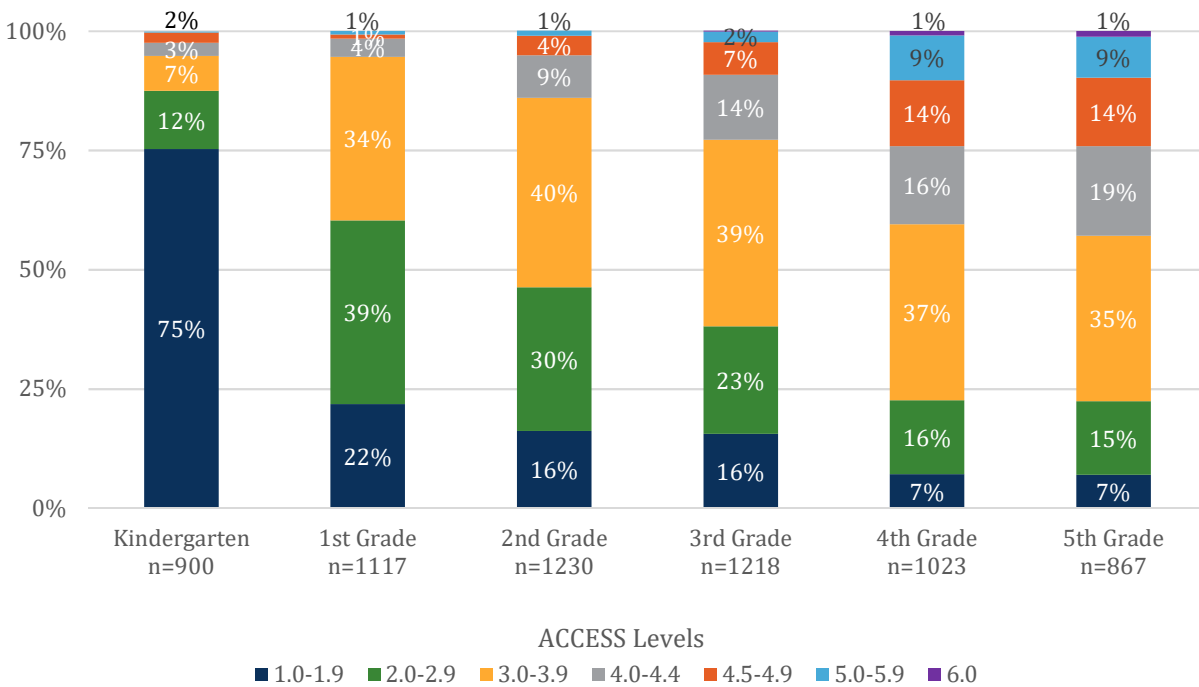
³ Students who are enrolled at a school and are scheduled to take the ACCESS but do not (this may occur for a variety of reasons, including transience) are counted as not meeting their growth target. Because they did not take the ACCESS test, these students are not included in this analysis.

Methods and Sample

A student's first ACCESS test provides a baseline score, and then they need one additional year of ACCESS data to measure growth. Our growth analyses include ELs with both a 2017-18 and 2018-19 ACCESS score in SDP who were continuously enrolled between October 1st and the end of the ACCESS testing window in February are included in this analysis (n=5,757), representing 77% of the 7,485 EL students enrolled in grades 1-5.⁴ Data for 2019-20 is not yet available, so kindergartners and ELs who enrolled in SDP in 2018-19 are excluded from this analysis.

To provide context for this analysis, ORE first examined the distribution of EL proficiency levels for K-5 students (Figure 2). The vast majority of ELs in Kindergarten (75%) scored at a Level 1, meaning that they are performing at the lowest level of English proficiency. This number is drastically lower in grade 1 through 5, where respectively only 7% and 22% of students are considered Level 1. Although the percentage of students in Levels 1 and 2 are smaller in older elementary grades, the majority (over 50%) of ELs in any elementary grade are still Level 3 or below.

Figure 2. Percent distribution of ELs at each ACCESS proficiency level by grade, grades K-5 (2018-19)



Source: Qlik, ACCESS for ELs App, Overview Sheet, retrieved 10/21/19

⁴ These calculations differ from PDE's calculation because PDE includes any ELs currently enrolled in SDP, even if they took previous year ACCESS tests in other Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

Findings

There was a substantial difference in the overall percent of ELs in grades 1-5 in our sample who met their growth target and the percent of ELs in grades 1-5 who were in or beyond their attainment year who met their growth target.

Nearly half (46%) of ELs in grades 1-5 in our sample (n=5,757) met their annual ACCESS growth target in 2018-19 (Figure 3). Yet, less than a quarter (18%) of the ELs in or beyond their attainment year (n=903) did so (Figure 4). This means that ELs who are in or beyond the year in which they are expected to meet the score needed to demonstrate English proficiency, met their target less often than the overall population of ELs in grades 1-5.

Figure 3. Percent of ELs in grades 1-5 that met their growth target (n=5,757)

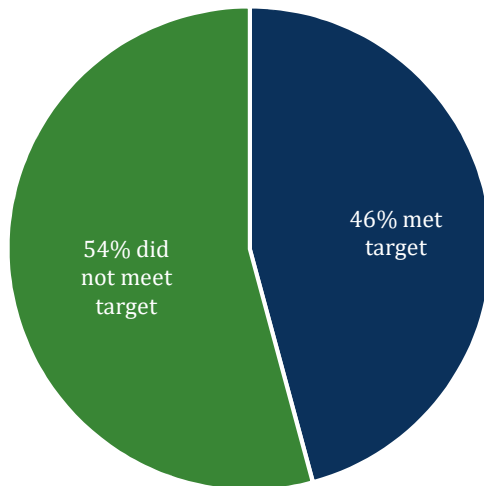
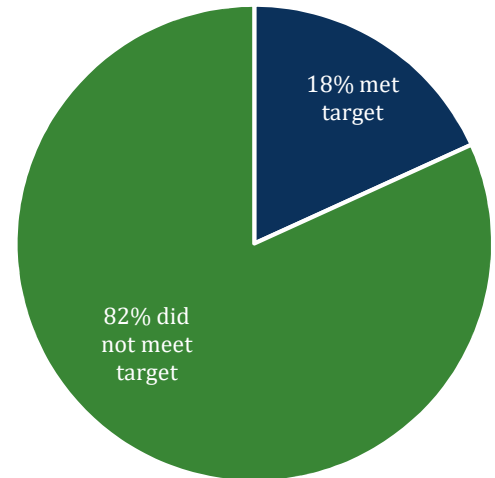


Figure 4. Percent of ELs in grades 1-5 in or beyond⁵ their attainment year that met their growth target (n=903)



Source: Qlik, ACCESS for ELs App, Growth to Target (GTT) Summary Sheet, retrieved 10/21/19

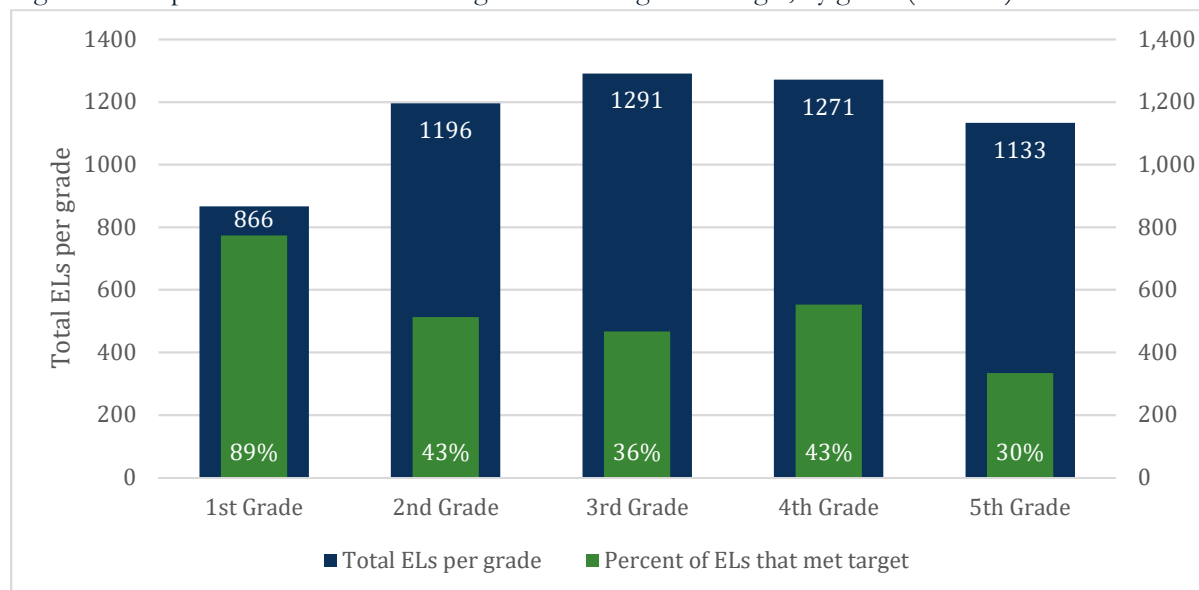
Most first grade ELs met their growth target.

The majority of first grade ELs (89%) met their annual growth targets from 2017-18 to 2018-19 (Figure 5). This was the only grade level where the majority of students met their target. In grades

⁵ Students who are beyond their attainment year are still required to make growth. Targets are recalculated each year and students continue to have an annual growth target even past their attainment year.

2-5, less than half of the students met their targets. Students in 3rd and 5th grades met their targets least often, with 36% and 30% of students meeting their annual targets, respectively.

Figure 5. The percent of students meeting their annual growth target, by grade (2018-19)⁶



Source: Qlik, ACCESS for ELs App, Growth to Target (GTT) Summary Sheet, retrieved 10/21/19

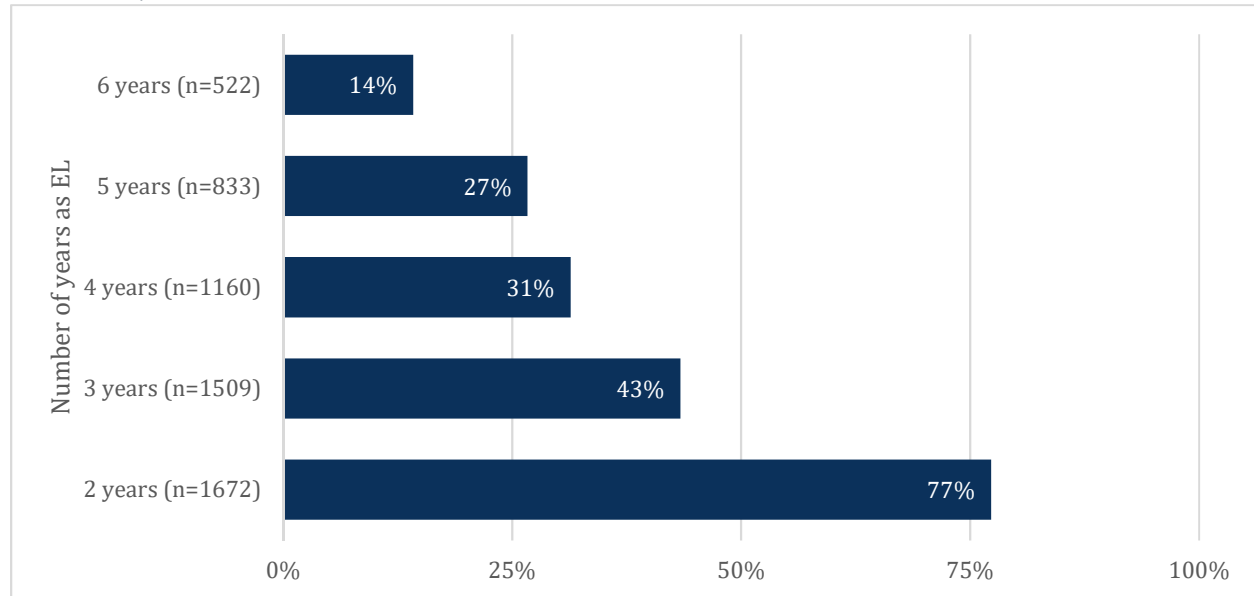
The percent of students meeting their growth target is negatively associated with the number of years they have been classified as an EL.⁷

Nearly 80% of students who had been classified as ELs for two years met their growth target (77%), whereas less than one-third of students (14%-31%) who had been classified as ELs for four or more years met their annual growth target in 2018-19 (Figure 7). After two years of classification, in our sample of 2017-18 to 2019 ACCESS data, the percent of students meeting their target decreased according to how long a student was classified as an EL. Students in our sample who are considered long term ELs (5+ years in the program) met their growth goals at the lowest rates of all students in our sample.

⁶ 2018-19 Kindergarteners are excluded from this analysis because measuring growth to target required two years of ACCESS data.

⁷ Years classified as an EL is the number of years that a student has been classified as an EL in SDP. This number excludes years in which they were not enrolled in SDP.

Figure 6. Percent of 1st-5th grade ELs meeting annual (2017-18 to 2018-19) ACCESS growth targets by number of years classified as an EL.⁸



Source: Qlik, ACCESS for ELs App, Growth to Target (GTT) Summary Sheet, retrieved 10/21/19

Table 1. Percent of 1st-5th grade ELs meeting annual (2017-18 to 2018-19) ACCESS growth targets by number of years in the EL program and grade level⁹

Grade Level	1st		2nd		3rd		4th		5th	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
2 years	840	90%	271	57%	221	61%	186	82%	154	63%
3 years			883	39%	261	38%	188	63%	161	52%
4 years					779	29%	212	42%	143	31%
5 years							656	28%	155	23%
6 years									497	14%

Source: Qlik, ACCESS for ELs App, Growth to Target (GTT) Summary Sheet, retrieved 10/21/19

How to Read this Table: This table shows the number and percent of students meeting their annual growth goal by the number of years they have been classified as an EL in SDP (rows) and their grade level (column). For example, 57% of 2nd grade students who have been classified as an EL for two years met their annual growth goal.

⁸ Excludes students who have been classified as an EL for one year (n=42). These students had a growth target because they were took their baseline assessment in the state of Pennsylvania, but SY18-19 was the first time they were classified as an EL in SDP.

⁹ For the sake of comparison, table excludes samples where n<40

ELs who identify as male, Hispanic/Latino, or are Spanish or Khmer speakers had the lowest rates of meeting their annual growth target from 2017-18 to 2018-19.

When examining outcomes by subgroup, several differences in student outcomes emerged. First, a greater proportion of female students met their annual growth target (48%) than did male students (44%) (Table 2). Second, over half of White (58%) and Asian ELs (53%) met their target, whereas only 40% of ELs identifying as Hispanic/Latino did so (Table 3). Russian-speaking ELs were the most likely to meet their annual growth target, with nearly three-quarters (63%) doing so as compared to 39% of Spanish-speaking ELs and 32% of Khmer-speaking ELs (Table 4).

Table 2. Percent of 1st-5th grade ELs meeting ACCESS annual growth targets by gender

Gender	Met target	Did not meet target
Female (n=2,690)	48%	52%
Male (n=3,067)	44%	56%

Source: Qlik, ACCESS for ELs App, GTT Subgroup Comparisons Sheet, retrieved 10/21/19

Table 3. Percent of 1st-5th grade ELs meeting ACCESS annual growth targets by race/ethnicity¹⁰

Race/Ethnicity	Met target	Did not meet target
Asian (n=1,429)	53%	47%
Black/African American (n=351)	47%	53%
Hispanic/Latino (n=3,028)	40%	60%
Multi Racial/Other (n=202)	37%	63%
White (n=729)	58%	43%

Source: Qlik, ACCESS for ELs App, GTT Subgroup Comparisons Sheet, retrieved 10/21/19

Table 4. Percent of 1st-5th grade ELs meeting ACCESS annual growth targets by home language¹¹

Home Language (spoken by 100+ students)	Met target	Did not meet target
Russian (n=215)	63%	37%
Chinese (Mandarin) (n=571)	61%	39%
Portuguese (n=226)	59%	41%
Vietnamese (n=179)	47%	53%
Arabic (n=361)	46%	54%
Spanish (n=2,985)	39%	61%
Khmer (n=154)	32%	68%

Source: Qlik, ACCESS for ELs App, GTT Subgroup Comparisons Sheet, retrieved 10/21/19

¹⁰ Due to low n counts, American Indian/Alaskan Native (n=6) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (n=16) are excluded from this analysis

¹¹ Includes languages spoken by 100+ students (n=4,691), representing 81% ELs in grades 1-5.

Conclusions

- Roughly half (46%) of ELs in grades 1-5 attained their annual growth targets in 2018-19. Of those ELs that were in their attainment year, or the year they expected to achieve ACCESS proficiency, less than one fifth (18%) met their growth target.
- ELs in 1st grade attained their annual growth targets in 2018-19 more often than ELs in other grades.
- Being classified as an EL for longer periods of time was associated with a lower percentage of students meeting their annual growth target in 2018-19.
- ELs who identify as male, Hispanic/Latino, or are Spanish or Khmer speakers met their annual growth targets between 2017-18 and 2018-19 least often.

Next Steps

ORE is currently conducting a similar analysis of annual EL growth between 2017-18 and 2018-19 for grade 6-12. Further planned analyses include: a three-year trend analysis of similar data points;; continued analysis of growth by demographic subgroups; and identification of schools whose ELs have demonstrated substantial growth to better understand the practices that may be related to that growth.