U.S. Department of Education
Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development
Policy and Program Studies Service

EXTANT DATA ANALYSIS

Educational Experiences of English Learners: Grade Retention, High School Graduation, and GED Attainment, 2011–12

March 2016

Researchers and policy makers frequently use grade retention, high school graduation, and GED® program participation and completion as indicators of school success, either individually, in combination, or in relation to measures of future education and workforce outcomes (e.g., student achievement, degree attainment, and post-school earnings).[1] Studies have shown, for example, that grade retention may be associated with lower academic performance and greater risk of dropping out of school.[2] Research on employment outcomes shows that high school graduates earn higher wages and have lower unemployment rates than adults without a high school diploma.[3] Though the economic benefits of a traditional high school diploma are generally considered to be superior to the GED,[4] for students who do not graduate from high school, earning a GED promotes enrollment in postsecondary institutions and does confer benefits in terms of future earnings compared with no credential at all.[5] Of particular interest to practitioners, policymakers, and researchers is the extent to which English learner students (ELs) experience grade retention, complete high school, and/or participate in and complete GED programs — especially as compared with non-ELs. These experiences can impact students' long- term outcomes, such as future earnings.[6] To ensure that this growing portion of the school population can participate fully in the national economy and in society at large, they must progress through and complete school.

This brief uses data from the 2011–12 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), [7] ED*Facts*, and other data sources to examine the educational success of ELs in the U.S. It addresses the questions:

(1) How does the EL proportion of students retained in grade compare with the EL proportion of students enrolled in each grade?

(2) How do high school graduation rates for ELs compare with those for non-ELs?

(3) How does the EL proportion of students who earn the GED credential compare with the EL proportion of students who participate in GED preparation programs?

The analyses in this brief are descriptive, and it is not possible to identify the factors leading to grade retention, high school graduation, or GED participation and completion with these data. Also, determining why ELs perform below non-ELs is outside the scope of this analysis and requires analyzing multiple interrelated student, school, and district factors (such as prior academic achievement and school supports). These data present two additional limitations for understanding the educational experiences of ELs. First, since ELs who attain English proficiency are reclassified and exit the EL subgroup, the composition of that subgroup is continuously changing; as a result, comparisons of the academic outcomes of ELs to their English proficient peers will be imperfect.[8] Additionally, these data do not allow us to identify important characteristics of ELs, such as whether they are recent arrivals to the U.S. or long-term ELs, which may contribute to lower academic performance in English, compared with ELs in other circumstances. For these reasons, causality cannot be established based on the comparisons presented in this brief.

This brief is part of a series of extant data analyses about the educational experiences of ELs. The topics of the other two briefs are instructional staff and college preparatory courses and programs. Those briefs present descriptive analyses of the 2011–12 CRDC data to explore ELs' exposure to novice, uncertified, or frequently absent teachers, and the extent to which ELs have access to and participate in advanced coursework and other college preparatory activities.[9]

HIGHLIGHTS

- In every grade except kindergarten, ELs were overrepresented among the students retained in grade at the end of the school year. A larger proportion of the students retained at grade level were ELs, compared to the proportion of ELs enrolled (e.g., 13 percent compared with 10 percent). The overrepresentation of English learners among retained students was largest in high school.
- In 2011–12, ELs had lower high school graduation rates (59 percent) than non-ELs (82 percent).[10]
- The gap between the graduation rate for ELs and the rate for non-ELs was largest in states that include in the EL graduation cohort only those students who are EL in 12th grade (28 percentage points).[11]
- ELs were underrepresented among students earning the GED credential. ELs represented 3.1 percent of students participating in local education agency (LEA)-operated GED programs but 1.5 percent of students completing the requirements for the GED credential. Completion rates for ELs varied greatly among states.[12]

GRADE RETENTION

Retaining students in a particular grade is intended to improve their chances for success in subsequent grades. However, research suggests that grade retention does not help struggling students in the long run.[13] Although students who are retained may experience short-term gains in academic subjects (e.g., reading and math), they later experience declines in school performance, particularly during adolescence, and are more likely to drop out of school.[14]

In every grade except kindergarten, ELs were overrepresented among the students retained in grade at the end of the school year, particularly in high school.

Data from the CRDC about students retained in grade, in combination with grade-level enrollment data from the Common Core of Data (CCD) and ED*Facts*, show that ELs were overrepresented among retained students relative to their representation in the student body as a whole. Nationally, in 2011–12 there were 47 million students enrolled in public school, of which 4.6 million were ELs (representing about 10 percent of enrollment). Of the 1.2 million students retained, roughly 159,000 were ELs (representing 13 percent of students retained in grade). The difference between these percentages (3 percentage points) is one measure of the degree to which ELs are overrepresented among retained students. This three-point difference also indicates that ELs comprise 32 percent more of the retained population than of the student body as a whole.

The disparity between enrollment and retention in grade among ELs appears in nearly every grade. As shown in Exhibit 1, ELs are overrepresented among students retained in every grade except kindergarten. In addition, the relative size of the overrepresentation (the black line in Exhibit 1) varies by grade. The data for grades 9 through 12 are particularly striking. In 11th and 12th grades, the percentage of retained students who were ELs was more than double the percentage of ELs enrolled in each grade. For example, in 2011–12, the EL percentage of all students retained in 12th grade (11 percent) was more than twice the EL percentage of students enrolled in 12th grade (5 percent).

Exhibit 1

EL percentage of students enrolled and retained in grade and the size of the percent difference between these percentages, by grade: 2011–12

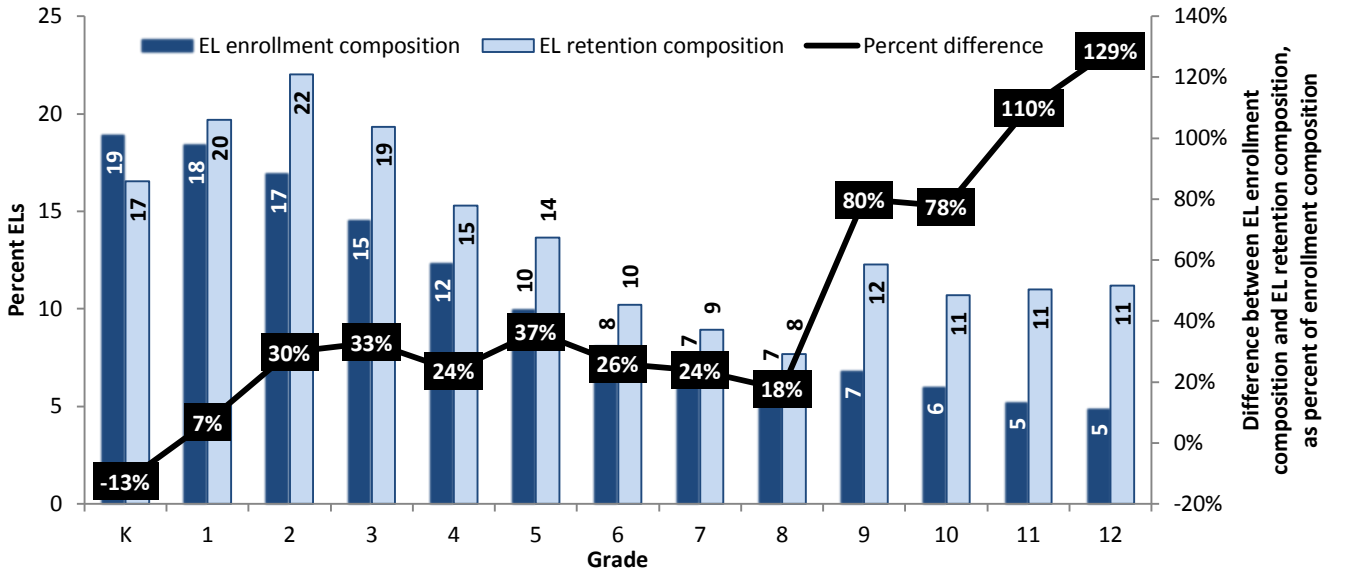

Exhibit reads: The EL percentage of all students retained in kindergarten (17 percent) is 13 percent lower than the EL percentage of students enrolled in kindergarten (19 percent).

Note: The data value labels display rounded percentages; however, unrounded percentages are used to display bar lengths and to calculate percent differences. English learner (EL) enrollment and grade retention composition data for all grades are in Exhibit A1 in the appendix.

Source: Retention data come from the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), 2011–12; Enrollment data come from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey," 2011–12.

The limited availability of nationally representative data on grade retention has, to date, hampered efforts to investigate retention patterns.[15] Though the CRDC data offer an opportunity to begin examining trends in grade-level retention, these data cannot address reasons for the overrepresentation of ELs among students retained in grade. Retention status alone does not tell us whether ELs are performing at lower levels than non-ELs or are simply more likely to be retained than non-ELs with similar performance. Although promotion and retention policies vary among schools, districts, and states, decisions to retain a student generally include recommendations from school staff and can be influenced by parental input. Due to language and cultural barriers, families of English learners may be less willing than other families to challenge the school's decision to retain a student.[16] However, data on ELs' grade-level academic performance also suggest that ELs may be less academically proficient than non-ELs; for example, 5 percent of eighth-grade ELs scored at or above the proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in mathematics, compared to 37 percent of non-ELs.[17]

High School Graduation

Graduating from high school is an important achievement with tangible benefits for young adults. In 2014, adults with a high school diploma (including high school equivalency credentials) but no college attainment earned 27 percent more than adults without a high school diploma: $668 per week, on average, compared to $488 per week, respectively. Additionally, having a high school diploma or its equivalent means greater likelihood of employment and protection from economic downturns; in 2014, 6 percent of adults with a high school credential and no further education were unemployed, compared to 9 percent of adults with no high school diploma.[18]

ELs had lower high school graduation rates (59 percent than non-ELs (82 percent.

In 2011–12, ELs had lower high school graduation rates — nationally and across almost all states — than students who were not ELs. There were nearly 3.6 million students in the cohort of students who could have graduated in 2011–12; of these students, 226,000 (6 percent) were ELs. Among ELs, 59 percent graduated within four years. Among students who were not ELs, 82 percent graduated within four years. This represents a 23 percentage point difference; in other words, the EL graduation rate is 28 percent lower than the non-EL graduation rate. High school graduation rates and the size of

the difference between the rates varied by state. In all but one state (West Virginia, which had 112 ELs in its graduation cohort), the graduation rate for ELs was below the rate for non-ELs (Exhibit A1).[19]

Gaps between EL and non-EL graduation rates ranged from 54 percentage points (Arizona) to 6 percentage points (New Mexico) (Exhibit A2). The percent difference between EL and non-EL graduation rates ranged from 69 percent (Arizona) to 8 percent (Arkansas) (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2
Percent difference between the four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rates for ELs and non-ELs: 2011–12

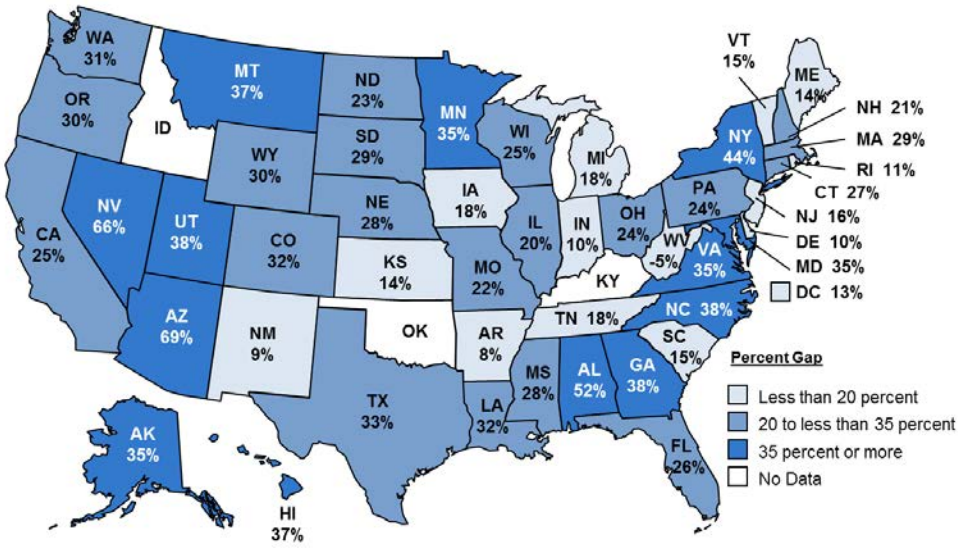

Exhibit reads: In Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Utah, and Virginia the graduation rate for ELs was lower than the graduation rate for non-ELs by 35 percent or more.

Notes: Gap size is calculated using unrounded percentages, but states are grouped based on rounded percentages. In West Virginia, the graduation rate for ELs was above the rate for non-ELs. Data from Idaho, Kentucky, and Oklahoma are not included; the U.S. Department of Education granted these states timeline extensions to begin reporting four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rate data. The EL cohort assignment method can be based on EL status at the beginning, end, or any time during the four-year cohort period.

Source: Graduation data come from the U.S. Department of Education, ED*Facts* (see Technical Notes for more detail).

There does not appear to be a relationship between the percentage of the graduation cohort who are EL and the gap between EL and non-EL four-year graduation rates. For example, New Mexico's ELs accounted for 28 percent of the graduation cohort, but graduated at nearly the same rate as non-ELs (66 percent and 72 percent, respectively). In contrast, in California, ELs represented 20 percent of the graduation cohort and the graduation rate for ELs was 21 percentage points lower than the rate for non-ELs (62 percent vs. 83 percent, respectively).

The gap between the graduation rate for ELs and the rate for non-ELs was largest in states that only included in the EL cohort those who were ELs in the final year of the cohort period.

For the purpose of reporting four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rates, states decide which students to include in their EL cohort. Twenty states included all students classified as EL at any time during the four year cohort period ("anytime") and almost as many states (*n* = 19) included only students classified as EL in the final year of the cohort period ("end").[20] Only a few states (*n* = 4) based EL cohort assignment on students' ninth grade EL status ("beginning").[21] Students who are ELs in the final year of the cohort period are likely to underperform on content assessments relative to students who were ELs in ninth grade and are no longer ELs four years later, so it is logical that "end" states (those that define their EL cohort based on EL status at the end of the cohort period) will have lower EL graduation rates and, consequently, larger gaps between EL and non-EL graduation rates, as is shown in Exhibit 3.[22] On average, the lowest EL graduation rate and the largest gap between the EL and non-EL graduation rates was in the 19 "end" states: the difference between the average EL and non-EL graduation rates was 28 percentage points in these states, compared with 21 percentage points in the four "beginning" states that based EL cohort membership on students' status in ninth grade (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3
Average four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rates for ELs and non-ELs and size of difference (gap), by state EL cohort assignment method: 2011–12

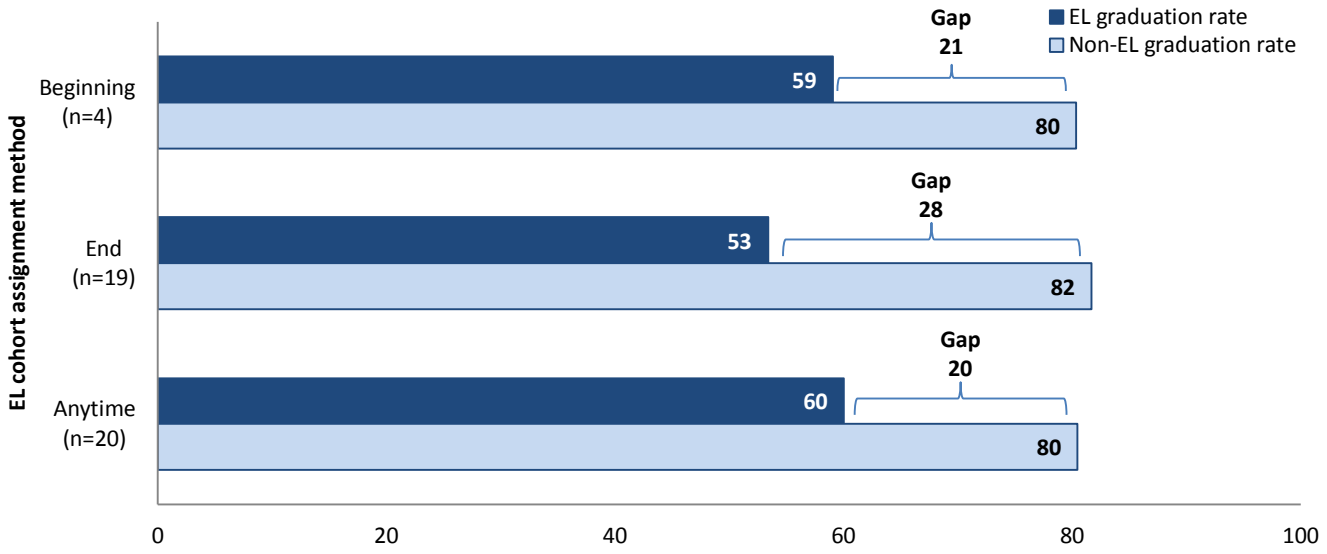

Exhibit reads: In the four states where students were included in the EL cohort based on their EL status at the beginning of the cohort period, 59 percent of ELs graduated in four years, compared to 80 percent of non-ELs, a difference (gap) of 21 percentage points.

Note: Gaps are calculated using unrounded data.

Source: Graduation data come from the U.S. Department of Education, ED*Facts* (see Technical Notes for more detail). Information on EL cohort assignment methods comes from metadata provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

Participation in GED Preparation Programs and Attainment of GED Credential

English learners are more than twice as likely to drop out of high school as their English-proficient peers.[23] The GED credential is an option for students who drop out and those who are otherwise unable to complete traditional secondary schooling and serves as an alternative to the traditional high school diploma.[24] Local education agencies can operate GED programs to prepare students to attain these credentials. While studies comparing later life outcomes among GED credential holders, dropouts, and traditional high school graduates have mixed results, they generally show that earning a GED credential confers academic and, in some cases, economic benefits compared to not earning a high school diploma. According to two studies, those earning the GED credential have economic outcomes more similar to dropouts than high school graduates, except in the case of low-skilled GED-earners who earn more than their low-skilled un-credentialed peers.[25] For the small share of GED holders who pursue additional schooling, the GED might serve as an effective gateway to postsecondary education.[26]

Nationally, ELs comprised 3.1 percent of students participating in LEA-operated GED preparation programs but only 1.5 percent of students who participated in such a program and attained the GED credential; this underrepresentation was not found in all states.

According to data from the CRDC, 1,576 LEAs (10 percent of all LEAs) operated GED preparation programs for students ages 16 to 19 in 2011–12 (Exhibit A3). Of the 110,452 students who participated in these LEA-operated GED preparation programs, 35,843 (32 percent) received their GED credential in 2011–12.

English learner performance in these LEA-operated GED preparation programs can be assessed by comparing the EL composition of participants to the EL composition of those who received a GED after such participation. In the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 3.1 percent of program participants were ELs but only 1.5 percent of program participants who received a GED were ELs, a 52 percent difference (Exhibit A3). Only 531 ELs nationwide earned the GED credential after participating in an LEA-operated GED preparation program in 2011–12.

States varied in whether their LEAs operated GED preparation programs, EL participation in those LEA-operated preparation programs, and EL representation among GED earners who participated in those preparation programs. Eight states (Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Maryland, Nebraska, and North Carolina) and the District of Columbia had no ELs participating in any of their 52 LEA-operated GED preparation programs (Exhibit A3). On the other end of the

spectrum, ELs accounted for more than 10 percent of LEA-operated GED preparation program participants in New Mexico (11 percent) and New York (12 percent). In most (*n* = 30) of the 41 states with EL participants in LEA-operated preparation programs, the EL percentage of participants who attained the GED credential was lower than the EL percentage of participants. There were 13 states in which none of the ELs who participated in the preparation program attained the GED credential; ELs accounted for 0.2 to 5 percent of participants in these states (Exhibit A3). Interestingly, there were 11 states[27] where ELs were overrepresented among those who attained a GED credential after participating in an LEA-operated preparation program (i.e., EL success outpaced that of non-ELs) (Exhibit A3); in 3 of these states (Kentucky, Maine, and Rhode Island) 100 percent of ELs who participated in an LEA-operated preparation program successfully attained their GED credential.

The CRDC data offer only a limited opportunity to examine GED preparation and attainment rates for ELs because they have several significant limitations. First, the CRDC GED data are limited to participants in LEA-operated preparation programs; participants in these preparation programs who earn the GED credential appear to represent about one-third of those who attained a GED credential.[28] Second, there is no way to know whether participants in the LEA-operated preparation programs failed to obtain a GED credential because they failed the test, or because they never took the test (or took but did not complete the test).[29] A very small number of English learners (531) were reported to have earned their GED credential after participating in an LEA-operated GED program. In addition, four states account for approximately three-quarters of all ELs who earned their GED credential after participating in an LEA-operated GED program (California accounted for 43 percent; Utah, 16 percent; New York, 10 percent; and Virginia, 6 percent). Therefore these data reflect patterns in a small share of programs in a handful of states.

CONCLUSION

Research links the academic indicators of grade retention, high school graduation, and GED completion to later academic and workforce outcomes. According to national data from the 2011–12 CRDC and other sources, English learners fared worse than their non-EL peers on these indicators of school success: they were overrepresented among students who were retained in grade, particularly in high school; they had lower graduation rates, particularly among those who finished high school without exiting from EL status; and those who participated in an LEA-operated preparation program, on average, did not earn the GED credential at rates similar to non-ELs. Overall, these findings suggest a pattern of schools not supporting ELs and ensuring their progress at the expected pace through elementary and secondary schooling, which may set ELs up for disadvantage in terms of access to post-secondary education and workforce participation. The CRDC data provide an opportunity to begin to understand ELs' academic experiences and identify avenues for further research.

APPENDIX

Exhibit A1
EL enrollment and retention in grade, by grade: 2011–12

Grade	Number of ELs enrolled	EL percentage of all students enrolled (%)	Number of ELs retained	EL percentage of all students retained (%)	Percentage point difference between EL percent enrolled and EL percent retained [1]	Percent difference between EL percent enrolled and EL percent retained [2]
All	4,607,378	10	158,698	13	3	32
K	647,167	19	19,998	17	-2	-13
1	639,012	18	22,884	20	1	7
2	579,725	17	15,569	22	5	30
3	495,471	15	9,776	19	5	33
4	413,547	12	5,824	15	3	24
5	334,511	10	4,061	14	4	37
6	270,476	8	3,611	10	2	26
7	236,515	7	3,798	9	2	24
8	212,322	7	3,717	8	1	18
9	238,951	7	25,145	12	5	80
10	197,379	6	16,141	11	5	78
11	159,394	5	12,360	11	6	110
12	142,123	5	15,626	11	6	129

[1]Percentage point difference is equal to the numeric difference between the EL percentage of students retained and the EL percentage of students enrolled. Differences are calculated based on unrounded data.

[2]Percent difference is equal to the percentage point difference between the EL percentage retained and the EL percent of students enrolled divided by the EL percentage of students enrolled. Differences are calculated based on unrounded data.

Source: Retention data come from the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), 2011–12; Enrollment data come from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey," 2011–12.

Exhibit A2

State regulatory four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rates for ELs and non-ELs, difference (gap) between rates, number of ELs in graduation cohort, and EL percentage of cohort, by state: 2011–12

State	EL graduation rate (%)	Non-EL graduation rate (%)	Percentage point difference between EL and non-EL rate	Percent difference between EL and non-EL rate	Number of ELs in graduation cohort	EL percent of graduation cohort
47 States and DC	**59**	**82**	**23**	**52**	**225,958**	**6**
Alabama	36	76	40	35	606	1
Alaska	47	72	25	69	956	9
Arizona	24	77	54	8	1,221	2
Arkansas	77	84	7	25	1,201	4
California	62	83	21	32	99,753	20
Colorado	53	78	25	27	6,171	10
Connecticut	63	86	23	10	2,026	5
Delaware	71	80	8	13	307	3
District of Columbia	52	59	8	26	327	6
Florida	57	76	19	38	14,881	8
Georgia	44	71	27	37	4,011	3
Hawaii	52	83	31	20	732	5
Illinois	66	83	16	10	5,462	3
Indiana	78	87	9	18	1,445	2
Iowa	74	90	16	14	1,035	3
Kansas	74	86	12	32	2,680	7
Louisiana	49	72	23	14	517	1
Maine	74	86	12	35	297	2
Maryland	55	84	29	29	1,328	2
Massachusetts	61	86	25	18	4,774	6
Michigan	63	77	13	35	3,107	2
Minnesota	51	79	28	28	4,529	7
Mississippi	54	75	21	22	118	#
Missouri	65	84	19	37	721	1
Montana	53	85	32	28	314	3
Nebraska	64	89	25	66	885	4
Nevada	23	67	45	21	3,196	9
New Hampshire	68	87	18	16	355	2
New Jersey	73	87	14	9	3,539	3
New Mexico	66	72	6	44	7,367	28
New York	44	79	35	38	12,077	5
North Carolina	50	81	31	23	3,003	3
North Dakota	68	88	20	24	223	3
Ohio	62	81	19	30	1,613	1
Oregon	49	70	21	24	3,578	8
Pennsylvania	64	84	20	11	2,878	2
Rhode Island	69	78	9	15	985	8
South Carolina	64	75	11	29	1,594	3
South Dakota	60	84	24	18	245	3
Tennessee	72	88	16	33	1,529	2
Texas	59	89	30	38	11,329	4
Utah	51	81	31	15	1,728	4
Vermont	75	88	13	35	127	2
Virginia	55	84	29	31	4,410	5
Washington	54	79	25	-5	4,509	6
West Virginia	83	79	-4	25	112	1
Wisconsin	66	88	22	30	1,971	3
Wyoming	56	80	24	52	186	3

Rounds to zero.

Note: Data from Idaho, Kentucky, and Oklahoma are not included in Exhibit A2; the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education granted these states timeline extensions for when they must begin reporting four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rate data. Gaps are calculated from unrounded data.

Source: Graduation data come from the U.S. Department of Education, ED*Facts* (see Technical Notes for more detail).

Exhibit A3

Number and percentage of LEAs offering GED preparation programs for students aged 16-19 and number and EL percentages of GED preparation program participants who received the GED credential, by state: 2011–12

	LEAs offering GED programs		GED program participants (ages 16-19)			GED program participants who received GED credential		
State	Number	Percentage[1] (%)	ELs	All students	EL percentage (%)	ELs	All students	EL percentage (%)
50 States and DC	**1,571**	**12.6**	**3,441**	**110,452**	**3.1**	**531**	**35,843**	**1.5**
Alabama	13	8.5	0	192	0.0	0	95	0.0
Alaska	1	1.9	0	2	0.0	0	2	0.0
Arizona	12	4.0	74	1,020	7.3	8	204	3.9
Arkansas	12	4.9	7	806	0.9	2	401	0.5
California	101	15.6	576	9,606	6.0	229	5,094	4.5
Colorado	16	8.8	78	1,450	5.4	13	370	3.5
Connecticut	45	32.8	21	1,722	1.2	6	443	1.4
Delaware	4	14.8	0	369	0.0	0	100	0.0
District of Columbia	3	16.7	0	112	0.0	0	46	0.0
Florida	53	71.6	596	12,788	4.7	0	4,132	0.0
Georgia	8	4.2	4	1,726	0.2	0	244	0.0
Hawaii	1	100.0	0	799	0.0	0	352	0.0
Idaho	5	4.1	2	88	2.3	0	39	0.0
Illinois	19	3.4	2	769	0.3	0	141	0.0
Indiana	33	10.4	13	4,846	0.3	2	1,205	0.2
Iowa	9	2.8	0	213	0.0	0	65	0.0
Kansas	9	3.1	6	468	1.3	0	266	0.0
Kentucky	35	20.5	2	1,964	0.1	2	628	0.3
Louisiana	38	44.7	13	3,824	0.3	2	1,167	0.2
Maine	52	47.7	8	1,332	0.6	8	745	1.1
Maryland	6	22.2	0	908	0.0	0	320	0.0
Massachusetts	13	4.5	10	427	2.3	0	198	0.0
Michigan	64	9.7	12	3,516	0.3	0	1,235	0.0
Minnesota	64	16.0	71	2,254	3.1	10	769	1.3
Mississippi	86	54.8	10	2,518	0.4	0	835	0.0
Missouri	84	18.5	16	3,488	0.5	4	1,502	0.3
Montana	11	7.1	59	1,081	5.5	0	357	0.0
Nebraska	11	4.1	0	332	0.0	0	171	0.0
Nevada	8	42.1	4	905	0.4	0	594	0.0
New Hampshire	25	30.1	2	355	0.6	0	233	0.0
New Jersey	11	3.4	9	495	1.8	2	180	1.1
New Mexico	3	2.6	10	88	11.4	4	30	13.3
New York	211	29.7	1,277	11,065	11.5	52	2,462	2.1
North Carolina	3	2.0	0	59	0.0	0	21	0.0
North Dakota	6	4.1	4	210	1.9	2	99	2.0
Ohio	29	3.6	23	3,117	0.7	4	746	0.5
Oklahoma	30	7.2	61	1,931	3.2	2	525	0.4
Oregon	56	30.8	159	3,637	4.4	8	1,000	0.8
Pennsylvania	24	3.8	4	585	0.7	2	370	0.5
Rhode Island	2	5.6	4	79	5.1	4	39	10.3
South Carolina	50	55.6	16	8,037	0.2	2	1,499	0.1
South Dakota	8	5.4	2	130	1.5	0	70	0.0
Tennessee	38	30.4	38	6,333	0.6	21	988	2.1
Texas	47	4.3	57	2,997	1.9	14	1,217	1.2
Utah	18	26.9	106	1,534	6.9	87	684	12.7

Exhibit A3 (continued)

Number and percentage of LEAs offering GED preparation programs for students aged 16-19 and number and EL percentages of GED preparation program participants who received the GED credential, by state: 2011–12

	LEAs offering GED programs		GED program participants (ages 16-19)			GED program participants who received GED credential		
State	Number	Percentage[1] (%)	ELs	All students	EL percentage (%)	ELs	All students	EL percentage (%)
Vermont	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virginia	108	66.7	51	4,407	1.2	33	2,208	1.5
Washington	9	3.5	8	825	1.0	2	202	1.0
West Virginia	34	61.8	6	2,734	0.2	4	1,196	0.3
Wisconsin	39	10.0	4	477	0.8	2	338	0.6
Wyoming	4	7.5	16	1,832	0.9	0	16	0.0

[1]Denominator is the total number of LEAs in the state in the 2011–12 CRDC that offered grades 12 or ungraded.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), 2011–12.

TECHNICAL NOTES

The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) is a biennial (i.e., every other school year) survey required by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The 2011–12 CRDC was designed to include data about every public school in the nation. Generally, school districts submit their data directly to OCR. The CRDC is a mandatory data collection, authorized under the statutes and regulations implementing Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, *Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972*, Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, and the *Department of Education Organization Act* (20 U.S.C. 3413). The regulations implementing these provisions can be found at 34 CFR 100.6(b); 34 CFR 106.71; and 34 CFR 104.61. To learn more about the Civil Rights Data Collection, visit http://ocrdata.ed.gov. The CRDC data used in these analyses are privacy protected by rounding student counts in groups of three to prevent the disclosure of individual student information. For example, student counts from one to three are rounded to two and student counts from four to six are rounded to five. Schools that did not meet data quality requirements for specific analyses were excluded from those analyses.

This brief used the following measures obtained or derived from the CRDC, Common Core of Data (CCD), and ED*Facts*:

Retention in Grade: The numbers of students (total and English learners) in each grade in each school who were not promoted to the next grade prior to the beginning of the following school year were obtained from the CRDC. These school-level data were aggregated to the national level, and the grade-level EL composition of retained students was calculated for each grade by dividing the total number of English learners retained by the total number of students retained. The overall EL composition of retained students was calculated by summing the number of English learners retained across all grades and dividing the result by the sum of all students retained across all grades.

***Enrollment*:** The numbers of students (total and English learners) enrolled in each grade in each school district were obtained from the CCD, and these district-level data were aggregated to the national level. The grade-level enrollment EL composition was calculated for each grade by dividing the total number of English learners enrolled by the total number of students enrolled. The overall EL composition of enrolled students was calculated by summing the number of English learners enrolled across all grades and dividing the result by the sum of all students enrolled across all grades.

Graduation: State-level four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rates and cohort sizes for ELs and all students were obtained from ED*Facts*, regulatory four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rate table (Data Group 695) and cohorts for regulatory four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rate table (Data Group 696). The four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years or less with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who formed the cohort. The number of graduating students in each state was estimated by multiplying the number of students in the cohort by the graduation rate. The number of non-ELs in the cohort was derived by subtracting the number of ELs in the cohort from the number of all students in the cohort, and the number of graduating non-ELs was estimated by subtracting the estimated number of graduating ELs from the estimated number of all graduating students. The graduation rate for non-ELs was then calculated by dividing the estimated number of graduating non-ELs by the derived number of non-ELs in the cohort.

GED Completion: The CRDC includes, for each local education agency (LEA), the number of students (total and English learners) aged 16 to 19 who participated in LEA-operated GED preparation programs and the number of participating students (total and English learners) who received the GED credential. These counts do not include participation in GED programs operated by other entities (such as community colleges or other community organizations) unless these programs were contracted by the school district. Further, the counts do not include data on other types of high school equivalency credentials.

ENDNOTES

[1] Shane R. Jimerson, "Meta-analysis of Grade Retention Research: Implications for Practice in the 21st Century," *School Psychology Review* 30 (2001): 420–437; Karl L. Alexander, Doris R. Entwisle, and Susan L. Dauber, *On the Success of Failure: A Reassessment of the Effects of Retention in the Primary School Grades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Russell W. Rumberger, "Dropping Out of Middle School: A Multilevel Analysis of Students and Schools," *American Educational Research Journal* 32 (1995): 583–625; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, "Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment (April 2015)," http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_001.htm; Catherine A.Wood, "Unemployment continued its downward trend in 2013," *Monthly Labor Review*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (April 2014), http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2014/article/unemployment-continued-its-downward-trend-in-2013.htm; Margaret Becker Patterson, Jizhi Zhang, Wei Song, and Anne Guison-Dowdy, "Crossing the Bridge: GED Credentials and Postsecondary Educational Outcomes," (Washington, DC: GED testing Service and American Council on Education, 2010), http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509888.pdf; John H. Tyler, "Economic benefits of the GED: Lessons from recent research," *Review of Educational Research* 73 (2003): 369–405.

[2] Jimerson (2001); Alexander et al. (2003); Rumberger (1995).

[3] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015); Wood (2014).

[4] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2012 (NCES 2015-015)", by Patrick Stark, and Amber M. Noel (Washington, DC: 2015).

[5] Patterson et al. (2010); Tyler (2003).

[6] Barry R. Chiswick, and Paul W. Miller, "Occupational Language Requirements and the Value of English in the US Labor Market," *Journal of Population Economics* 23 (2010): 353–372; Hoyt Bleakley and Aimee Chin, "Language Skills and Earnings: Evidence from Childhood Immigrants," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 86 (2004): 481–496.

[7] The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) is a biennial survey required by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The 2011–12 CRDC was designed to include data about every public school in the nation. See the technical notes for more information.

[8] Comparing non-ELs to students who were ever classified as ELs would be the optimal comparison; however, the CRDC data do not support such comparisons.

[9] These briefs are available at http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html.

[10] The regulatory four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rate (ACGR) is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who formed the cohort for that graduating class. The four-year adjusted cohort rate also includes students who graduate in fewer than four years. From the beginning of ninth grade (or the earliest high school grade), students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is "adjusted" by adding any students who subsequently transfer into the cohort and subtracting any students who subsequently transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die. 2010–11 was the first year that states were required to use the regulatory cohort rate. While the ACGR is more comparable across states than previous rates, there are still some differences in state implementation of the requirements, leading to the potential for differences in how the rates are calculated.

[11] For the purpose of reporting the four-year ACGR for English learners, states apply their own rules for whether to count as an English learner any students identified as an English learner in 9th grade and designated proficient in English by the end of high school. The EL cohort assignment method can be based on whether students were EL at the beginning, end, or any time during the four-year cohort period.

[12] See technical notes for limitations of GED data in the CRDC.

[13] Chiharu S. Allen, Qi Chen, Victor L. Willson, and Jan N. Hughes, "Quality of Research Design Moderates Effects of Grade Retention on Achievement: A Meta-Analytic, Multilevel Analysis," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 31 (2009): 480–499.

[14] Jimerson (2001); Alexander et al. (2003); Rumberger (1995).

[15] John Robert Warren, Emily Hoffman, and Megan Andrew, "Patterns and Trends in Grade Retention Rates in the United States, 1995–2010," *Educational Researcher* 43 (2014): 433–443.

[16] Victor L. Willson, and Jan N. Hughes, "Retention of Hispanic/Latino students in First Grade: Child, Parent, Teacher, School, and Peer Predictors," *Journal of School Psychology* 44 (2006): 31–49.

[17] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2013 Mathematics Assessment," http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata. In most cases, the NAEP assessment is only administered in English, thus putting students with limited English proficiency at a greater disadvantage than their English-proficient peers. In certain

cases, ELs can receive accommodations for the NAEP assessment, which include extended time, bilingual dictionary (without definitions in any language), directions read aloud in Spanish, Spanish/English version of the test, or test items read aloud in Spanish. However, only a small percentage of ELs received accommodations on the 2013 mathematics assessment (ranging from zero to less than 5 percent, depending on the particular accommodation).

[18] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015).

[19] The method of assigning English learners to the four-year graduation cohort varied across states; students could be included in the cohort depending on their EL status at the beginning or end, or at any time during, the cohort period.

[20] U.S. Department of Education, "High School Graduation Rate: Non-regulatory Guidance" (December 22, 2008), http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf.

[21] Based on when the student first entered ninth grade.

[22] Rebecca M. Callahan and Dara R. Shifrer, "High School ESL Placement: Practice, Policy, and Effects on Achievement," in *Linguistic Minority Students Go to College: Preparation, Access, and Persistence*, ed. Yasuko Kanno and Linda Harklau (New York: Routledge, 2012), 19–37; Robert Linquanti, "The Redesignation Dilemma: Challenges and Choices in Fostering Meaningful Accountability for English Learners," *The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute* Policy Report 2001-1 (September 2001), http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/redesignation.pdf. About 7 out of every 10 districts consider state academic content area tests for exiting students from EL status. Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, *National Evaluation of Title III Implementation—Report on State and Local Implementation* (Washington, DC: 2012), http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html#titleiii.

[23] Rebecca M. Callahan, "Tracking and High School English Learners: Limiting Opportunity to Learn," *American Educational Research Journal* 42 (2005): 305–328.

[24] Most states offer certification of completion of a high school equivalency education program through assessment on the GED test.

[25] Richard J. Murnane, John B. Willett, and John H. Tyler, "Who benefits from obtaining a GED? Evidence from High School and Beyond," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 82 (2000): 23–37; Tyler (2003).

[26] Stephen V. Cameron and James J. Heckman, "The Nonequivalence of High School Equivalents," *Journal of Labor Economics* 11 (1993): 1–47; Tyler (2003).

[27] Those states were: Connecticut, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.

[28] According to the GED testing service's 2012 annual statistical report, in the 50 states and DC, there were about 105,500 test passers who were ages 16-18. The CRDC data indicated that there were 35,853 participants in LEA-operated preparation programs who earned a GED credential. So, the CRDC data might represent about 34 percent of all test passers of those ages in 2012. Source: GED Testing Service, *2012 Annual Statistical Report on the GED Test*, http://www.gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/92fc2c38402f4d8da1554120921f0291.pdf.

[29] The GED testing service's 2012 annual statistical report states that, in the 50 states and DC, 80 percent of all test takers who were ages 16-18 passed the test. That 20 percent failure rate would not, alone, explain the 67.5 percent reported drop between those participating in an LEA-operated preparation program and those passing the test.