

Identification of gifted and talented English learner students in grades K–5 in Texas: Lessons from student-level data

Verónica Ruiz de Castilla & Diane August, American Institutes for Research

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What We Studied

The members of Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest’s Texas English Learners Research Alliance requested this project because they were interested in learning more about the participation of current English learner students in gifted and talented (GT) programs in Texas, and how their participation compared with that of former English learner students and students who were never English learner students.

A series of studies have been conducted to find out more about GT participation rates of current and former English learner students and students who were never English learner students. Existing research indicates that English learner students have historically been underrepresented in GT programs. According to data from the Office for Civil Rights at the US Department of Education, English learner students make up 9.6 percent of public school student enrollment in prekindergarten through grade 12 in the United States but account for only 2.7 percent of students enrolled in GT programs (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014). This underrepresentation of English learner students in GT programs was evident in 48 states, including Texas. Moreover, in a recent national survey of a sample of elementary GT programs commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education (Callahan, Moon, & Oh, 2013), only half of elementary school districts reported having strategies to identify as gifted historically underrepresented populations.¹ Please see appendix A for a brief review of recent literature on participation of English learner students in GT programs.

In Texas, the State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2009), adopted in 1996 and revised most recently in 2009, is the basic guide for Texas school districts in designing and improving their services for GT students. The plan covers five aspects: student assessment, service design, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and family-community involvement. For each of the five aspects, “the ‘In Compliance’ column of the State Plan displays required standards of service per Texas laws and rules. The Recommended and Exemplary standards are the standards of services that districts should aim for beyond the compliance with law and rule. Currently, the responsibility for implementing GT services aligned with these standards is the responsibility of the local school board. However, TEA does conduct financial audits of the gifted/talented allotment per the standards of the State Plan.”² One of the standards for selected services under the student assessment aspect of the state plan is presented in table 1: To qualify as an “exemplary” gifted/talented program, the population of the total district needs to be reflected in the population of the gifted/talented services program. Populations of the gifted and talented program can be defined by race/ethnicity, economic status, English learner status, homeless status, military status, and twice-exceptional children (i.e., students identified as both special education and EL).

¹ The national survey did not gather information specific to English learner students enrolled in GT programs.

² Information obtained on July 26, 2017, through electronic communication from the statewide coordinator, Gifted/Talented Education, Special Populations Division, Texas Education Agency.

Specific populations considered could vary from district to district. The most recent enrollment data available for the state indicate that 7.8 percent of grade K–12 students enrolled in Texas public schools participated in GT programs in the 2016/17 school year (TEA, 2017a). TEA publishes participation³ of students in GT programs by race/ethnicity and economically disadvantaged status, but not by English learner status. According to the numbers for 2016/17, African American and Hispanic representation was smaller in GT programs than in the overall student population (see figure 1). Conversely, Asian, White, and multiracial representation was larger in GT programs than in the overall student population (figure 1). Compared with their representation in overall student enrollment in 2016/17, students identified as economically disadvantaged made up a smaller percentage of students participating in GT programs (figure 1).

How We Analyzed the Data

To find out more about the participation of English learner students in GT programs in Texas public schools, this first component of the project proposed to answer three primary research questions:

1. How does the participation of current English learner students in GT programs compare with their participation in the total student population in Texas public schools?
2. What percentage of Texas schools serving grades K–5 have proportional representation of current and former English learner students in their general student population and in their GT population?
 - a. How do the demographic characteristics of schools with proportional representation compare with those of underrepresenter schools?
3. In what elementary grades are current, former, and never English learner students first identified as gifted?
4. How do the rates of GT participation at each grade level compare among current, former, and never English learner students?

To answer research question 1, REL Southwest researchers used school-level data corresponding to the 2014/15 school year provided by TEA. The data included the total number of students enrolled in the school and the total participating in GT programs, as well as total number of current English learner students enrolled in the school and the total number of current English learner students participating in GT programs. The student-level data used for questions 2 and 3 were obtained from the University of Texas Education Research Center (ERC).

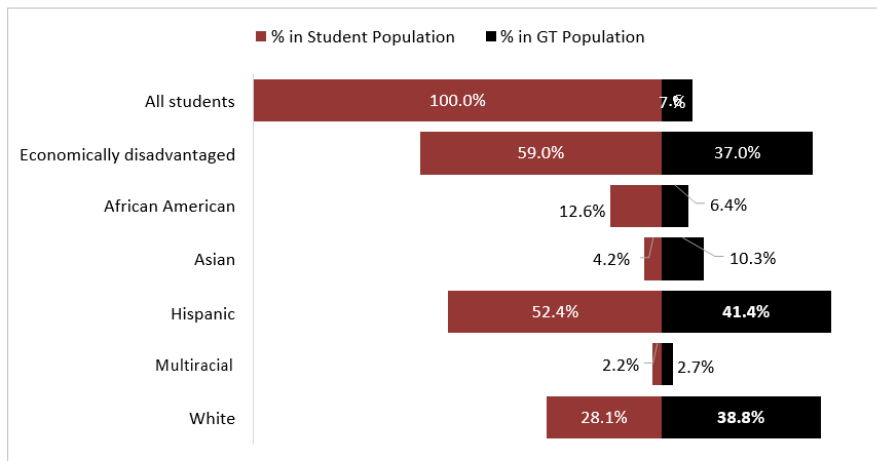
³ In Texas, the only gifted and talented indicator code indicates whether the student is participating in a state- approved gifted and talented program, as defined in 19 TAC §89.1. There is no gifted and talented indicator for a student who is identified as gifted and talented but is not participating in a gifted and talented program. Therefore, the language used throughout the report refers to participation as opposed to identification.

Table 1. Standards for selected services under the student assessment aspect of the Texas State Plan

In Compliance (C)	Recommended (R)	Exemplary (E)
1.6C Access to assessment and, if needed, GT services is available to all populations of the district (19 TAC §89.1(3)).	1.6R Over the past two (2) years, the population of the GT services program has become more closely reflective of the population of the total district.	1.6E The population of the total district is reflected in the population of the GT services program or has been for two (2) of the past three (3) years.

Source: Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (2009), Texas Education Agency.

Figure 1. Economically disadvantaged, African American, and Hispanic students are underrepresented in GT programs in Texas public schools, 2016/17



Source: Authors' compilation based on data from the Texas Education Agency (2017a).

The data included records of every student in the Texas public K–12 education system. To answer research question 2, cross-sectional student-level data for students in kindergarten through grade 5 from 2011/12 through 2014/15 were used. To answer research question 3, longitudinal student-level data from students in grades K–5 for four cohorts of kindergarten enrollees for the 2006/07 through 2009/10 school years were examined. Not included in the sample were students who enrolled after kindergarten, students who left Texas public schools between grades 1 and 5, and retained students.

The sample for question 1 consisted of school-level data for all Texas public schools serving children in early education through grade 12. Given that 66 percent of current English learner students in Texas public schools were enrolled in grades K–5 (TEA, 2017b), the calculations to answer question 1 were replicated using data only from schools serving students in grades K–5, had English learner students in their student population, had GT programs and were not missing data ($n = 2,643$ schools).⁴

The sample used to answer research question 2 consisted of student-level data for all students in Texas schools in grades K–5 from 2011/12 through 2014/15 (see table 2). It should be noted that the sample was limited to students in grades K–5 even in schools that served other grades. Because the analysis used the data from all students enrolled in grades K–5 each year, it is referred to as cross-sectional data. The student-level data was used to generate school-level values for grades K–5 each school year ($n = 4,140$ schools). This sample is larger than the sample of schools used in question 1 mainly because schools excluded due to masked data in question 1 could be included in research question 2. Schools with no GT programs, schools that did not serve English learner students, and schools with a larger percentage of ever English

⁴ The sample originally included 4,652 schools that served current English learner students in grades K–5, of which 3,920 had GT programs. From these, 1,277 schools were excluded because of masked counts due to serving fewer than five total students, fewer than five current English learner students, or fewer than five gifted students; these exclusions reduced the sample to 2,643 schools.

Table 2. The cross-sectional sample to answer research question 2 included all students in grades K–5 in Texas public schools

Grade	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
K	379,431	390,619	391,711	390,550
1	392,276	396,885	409,433	412,338
2	383,400	389,203	394,431	408,139
3	379,400	382,968	389,998	396,320
4	375,729	378,716	383,561	390,543
5	377,701	376,396	382,914	388,299
Total by year	2,287,937	2,314,787	2,352,048	2,386,189

Source: Authors' calculations based on a cross-sectional sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Table 3. The longitudinal sample included all students who started kindergarten between 2006/07 and 2009/10 and stayed in school through grade 5

Grade	Number of students by EL status in each grade				Percentage of students by EL status in each grade			
	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL	Total	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL	Total
K	299,634	0	732,346	1,031,980	29.0	0.0	71.0	100
1	291,856	7,778	732,346	1,031,980	28.3	0.8	71.0	100
2	280,829	18,805	732,346	1,031,980	27.2	1.8	71.0	100
3	264,854	34,780	732,346	1,031,980	25.7	3.4	71.0	100
4	215,593	84,041	732,346	1,031,980	20.9	8.1	71.0	100
5	166,644	132,990	732,346	1,031,980	16.1	12.9	71.0	100

Note: EL is English learner student. GT is gifted and talented student.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a longitudinal sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Table 4. One in four GT students identified in the longitudinal sample was an ever English learner student

Grade	Numbers of GT students first identified at each grade, by EL status			
	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL	Total
K	516	0	2,466	2,982
1	11,702	162	32,878	44,742
2	6,549	913	22,199	29,661
3	5,688	1,322	19,130	26,140
4	3,271	2,738	16,098	22,107
5	1,933	3,463	13,557	18,953
Total	29,659	8,598	106,328	144,585

Note: EL is English learner student. GT is gifted and talented student.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a longitudinal sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

learner students in their GT programs than in their student population were not included in this sample. The latter set of schools was excluded because the goal of the study was to examine schools that had proportional representation or underrepresentation rather than overrepresentation.

The sample used to answer research questions 3 and 4 was a subset of the sample used to answer research question 2. Specifically, the subset was limited to students who enrolled in kindergarten for the first time between 2006/07 and 2009/10 and for whom data was available in every grade from K to 5. The number of students included in each grade for these four cohorts of students is reported in table 3. Because the data used to answer this question included only students who enrolled in kindergarten and for whom data was available for grades K–5, it is referred to as the longitudinal sample. Not included in this longitudinal sample were students who enrolled after kindergarten, students who left Texas public schools between grades 1 and 5, and retained students.

To answer research questions 3 and 4, only those students identified as gifted and talented between grades kindergarten and 5 (see table 4) were included. The resulting sample comprised 144,585 students who were first identified as gifted and talented between kindergarten and grade 5: 29,659 students identified while current English learner students, 8,598 identified while former English learner students, and 106,328 identified as never English learner students (table 4).

To answer research question 1, first, the total student population, total current English learner students in the student population, total students in GT programs, and total current English learner students in GT programs were calculating by adding up the school totals for each of these variables. Next, the analysis used these totals to calculate the percentage of current English learner students in the total student population, the percentage of all students in GT programs, and the percentage of current English learner students in GT programs. The first two percentages are published by TEA in its annual report on enrollment in Texas public schools, but the third one (percentage of current English learner students in GT programs) is not. As explained in the Sample section, these calculations were replicated using totals from the subset of schools that covered at least one of grades K–5, served current English learner students, and did not have any of the needed data masked. It is important to remember that, as mentioned in the Sample section, these calculations are based on school-level data, so data for schools serving students in at least one grade in the K–5 range include all grades served and not just data for K–5.

To answer research question 2, the analysis used student-level data to determine if English learner students in grades K–5 were proportionally represented in GT programs at schools that served grades that included at least one grade in the K–5 grade span. The definition of schools with proportional representation used in this project is based on the E-formula (Roy, 2012) (see appendix B for a detailed explanation of the E-formula). Next, to identify any significant differences in demographic characteristics between schools identified as schools with proportional representation and schools with underrepresentation, the student-level data were used to calculate school-level means for demographic characteristics. Finally t-tests were used to determine whether the means of the two groups were significantly different (see tables C1 and C2).

It should be noted that while the analysis to answer research question 1 used school-level data to determine representation of English learner students in GT programs in schools serving grades K–5, the analysis to answer research question 2 used student-level data to determine representation of English learner students in GT programs in grades K–5. The use of student-level data enabled the research team to examine differences between current and former English learner students. Another advantage of using student-level data was that it allowed the analysis to look at representation just within the study’s grade range of interest, K–5, even though some schools served other grades. This was not possible when the analysis used school-level data to answer question 1.

To answer research question 3, researchers analyzed data from the longitudinal sample to determine the grade in which each GT student was first identified as gifted and their English learner status at the time of identification. Step 1 determined the number of students first identified as gifted in each grade by English learner status (current English learner, former English learner, never English learner). Step 2 added up these numbers across grades to obtain a total by English learner status for grades K–5. Step 3 calculated the percentage of students identified as gifted by English learner status in each grade using the count by English learner status in each grade (from step 1) as the numerator and using the total count of students identified as gifted in grades K–5 by English learner status (from step 2) as the

denominator. Steps 1–3 were done for each cohort separately. Given that there were similar results for the four cohorts, the analysis was replicated with the pooled data (all four cohorts together).

To answer research question 4, for each cohort, the REL Southwest research team determined the number of students participating in GT programs in each grade by English learner status in the grade (step 4). For each cohort, the research team also determined the number of students in each grade by English learner status (step 5). Both of these counts used the students’ English learner status in that grade. As step 6, the research team used the totals, by English learner status, from step 4 as numerator and the totals, by English learner status, from step 5 as the denominator to calculate the percentage of students participating in GT programs in each grade by English learner status. The totals in steps 4 and 5 and the resulting percentages in step 6 were very similar across cohorts, so the data from the 4 cohorts was pooled, and steps 4–6 were replicated using the pooled dataset (see table 8). The analysis compared the participation of students by English learner status in the student population and in the GT population in each grade, and t-tests were used to determine whether the difference between participation in the student population and in the GT population by EL status at each grade was significantly different from 0.

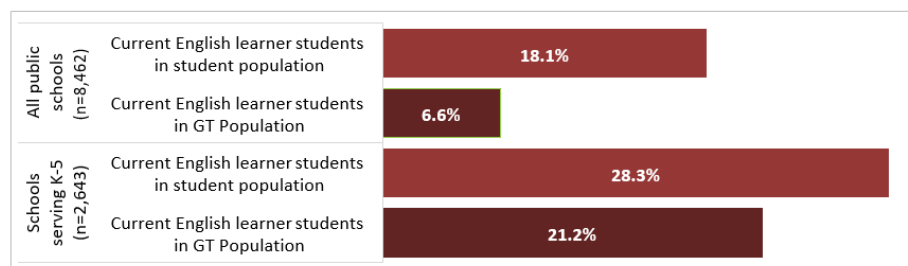
What We Discovered

Research question 1: How does the participation of current English learner students in GT programs compare with their participation in the total student population in Texas public schools?

Current English learner student representation was smaller in GT programs than in the overall student population.

Current English learner students in Texas public schools represented 6.6 percent of the GT population and 18.1 percent of the overall student population in 2014/15. The calculations using data only from schools serving students in kindergarten through grade 5 revealed a similar finding; that is, that current English learner student representation was smaller in GT programs (21.2 percent) than in the overall student population (28.3 percent) (figure 2). Next, results from using student-level data to answer questions 2-4 are presented.

Figure 2. Current English learner students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs in Texas public schools, 2014/15



Note: The sample of schools serving grades K–5 include elementary schools and middle schools that served current English learner students in grades K–5, and exclude schools with masked counts due to serving fewer than five total students, fewer than five current English learner students, or fewer than five gifted students.

Source: Authors’ calculations using school-level data provided by the Texas Education Agency.

The analysis of the school-level data for those 2,643 schools revealed that 54.1 percent did not serve any current English learner students in their GT programs, even though current English learner students represented on average 9.5 percent of their student population. Additionally, 30.2 percent of schools served a lower percentage of current English learner students in their GT programs compared with their overall student population, while 15.6 percent served an equal or greater percentage of current English learner students in their GT programs compared with their overall student population.

Research question 2: What percentage of Texas schools serving grades K–5 have the same representation of current and former English learner students in their general student population and in their GT population?

One in three schools in Texas had a proportional representation of ever English learner students in their gifted and talented programs in grades kindergarten to 5.

Of this sample of 4,140 schools, 31.8 percent had proportional representation of ever English learner students in the period 2011/12 to 2014/15 4-year period analyzed and 68.2 percent were underrepresenter schools (see table 5).

Research question 2a: How do the demographic characteristics of schools with proportional representation compare with those of underrepresenter schools?

The analyses revealed a few significant differences between schools with proportional representation and underrepresenters.⁵ Specifically, schools with proportional representation and underrepresenters were significantly different in the demographic makeup of their student population; for example, schools with proportional representation had on average higher percentages of African American and Hispanic students and a smaller percentage of White students in their student population compared to underrepresenter schools (see table B1). These schools also differed in the percent of students who spoke Spanish or Vietnamese at home: significantly higher percentages of English learner students spoke Spanish or Vietnamese at schools with proportional representation than at underrepresenter schools (table B1). Also, the average percentage of economically disadvantaged students in schools with proportional representation was higher than the corresponding percentage for underrepresenter schools (table B1). Enrollment in grades K–5 at schools with proportional representation was larger than at underrepresenter schools (table B1). It is important to point out that the size of the GT program was similar in schools with proportional representation and in underrepresenter schools (that is, the average percentage of students participating in GT programs was the same at both types of schools).

Current and ever English learner students represented significantly greater percentages of the school population than they did at schools without proportional representation.

In schools with proportional representation, current English learner students represented 26.8 percent of the overall student population in grades K–5, versus 20.9 percent at underrepresenter schools (see figure 3, first pair of bars). When looking at the participation of current English learner students in their GT programs, at schools with proportional representation, current English learner students represented 21.8 percent of the GT student population in grades K–5, versus only 6.8 percent at underrepresenter schools (figure 3, second pair of bars).

Ever English learner students represented 29.1 percent of the overall population at schools with proportional representation and 23.4 percent at underrepresenter schools (figure 3, third pair of bars). When looking at the participation of ever English learner students in their GT programs, at schools with proportional representation ever

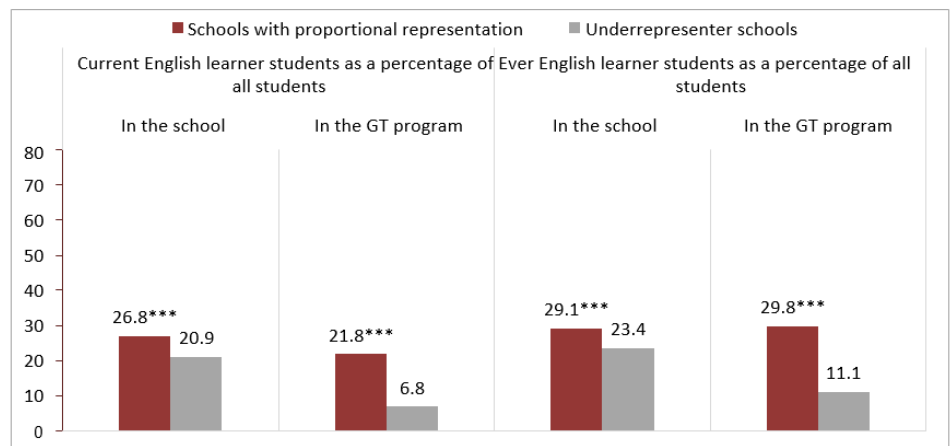
Table 5. Most schools serving ever English learner students in grades K–5 have underrepresentation of these students in gifted and talented programs in 2011/12 to 2014/15

Percentage of ever English learner students in GT population...	Number of schools	Percentage of schools
was less than proportional to the percentage of ever English learner students in the total student population	2,824	68.2%
was proportional to the percentage of ever English learner students in the total student population ¹	1,316	31.8%
Total	4,140	100.0%

Note: Uses the E-formula to define schools with proportional representation.

Source: Authors' calculations using data provided by the Texas Education Agency and accessed at the Texas ERC.

Figure 3. Percentage of current and ever English learner students in GT programs at schools with proportional representation is three times the percentage at underrepresenter schools



*** $p < .001$.

Note: GT is gifted and talented.

Source: Authors' analyses of cross-sectional time-series sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

⁵ See tables B1 and B2 in appendix B for additional comparisons of mean values for demographic characteristics of schools with proportional representation and underrepresenters, and the t -statistics for these comparisons to determine whether the mean values between these two groups are significantly different.

English learner students represented 29.1 percent of the GT student population in grades K–5, versus only 11.1 percent at underrepresenter schools (figure 3, last pair of bars).

Schools with proportional representation served, on average, a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students in their GT programs compared with underrepresenters.

At schools with proportional representation, economically disadvantaged students represent 55.7 percent of the GT population versus 37.3 percent at underrepresenter schools (see figure 4).

Moreover, schools with proportional representation have, on average, more than three times the percentage of their economically disadvantaged current English learner students participating in GT programs (3.9 percent) than underrepresenter schools (1.2 percent) (This is the case even when there was no significant difference in the average percentage of K–5 students served in GT programs at these two sets of schools—6 percent in schools with proportional representation and 5.8 percent in schools with underrepresentation (see figure 5 and table C3).

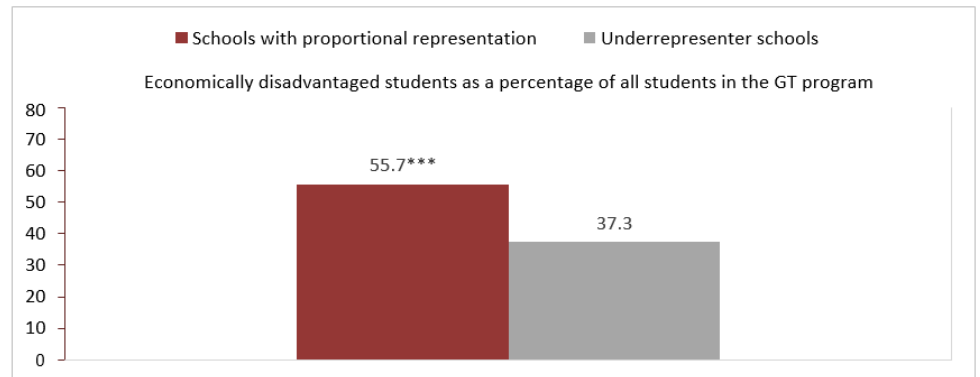
Research question 3: In what elementary grades are current, former, and never English learner students first identified as gifted?
Current and never English learner GT students were most frequently first identified as GT in grade 1.

For both current and never English learner GT students, the percentages of GT students identified in each grade after grade 1 fell as students moved from grade 1 to grade 5. At grade 5, 6.5 percent of current English learner GT students and 12.8 percent of never English learner GT students were identified (see table 6).

Former English learner students were first identified most frequently as GT in grade 5

As more current English learner students are reclassified as former English learner students as they move up the grades, the percentage of former ELs who are identified as GT in each grade also increases (table 6).

Figure 4. Schools with proportional representation serve a greater percentage of economically disadvantaged students in their GT program

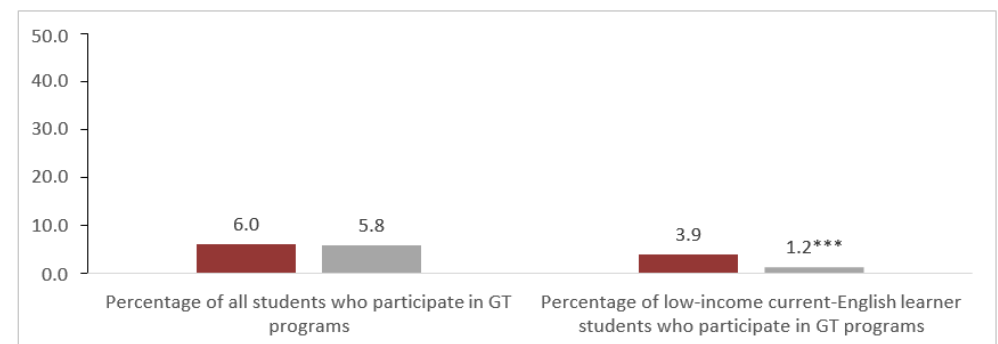


*** $p < .001$.

Note: GT is gifted and talented.

Source: Authors' analyses of cross-sectional time-series sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 5. GT programs at both schools are the same size, but schools with proportional representation have more than three times the percentage of their economically disadvantaged English learner students participating



*** $p < .001$.

Note: GT is gifted and talented.

Source: Authors' analyses of cross-sectional time-series sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Specifically, of all former English learner students identified as GT between grades K and 5, 1.9 percent of them were identified in grade 1, 10.6 percent were identified in grade 2, 15.4 percent were identified in grade 3, 31.8 percent were identified in grade 4, and 40.3 percent of them were identified in grade 5 (table 6). Former English learner students became a higher percentage of GT students identified in each grade (see table 7). For example, in grade 3, 3.4 percent of students in the sample were former English learner students (table 3) and 5.1 percent of students first identified as GT in grade 3 were former English learner students (table 7). In grade 5, 12.9 percent of students in the sample were former English learner students (table 3), and 18.3 percent of students identified as GT in grade 5 were former English learner students (table 7). These data trends suggest that English learner students are being identified as GT once they become English proficient rather than before reaching proficiency. This is also consistent with analysis that determined that former English learner students in Texas had a higher probability of being identified as GT in grades 4 and 5 compared to current and never English learner students with similar achievement levels (Ruiz de Castilla, 2017).

Research question 4: How do the rates of GT participation at each grade level compare among these groups? The percentage of ever English learner students participating in GT programs was significantly smaller than the percentage of ever English learner students in the student population.

Throughout grades K–5, ever English learner students (that is, current and former English learner students combined) represented a smaller percentage of students in GT programs compared with their percentage in the student population, though the gap tended to get smaller as students moved from kindergarten to grade 5 (table 8). Conversely, the participation of never English learner students in the GT population

Table 6. Most current and never English learner students first identified as GT in grade 1

Grade	Number of students first identified GT at each grade by EL status at time of identification			Percentage of students first identified GT at each grade by EL status at time of identification		
	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL
K	516	0	2,466	1.7	0.0	2.3
1	11,702	162	32,878	39.5	1.9	30.9
2	6,549	913	22,199	22.1	10.6	20.9
3	5,688	1,322	19,130	19.2	15.4	18.0
4	3,271	2,738	16,098	11.0	31.8	15.1
5	1,933	3,463	13,557	6.5	40.3	12.8
Total	29,659	8,598	106,328	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: EL is English learner student. GT is gifted and talented student. Percentages add up to 100 in each column, EL status, and indicate the percentage of GT students first identified in each grade.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a longitudinal sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Table 7. Participation of former English learner students first identified for GT programs increases in each grade

Grade	Percentages of GT students first identified in each grade by EL status			Total
	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL	
K	17.3	0	82.7	100
1	26.2	0.4	73.5	100
2	22.1	3.1	74.8	100
3	21.8	5.1	73.2	100
4	14.8	12.4	72.8	100
5	10.2	18.3	71.5	100
Total	20.5	5.9	73.5	

Note: EL is English learner student. GT is gifted and talented student. Percentages add up to 100 in each row, grade level, and correspond to the percentages of GT students first identified in that grade by EL status.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a longitudinal sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Table 8. In GT programs, current English learner students are underrepresented in grades K–5 but former English learner students are overrepresented in grades 2–5

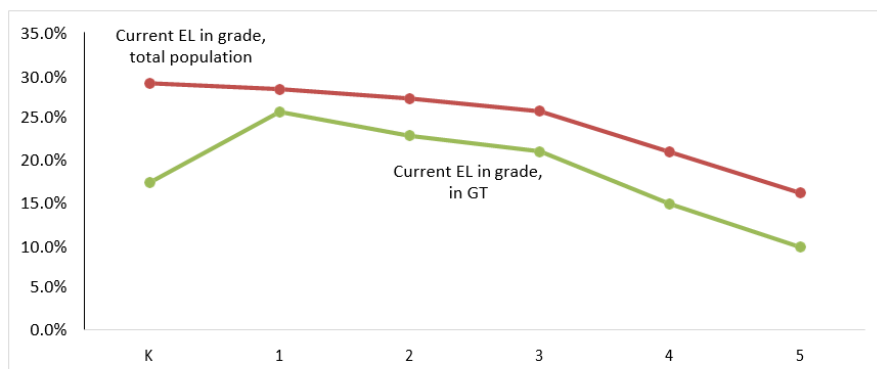
Grade	Percentage of students by EL Status each grade level			Percentage of GT students by EL status at each grade		
	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL	Current EL	Former EL	Never EL
K	29.0	0.0	71.0	17.3	0.0	82.7
1	28.3	0.8	71.0	25.6	0.4	74.0
2	27.2	1.8	71.0	22.8	2.8	74.4
3	25.7	3.4	71.0	21.0	5.3	73.7
4	20.9	8.1	71.0	14.8	11.7	73.5
5	16.1	12.9	71.0	9.7	17.0	73.3

Note: EL is English learner student. GT is gifted and talented student.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a longitudinal sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

was always significantly greater than their participation in the student population, though it tended to get smaller as students moved from kindergarten to grade 5 (table 8). Current English learner students were underrepresented at every grade level. That is at every grade level their GT participation rates were lower than their percentage of the student population (e.g. 27.2 percent of the student population at grade 2, but 22.8 percent identified as GT) (table 8 and figure 6). However, former English learner students increased their participation rates in the GT program in each grade (table 8). By grade 2, they were overrepresented in the GT population (table 8).

Figure 6. Current English learner students in the longitudinal sample were underrepresented in gifted and talented programs in grades K–5



Note: EL is English learner student. GT is gifted and talented student. The counts used to calculate these percentages are based on total number of students in the longitudinal sample participating in GT programs in each grade using the EL status of the students when first identified (green line) and in the current grade (red line).

Source: Authors' calculations based on a longitudinal sample using data provided by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Policy Recommendations/Implications

The purpose of this first component of the project was to use descriptive, nonexperimental analyses to find out if current English learner students were underrepresented in GT programs in Texas public schools, and to further explore data on current and former English learner students in schools serving grades K–5.

Findings related to research question 1 indicated that current English learner students were underrepresented in GT programs in Texas public schools; they make up 18.1 percent of the student population but only 6.6 percent of the GT population. Looking at the sample of schools that serve any grade in the K–5 range, current English learner students make up 28.3 percent of the student population but only 21.2 percent of the GT population. Using student-level data, the project then compared characteristics of schools with proportional representation of English learner students in GT programs to underrepresenter schools where EL GT participation was less than proportional.

Findings related to question 2 indicate that in schools identified with proportional representation, both current and ever English learner students represented significantly greater percentages of the school population than at underrepresenter schools. Additionally, the percentage of economically disadvantaged current English learner students participating in GT programs was more than three times the percentage participating at underrepresenter schools.

Findings related to question 3 indicate that current and never English learner students were most frequently first identified as GT in grade 1, whereas former English learner students were most frequently first identified as GT in grade 5.

Findings related to question 4 indicate current English learner students were underrepresented as GT in each grade in kindergarten through grade 5. However, starting in grade 2, former English learner students are overrepresented in GT programs. This trend suggests that schools are not well equipped to identify some gifted English learner students before they are fully proficient in English. Districts and schools serving English learner students could explore their own procedures related to GT referral and identification to determine whether they could be more effectively referring and identifying English learner students for GT services before they become proficient in English.

The list of schools with proportional representation generated through this work will inform the qualitative component to complement the quantitative component of the project. It should be added that the ability to monitor former English learner students beyond their second year after exiting EL status enhances the ability to learn about the trajectories and academic progress of these students. Therefore, if the Texas Education Agency could enable this extended monitoring, it would greatly enhance what can be learned from these data to improve the outcomes of English learner students, a growing segment of the Texas student population.

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