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Review of Curriculums for English Language Learners

Hayden Doherty

Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Departmental Honors in Elementary Education

Bridgewater State University

December 19, 2022

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Abstract

ELL students have become more prevalent in public and private schools. While the number of these students has been increasing, so has the need for effective and efficient curriculums to be put into place in order to ensure students get the proper education they deserve. There are many programs that provide teachers with assistance in teaching their English learning students. While there are a variety of programs available, each one is different and complex. Four different evaluative frameworks have been chosen to determine whether or not they are effective. This thesis examines four evaluative frameworks for English Language Learners including WIDA, ELL educational programs: the World Class Instruction Design and Assessment, the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners, California English Language Development Standards, and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System. Each is evaluated based on a set of criteria that includes test scores, graduation rates, and ability to accommodate students. While there are multiple frameworks, each framework is effective in its own way.

Key Terms

English Language Learner (ELL): a student who is unable to communicate effectively in English.

This can often be referred to as an ELL or EL, English learner.

World Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA): WIDA is a program that assesses.

English Language Learners and determines their proficiency in the English Language.

New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL): NYSITELL is a series of assessments created to determine the language proficiency of new English Language Learners in the state of New York.

English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC): The ELPAC is a system of assessments created to determine the level of English language proficiency of English Language Learners in the state of California.

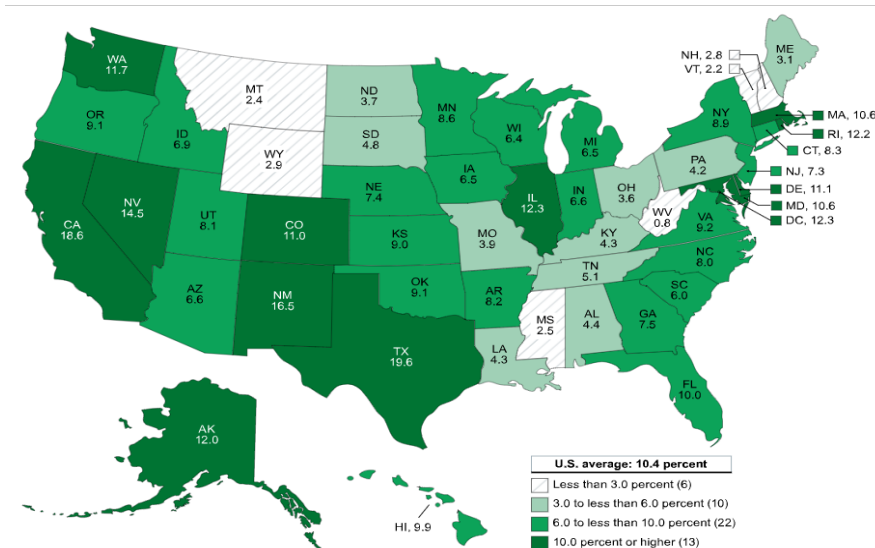
Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS): The TELPAS is a series of assessments that determines the proficiency levels of English Language Learners in the state of Texas.

Introduction

As of 2019, there are a recorded 5.12 million English Language Learner (ELL) students in public schools in the United States (Statista, 2021). According to the Department of Education (2018), an English Language Learner, or ELL, is a “national-origin-minority student who is limited-English proficient.” With this high number of ELL students in public schools across the country, it is vital that effective curriculum programs are utilized to ensure the success of the over 5 million ELL students in the United States public schools. Looking deeper at the geographic concentrations of ELL students, there are several locations that are home to a large percentage of the ELL population in this country. According to **Figure 1**, as of 2019, public schools in 12 out of the 50 U.S. states and Washington DC have at least ten percent of students who are English Language Learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

Figure 1: Percentage of public school students who were ELs by state (Fall 2019)

Figure 1. Percentage of public school students who were English learners (ELs), by state and categorized into specific ranges: Fall 2019



NOTE: U.S. average is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, EDData file 141, Data Group 678, extracted March 31, 2021; and Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 204.20.

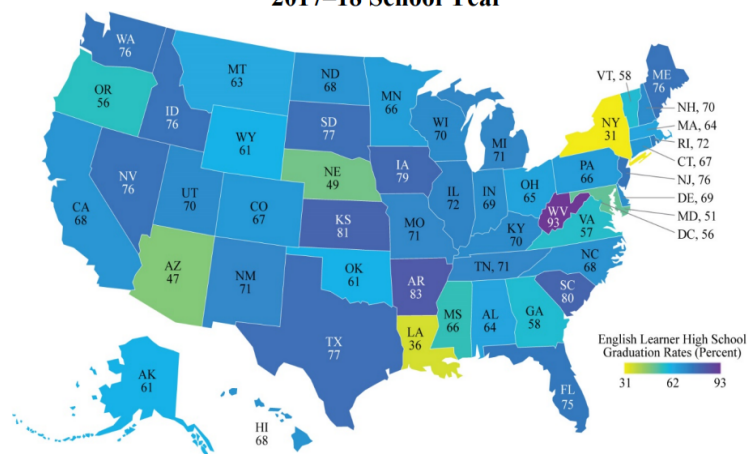
These states include Alaska, California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Twenty-two other states have at least 6 percent English Language Learners in their public schools. As of 2019, Texas stands at 19.6 percent of ELL students in public schools, followed by California at 18.6 percent, and New Mexico at 16.5 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). These states are all home to a large concentration of English Language Learners, making effective, specialized teaching and assessment resources imperative for those and all school districts.

Due to immigration patterns, many ELL students live within a few of the most populated cities in these states. According to the Migration Policy Institute, the enrollment of English Language Learners, in Dallas, Houston, Fort Worth, and Austin, Texas there are a total of 154,647 English Language Learning students. Los Angeles California also supports over 150,000 English Language Learners (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, Batalova 2021). New York City follows close behind with over 140,000 English learning students. Some of the most crowded cities in the United States are experiencing the highest enrollments of ELL students (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, Batalova 2021).

While these cities encourage diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and are home to lifelong learning opportunities, the educational systems in many of these areas lack the resources needed to support English Language Learners to the same standard as native English-speaking students. In many cases, the lack of programs specifically tailored to English Language Learners may contribute to students leaving school prior to completing their education.

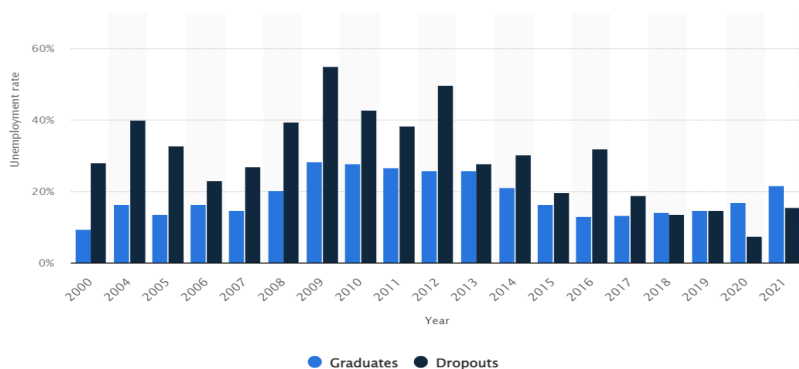
Figure 2: High School Graduation Rate by Percentage for ELs (2017-18)

**State-Level High School Graduation Rate Percentages* for English Learners
2017–18 School Year**



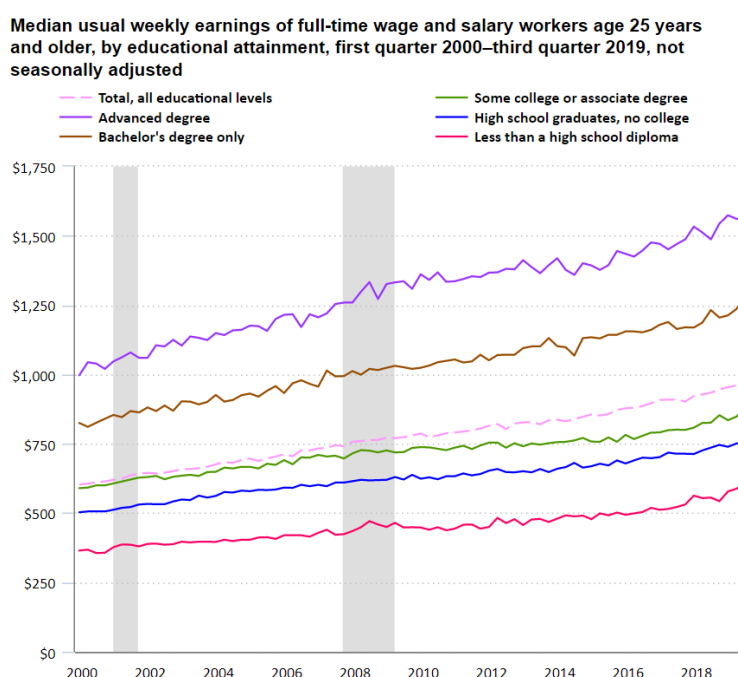
Across the United States, the high school graduation rates for English learners (ELs) during the 2017–18 school year (SY) ranged from a low of 31% in New York and 36% in Louisiana to a high of 93% in West Virginia and 83% in Arkansas. The median state-level high school graduation rate for ELs was 68.4%.

Figure 2 shares the percentages of English Learners in each state who graduated in the 2017-2018 school year (Orozco and Anand, 2020). Additionally, a nationwide survey done by the U.S. Department of Education showed that 85 percent of English-speaking students graduated from high school on time while only 67 percent of English Learners graduated high school (U.S. Department of Education). The discrepancy between these two graduation rates is alarming and can lead to lifelong inequalities.

Figure 3: Yearly graduation rate compared to dropout rate by year

As seen in **Figure 3**, in the United States, those students without a high school diploma experience a higher rate of unemployment (Statista, 2021). Furthermore, as depicted in Figure 4, there is a direct correlation between the level of education and wages (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). People without a high school diploma earn much less than those with a high school diploma, and even less than those who have a higher degree (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

Figure 4: Average weekly earnings of workers 25+ by educational attainment



This data highlights the need for programs that aid English Language learners in the public school system and provide students with the resources they need in order to succeed in life outside of the education system (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

While schools are obligated to provide equal access to education for English Language Learners under civil rights law, there is no specific guideline to ensure schools across the country are providing a positive educational experience for over 5 million students (*“Q: What legal obligations do schools have to English language learners (ells)?”*). The United States does not

have a mandatory educational program, but rather provides broad outlines, primarily leaving it up to the individual states. In a memo issued in 1970 by the Office for Civil Rights, it states, “Where the inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students (US Department of Education 2020).” The memo continues further, listing examples of violations of federal law. It does not indicate a specific curriculum or protocol to utilize with ELL students (US Department of Education 2020). With the lack of specific guidelines, there is what one might refer to as a “gray area” in our educational system (US Department of Education 2020). This leads to inequities and disadvantages for thousands of children which need to be rectified.

Most states have adopted an ELL curriculum to increase the success of English Language Learners. In 40 U.S. states as well as Washington D.C., schools have taken advantage of the program called WIDA Consortium, formerly known as World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (“The 2020 Edition”). In other states including those with very high concentrations of ELL students, other programs are used. New York utilizes a program created in this state known as New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners, or NYSITELL (“Next Generation Learning Standards”). California created the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California, known as ELPAC. Texas utilizes a program known as the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System or TELPAS. While each system is different, they all follow the outlined guidelines established by the Office of Civil Rights.

The discrepancy in the high school graduation rates of English Language Learners and native English speakers highlights the importance of determining the effectiveness of programs

like WIDA, NYSITELL, ELPAC, and TELPAS. Due to the lack of a nationally regulated educational program for ELL students, programs such as those listed above have been developed to aid ELL students in public schools to ensure they are able to be successful in their educational endeavors. The following research paper will review these curriculums and assessments to determine whether or not they are effective in their goals of improving the experiences and education of ELL students in the United States. This paper will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of these assessments in order to determine the answer to the proposed research question.

Literature Review

This literature review examines various approaches to teaching students who do not speak English as their first language. While researching educational programs for English Language Learners, it became apparent that there was no one regulated national curriculum for teachers to utilize in order to effectively teach their students. WIDA, World Class Instruction Design and Assessment, is one of the most commonly used programs, containing a curriculum of frameworks as well as a system of testing. However, many of the states with the highest percentages of ELL students do not endorse WIDA. Rather than use the program so many schools around the nation use, states like California, Texas, and New York have created their own programs and testing materials to teach and assess ELL students in their states. ELPAC, English Language Proficiency Assessments for California is used in California. TELPAS, Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System was developed in Texas. NYSITELL, New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners is utilized in New York (Education Department, 2022). While each program is different and meets the general requirements set by

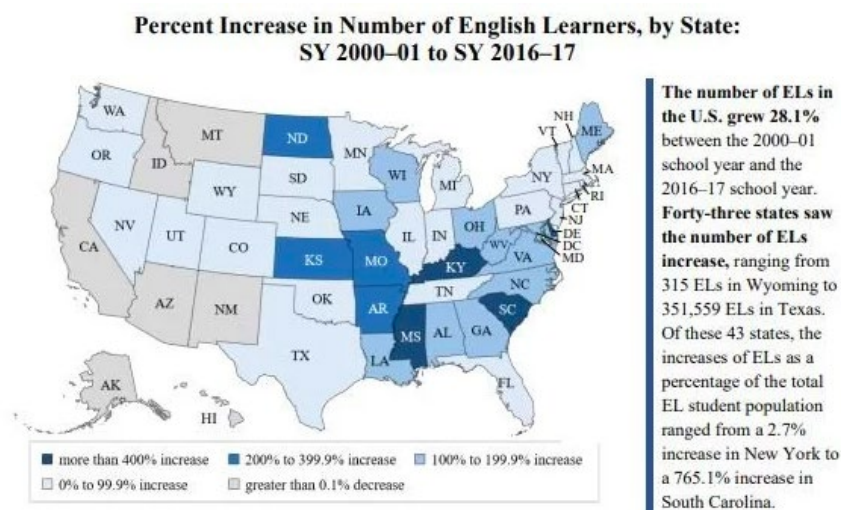
the United States, this inconsistency is interesting and warrants investigation, leading to the question: Are WIDA, NYSITELL, ELPAC, and TELPAS effective in teaching ELL students?

By investigating qualitative information and reviewing quantitative data, this thesis offers an objective analysis of the effectiveness of four English Language Learner curriculums commonly used in public schools throughout the United States. A review of quantitative data such as graduation rates and English proficiency scores, as well as qualitative data from administrators, teachers, students, and families who have used the various programs, provides insight into the effectiveness of each program. The sources used reflect current data and look for discrepancies among the four programs, contributing to the debate about which curriculum has the greatest results.

Research

According to findings by an article titled, *The Nation's English-Learner Population Has Surged: 3 Things to Know*, released in February of 2020 by Education Week, there are almost 5 million children trying to learn the English language in US public schools (Mitchell, 2021).

Figure 4: Percent increase of ELs by state



As illustrated in **Figure 4**, since 2000, ELL students have increased throughout the education system, increasing from 8 percent to about 9.6 percent in K-12 schools within 43 of the 50 U.S. states as recorded in the 2016-2017 school year (Mitchell, 2021). This increase in English Language Learners in public schools emphasizes the need for effective tools for teaching the English language to these students. The purpose of this study is to explore several frameworks used to evaluate methods of teaching ELL students and determine whether or not they are effective in their approach to ELL education.

Frameworks are often used to lay out the necessary information in a curriculum or standard. According to a 2020 article released by BMC Public Health titled, *“A scoping review of evaluation frameworks and their applicability to real-world physical activity and dietary change program evaluation,”* evaluating frameworks is crucial to help combat some of the potential challenges of a new curriculum. Evaluations are vital to working through the programs and processes in order to highlight the objectives and methods of the frameworks (Fynn, 2020). When a program emerges, it is important to examine it thoroughly and critically. While there is no national program for all public school systems to utilize, there are several states that take advantage of independent programs. States around the U.S. are utilizing several different curriculums and assessments in order to improve the English language proficiency of ELL students in the United States. The following review looks into four different English language learner programs including WIDA, NYSITELL, ELPAC, and TELPAS. These programs, used by many different states, will be reviewed and analyzed to determine their effectiveness.

WIDA Overview

WIDA or World Class Instruction Design and Assessment is the most assessment tool used with ELL students in our country. WIDA is an English Language Development Standards Framework resource (University of Wisconsin, 2020) in order to assist in teaching language curriculum for English Language Learners. It acts as a “resource for planning and implementing language curriculum, instruction and assessment for multilingual learners” (University of Wisconsin, 2020). The WIDA resource is a guide for educators that promotes language development, helps plan content and language, monitors growth, and provides feedback to students and their families (University of Wisconsin, 2020).

There are five definitive standards within the WIDA English Language Development frameworks that are used to guide the instruction of ELL students (*ELD Standards Framework*, 2022). The first focuses on developing language skills for social development, as well as instructional purposes, helping ELL students communicate in social scenarios in school (*ELD Standards Framework*, 2022). The second standard of the program highlights the importance of learning English for the language arts content area. The third looks at learning English in the area of mathematics. The fourth helps English learners communicate in the science content area. Finally, the fifth standard focuses on English language learners communicating things necessary for the social studies content area. Each of these five standards helps teachers and other English-speaking educators improve their ability to share the information and knowledge needed to connect language development and academic content (WIDA, 2020). Overall, the WIDA standards help guide educators, improving the instructional methods they use to communicate academic material to English Language Learners.

The WIDA program also includes an assessment tool utilizing exams that determine proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing English. Referred to as ACCESS, the summative English Language proficiency assessments are taken annually by ELL students from Kindergarten through grade twelve (WIDA, 2020). With a scale of levels 1 to 6, educators can use the ACCESS scores to help teachers differentiate instruction and improve scores until students are considered proficient in English (WIDA, 2020). There are several different ways to administer the exams depending on the abilities of the ELL students including both paper and online versions (Wisconsin-Madison, 2022). The online version automatically scores both the listening and reading section while outside sources from the test delivery partners score the speaking and writing. For the paper version, listening, reading, and writing are all scored by an outsourced team while test administrators score the speaking section and then send in the scores for reporting (Wisconsin-Madison, 2022). Both the curriculum and the ACCESS assessments are great resources that have become popular in 40 states and in Washington D.C. Using the WIDA resources allows educators to help ELL students through the difficulties of the education system and improve their English language proficiency.

Based on the information acquired about the WIDA frameworks, research question one was developed.

RQ1: Based on current research, is WIDA an effective program for the instruction of English Language Learners?

NYSITELL Overview

The state of New York is one of the few states that does not use WIDA but has developed a program known as the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners or

NYSITELL. The program includes what is referred to as a “Blueprint for English Language Learner/Multilingual Learner Success” that provides a guide to educating students who do not speak fluent English (New York Education Department, 2022). The principles and frameworks were developed to clarify expectations for administrators, policymakers, and practitioners to prepare English Language Learners for success. When possible, students begin before kindergarten to build a strong foundation, ensuring their success all the way through college and into their careers. The frameworks within the blueprint give educators guidance, resources, and support, promoting a better understanding and appreciation of Bilingual education (New York Education Department, 2022).

The blueprints found on the New York Department of Education website review the roles of those involved in educating English Language Learners (New York Education Department, 2022). The first blueprint framework identifies the responsibilities of teachers including designing instruction for diverse learners, utilizing materials and resources that are grade-appropriate, and collaborating with school support to help the needs of English Language Learners (New York Education Department, 2022). The second blueprint structure highlights the role of school boards and district and school administrators. These people must ensure that the academic, linguistic, social, and emotional needs of students are met. Guidelines for these leaders include: creating a vision for student success, developing a plan of action for students to enter college, begin a career, or pursue other professional programs, and providing a safe and inclusive learning environment that promotes respect (New York Education Department, 2022). The third blueprint outlines the district’s and school’s responsibility to articulate content and language objectives, implement a high-quality curriculum that meets the needs of EMLL or

Emergent Multilingual Learners, and provide opportunities for students to discuss content and problem-solve with peers (New York Education Department, 2022).

The fourth blueprint section highlights bilingualism and biliteracy, describing them as an asset. Schools and districts must provide opportunities to participate in language learning support programs that lead to proficiency, to use and develop academic language and content knowledge in both their native language and the English language (New York Education Department, 2022). Finally, the educators must provide rigorous bilingual education programs for students aimed at maintaining and developing their home language and attaining English proficiency (New York Education Department, 2022). The fifth blueprint point discusses the importance of parental involvement and including them in their children's education (New York Education Department, 2022). The sixth blueprint bullet discusses the important step of improving the education of the educators through professional development so they are continuously learning and improving their teaching techniques (New York Education Department, 2022). The seventh blueprint framework highlights the importance of including the home languages, cultural assets, and prior knowledge of ELL students in the curriculum and lessons (New York Education Department, 2022). The eighth and final blueprint framework emphasizes the use of formative assessment and practices to measure content knowledge (New York Education Department, 2022). Each of these eight sections explains how those involved in educating English Language Learners can help elevate the progress of ELL students and ensure they are multilingual learners.

NYSITELL guides educators in their endeavor to create a strong differentiated curriculum that helps ELL students become proficient in the English Language. After being positively identified as an English Language Learner, students take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) each year to determine progress and

identify students who are still limited in their English proficiency based on the state-designed scoring scale (New York Education Department, 2022). This assessment consists of speaking, listening, reading, and writing tasks that students complete to determine their proficiency level (New York Education Department, 2022). This program is very similar to WIDA but specifically designed for students in the state of New York.

Based on the information acquired about the NYSITELL frameworks, research question two was developed.

RQ2: Based on current research, is NYSITELL an effective program for the instruction of English Language Learners?

ELPAC Overview

Similar to New York, the state of California does not use the same program as the majority of the schools in our nation use to teach English Language Learners, but rather they created their own system (CA Department of Education, 2022). California has created the California English Language Development Standards which can be found on the website of the California Department of Education. This curriculum includes six chapters that share important aspects of teaching English Language Learners. The first chapter shares the purpose, development, and structure of each standard (CA Department of Education, 2022). It highlights the intended use, the goals, and the leveling system that should be used. The second chapter lists the proficiency level descriptors and explains how each student will progress through the program as their English Language Development improves (CA Department of Education, 2022). The third chapter takes a deeper look at every individual grade level from kindergarten all

the way to twelfth grade. It gives teachers a look into the subjects and levels that are appropriate as children progress through their education.

The fourth chapter looks into the established and emerging theories, research, and resources that relate to the development of the California English Language Development Standards for K-12 ELL students. The fifth chapter highlights the importance of teaching academic language after solidifying social language. The sixth and final chapter discusses foundational literacy skills for ELL students including topics like phonics, fluency, and word recognition. Each of these chapters builds on important aspects of teaching ELL students to ensure teachers are being thorough in educating their students (CA Department of Education, 2022).

Up until 2018, California utilized a testing program known as the California English Language Development Test, but that has since been replaced. The California Department of Education created what is known as the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California, or ELPAC (CA Department of Education, 2022). The ELPAC exam is the California state exam that is administered to English Language Learners from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The ELPAC utilizes two different assessments in order to both identify students who are English Learners as well as annually re-evaluate students, identifying students' English language proficiency (ELP). Similar to the other ELL assessments, these tests evaluate the student's ability to listen, speak, read, and write in English. According to the California Department of Education, the test is administered by local agencies and includes newly enrolled ELL students as an initial assessment, as well as those who have not yet been deemed fluent in English through a summative assessment (2022). Both the initial and summative assessments align with the English Language Development Standards previously mentioned and are scored using different scales.

The passing score benchmarks for the summative exam are shown in **figure 5** and the initial exam in **figure 6** (California Department of Education, 2022).

Figure 5: Passing score of Summative Exam for English Language Development Standards

Grade	Oral Language Composite (Listening and Speaking)	Written Language Composite (Reading and Writing)
Kindergarten	70	30
Grades 1–12	50	50

Figure 6: Passing Score of Initial Exam for English Language Development Standards

Grade	Oral Language Composite (Listening and Speaking)	Written Language Composite (Reading and Writing)
Kindergarten	90	10
Grades 1	70	30
Grades 2–12	50	50

Once the results are calculated, the California Department of Education website reports both the summative and initial exams at four levels including state, county, district, and school for each year. The data is divided up into categories and shared them in terms of gender, student groups, or primary language (California Department of Education, 2022). Having these results allows the district and schools to determine the success of the ELPAC program and the education system in California.

Based on the information acquired about the ELPAC frameworks, research question three was developed.

RQ3: Based on current research, is ELPAC an effective program for the instruction of English Language Learners?

TELPAS Overview

Texas utilizes a program known as the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System or TELPAS. The Texas Education Agency includes an English Learner Support Division that provides teachers, administrators, and students with direction and leadership while implementing the Bilingual and English as a Second Language Programs for ELL students (Texas Education Agency, 2022). The Texas Education Agency website includes an entire section referred to as the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee that includes all pertinent information regarding students who classify as English Language Learner (Texas Education Agency, 2022). The site shares laws, training resources, parent resources, and teaching suggestions including the LPAC Frameworks (Texas Education Agency, 2022). There are a plethora of resources within this site that people involved in the education system can utilize.

These resources are divided into sections, including the first section, which is an introduction that highlights the purpose, membership, and responsibilities of the organization and frameworks (Texas Education Agency, 2022). The second section is the identification section which shares timelines, procedures, assessment practices, and processes for identifying English Language Learners. Next is the description of the placement process which describes the rights of parents in terms of identification, placement, services, and approval for participation in the ESL programs. The fourth section is the English Learner Services portion which includes state-approved bilingual and ESL program models and procedures for exception waivers. The fifth section is appropriately titled “Review and Reclassification” as it shares an ongoing and annual review of progress as well as the criteria for reclassification of students as they become English proficient. The final section is known as the “Monitoring and Evaluation” section. It examines

the state and federal monitoring requirements and outlines elements of the annual re-examinations (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

Each of these sections includes frameworks that help teachers improve the education of their English Language Learners. In terms of assessment and evaluation, students are given an assessment known as the TELPAS. Similar to the other programs, it is an annually performed assessment that determines the level of English language proficiency students have after being identified as English Language Learners. It focuses on listening, speaking, reading, and writing and works to meet state and federal requirements (Texas Education Agency, 2022). ELL students from kindergarten to twelfth grade are required to complete this assessment regardless of whether or not their parents have declined the ESL services. A language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) meets to determine whether or not a student is proficient in the English language. Once the student has met the exit criteria, the student will no longer take the TELPAS assessment (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

The results of the TELPAS exam are reported within a report card that is then sent out to the families of the ELL students. There are four levels of the results including beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high learners. Each successive level includes a higher level of English proficiency than the last (Texas Education Agency, 2022). If a student has a cognitive disability, they can use what is referred to as the TELPAS Alternate which will allow students to have an accommodation to the test itself. The systems in place in the state of Texas through the TELPAS program and assessment allow teachers and parents an abundance of resources to provide the best possible education and improvement for their English Language Learners (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

Based on the information acquired about the TELPAS frameworks, research question four was developed.

RQ4: Based on current research, is TELPAS an effective program for the instruction of English Language Learners?

Research Outcomes

One way to judge the effectiveness of each of the four ELL programs is to examine the results of each of their proficiency exams. While each exam differs slightly, they all assess the four main objectives of each program: speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English. The results from the exams that the English Language Learners take, in conjunction with their high school graduation rates, are one way to determine whether the program contributes to the long-term success of their students. It is also important to look into whether or not students with additional special needs who may have an IEP are given proper accommodations to ensure the program is inclusive to all ELL students. The success of each program can also be confirmed by qualitative data from people involved in the programs themselves. Data that identifies the emotional well-being of those involved in each program is also important. The research conducted will determine if effective curriculums are being used.

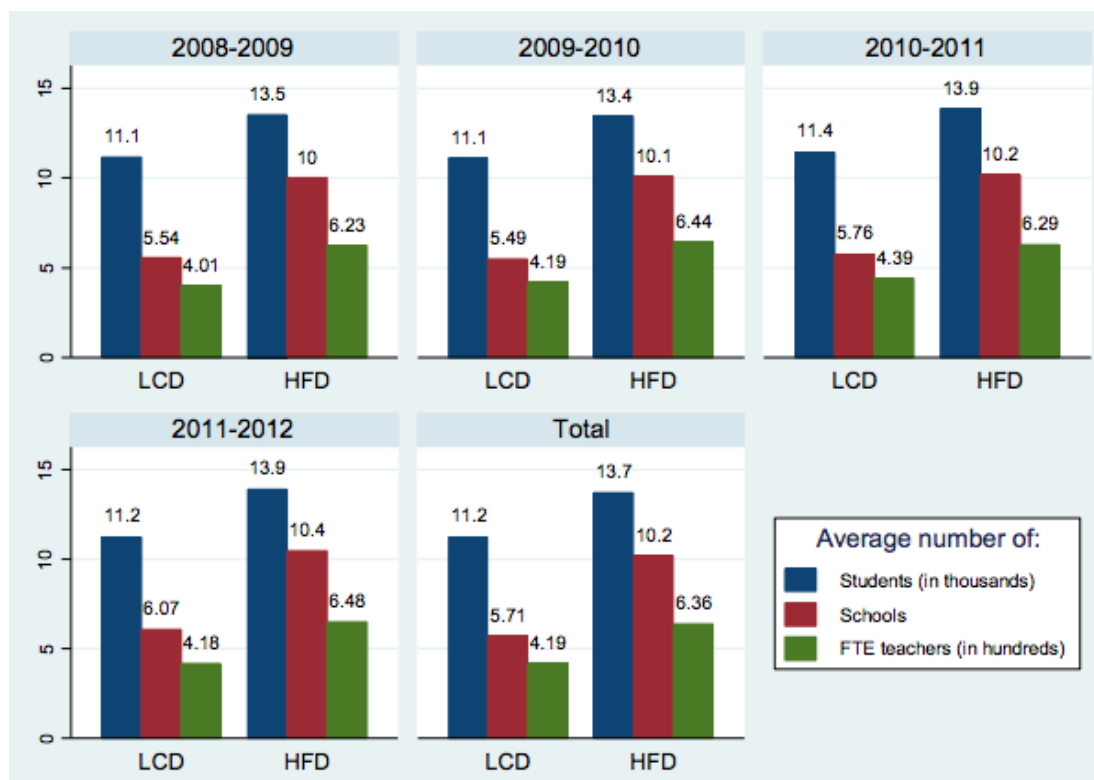
WIDA Efficacy

The WIDA program is widely used throughout the United States. Since being put into place in 2003 when the Enhanced Assessment Grant was given to the Wisconsin Department of Public Education, WIDA has been implemented in many schools across the country (Sahakyan and Ryan, 2018). With the participation of over 500 schools, it has gathered a positive reputation

in the field of education. To ensure this reputation is valid and true, the WIDA program was evaluated (WIDA, 2022).

A truly effective program for an ELL student will ensure the students are successful in their educational career and therefore are able to graduate. After reviewing a 2014 WIDA research report from the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin, **figure 6** highlights low-cruising school districts (LCD) and high-flying school districts (HFD), with low-cruising districts being those that perform at a low level and high-flying schools being high-performing schools (Sahakyan and Cook, 2014). This differentiates the school districts that use these programs and the degree, they use them to teach the ELL students in those districts.

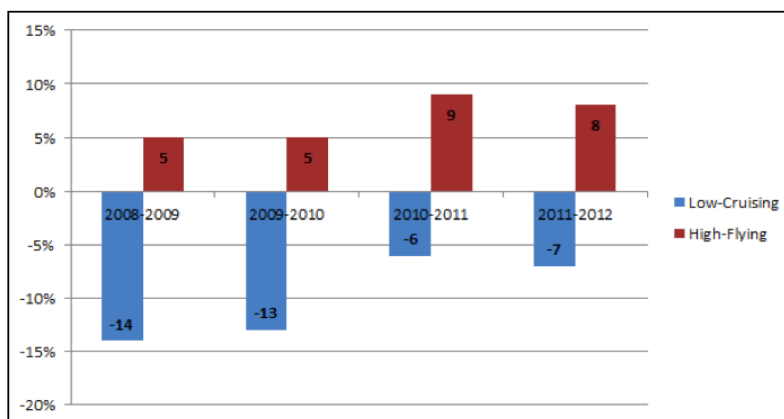
Figure 7: School districts performance levels each school year



This graphic shares that low-cruising schools have a lower number of students enrolled in the ELL programs than high-flying districts suggesting scale effects. This indicates that it is more difficult for schools to achieve higher growth in smaller school districts (Sahakyan and Cook, 2014). The graphs in blue share the students who are ELL students in the schools. The bars on the left show the low-cruising schools and highlight that the programs within these small schools are not as effective as those in the larger, high-flying districts (Sahakyan and Cook, 2014).

In the same WIDA research report, the graduation rate differences between the LCD and HFD in school districts that use the WIDA program are depicted. **Figure 7** highlights the fact that HFD has a higher graduation rate when it comes to their ELL students than those in LCD. The differences range from 15 to 20% when it comes to students who graduate (Sahakyan and Cook, 2014).

Figure 8: Graduation Rates compared between LCD and HFD



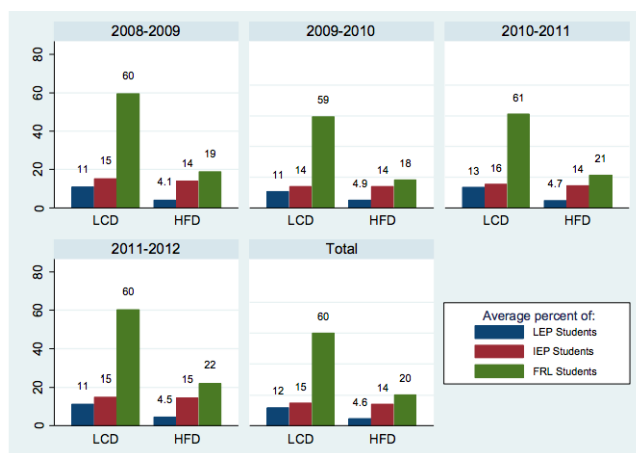
The graphic suggests that the more ELL students there are in a school, the more likely they are to graduate. While graduation rates may differ depending on the size of the ELL population within schools, the results of proficiency are impressive (Sahakyan and Cook, 2014).

This WIDA program has been in use for many years and has been revised most recently in the year 2020. An evaluative study conducted at the University of Tennessee compared WIDA

results to the previous assessment used in this state called ELDA. “For the last 2 years of ELDA, a total of 404 ELL students were tested. Only two students reached proficiency. In the first 2 years of WIDA, a total of 496 ELL students were tested. Out of these students, 211 reached proficiency” (Coulter 2016). This study suggests that utilizing the WIDA frameworks helped increase the effectiveness of ELL instruction. Quotes like this highlight the positive effect WIDA programs can have on the English proficiency of English Language Learners.

When it comes to students who need access to alternative testing methods or programs like IEPs, WIDA offers what is known as Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. The WIDA site describes this as, “a large-print, paper-based test individually administered to students in grades 1-12 who are identified as English learners (ELs) with the most significant cognitive disabilities... who would be likely to participate in their state’s alternate content assessments (WIDA, 2020).” This exam includes accommodations that meet U.S. federal requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 and the Every Student Succeeds Act to ensure students are given the best opportunity to succeed in the WIDA program and in school (WIDA, 2020). There is a percentage of students in many participating WIDA schools that require an IEP or LEP accommodation in academics. **Figure 9** is similar to **figure 5**, but includes students in those schools who require modifications or accommodation to their curriculum or assessments (Sahakyan and Cook, 2014).

Figure 9: Students who require accommodations to their curriculum/assessments



The large number of students who need this service highlights the importance of providing the Alternate ACCESS exam such as the test provided (Sahakyan and Cook, 2014). The data represented by the blue bar in the graph shares that the schools that actively incorporate the WIDA programs are able to help the students who need additional academic services (Sahakyan and Cook, 2014). The accommodations of the ACCESS testing process and exam will ensure students are able to receive a fair chance at proving their proficiency.

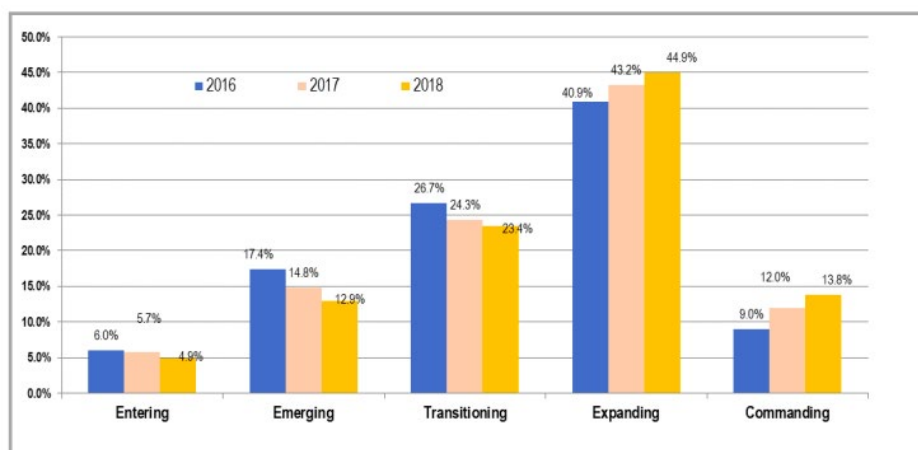
With the participation of over 500 schools, there is no question this is a popular program. School district administrations throughout the entire country have decided to use the WIDA curriculum and ACCESS testing methods. The program curriculum and exam have been reviewed over the course of many years since it was created. The resources provided to families, educators, and students have ensured students are able to succeed in the goal of improving their English proficiency. With the proof from both the graduation rates and accommodations for students with IEPs, the research has concluded that WIDA is an effective program for teaching English Language Learners.

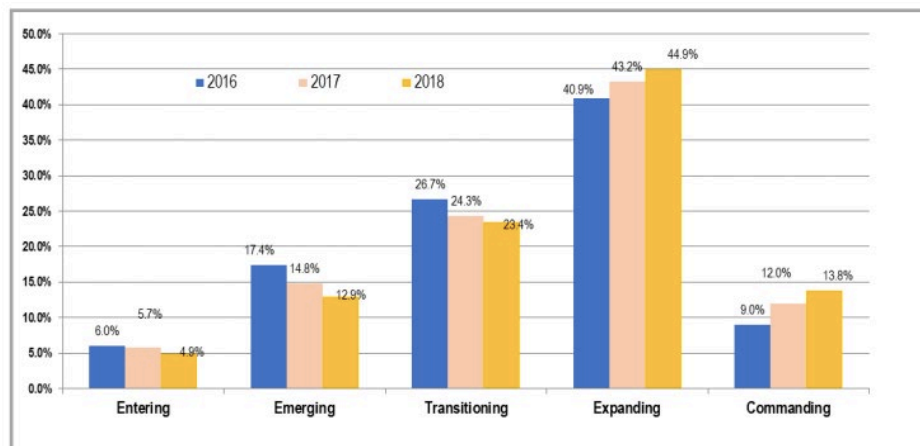
NYSITELL Efficacy

The state of New York created the NYSITELL curriculum and NYSESLAT testing system in order to create a more effective educational environment for English Language learners. With ELL students being over ten percent of the population with many different native languages recorded in the NYS public and charter school systems, it is crucial that the New York State Education Department create an effective program that ensures the success of the students (NYSED, 2019).

As the different criteria were looked into, test scores were reviewed to determine whether or not the NYSITELL program is effective or successful. The NYSESLAT test is broken into five categories: Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, and Commanding. Each section refers to the English language abilities of the students. NYSED looked into the results from 2016, 2017, and 2018 to determine which stage of the five categories was most popular among the ELL students. According to the data shown by a data report created by the NYSED and below in **Figure 10**, the fourth stage, expanding, was the most frequent score among ELL students in all three years, increasing after each year.

Figure 10: Scores attained by EL students three different school years

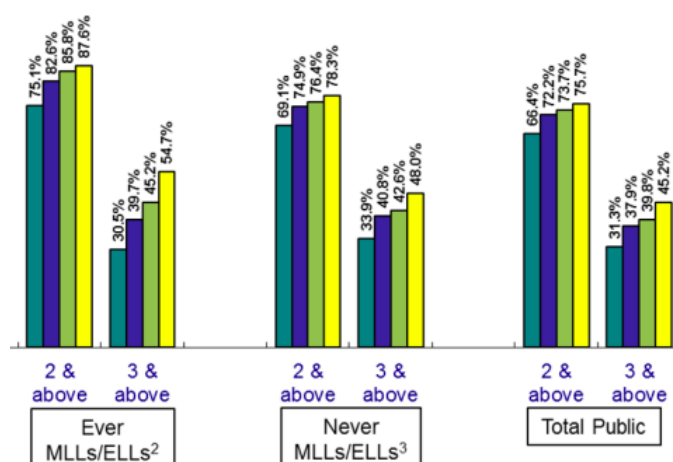




This stage shares that the English Language Learners that were eligible to take the exam did quite well on the exams. This data highlights the successful nature of the NYSITELL program in achieving a high score on the English Language Learner test.

The data report also shared the performance on specific sections of the state test as well in order to compare the ELL students to the non-ELL students (NYSED, 2019). **Figure 11** below shares the results over the course of four years from 2015-2018 in grades 3-8.

Figure 11: The results from NYSMLL in 2015-2018



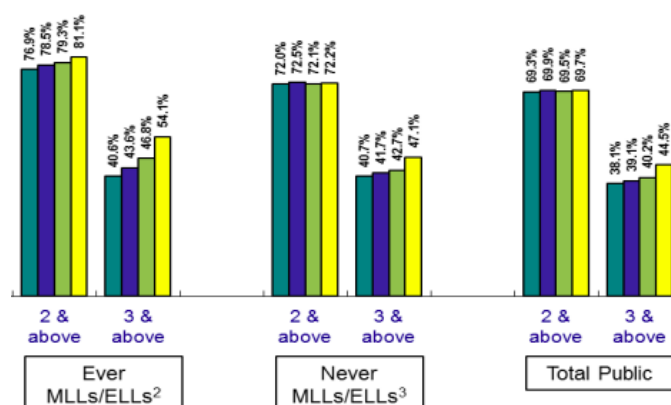
The results to the right share the testing percentages of the English Language Arts sections.

Figure 11 shows that students who have been in the MLL/ELL program have performed better

than the total public population highlighting the program has successfully met the students' diverse needs (NYSED, 2019)

The next section shows the mathematics statewide exam results of the same testing periods from grades 3 to 8. **Figure 12** shares the comparison between the ELL students and the native English-speaking students in mathematics. Similarly to the graphic in **Figure 11**, Figure 12 shows that Multilingual Learners and ELL students have performed higher than the total student population at the state level (NYSED, 2019).

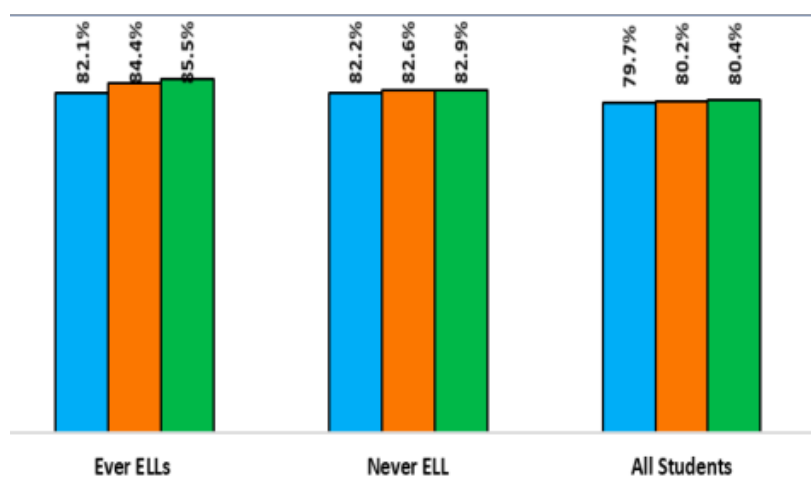
Figure 12: Comparison between ELL students and Non-EL students' scores in mathematics



The second criterion of efficacy looks into the graduation rates of ELL students. To ensure a program such as this is truly helpful to the students, it needs to help students graduate and complete their educational careers. While researching, a data report by the New York State Education Department shared the graduation rates over the course of three years. Similar to the previous charts that looked at the testing scores, the report compared the current and past ELL students to those who have always been considered English speakers and then compiles the data together and takes that percentage as well (NYSED, 2019). In **Figure 13** below, the graphic

shares data from 2012 to 2014. This report shows that students who have met the exit criteria of the NYSIELL program by the time they are 16 years old have a lower chance of dropping out compared to those who remain in the program, as well as those who have never been ELL students (NYSED, 2019).

Figure 13: Graduation Rates from NYSED



The final means of reviewing the NYSITELL look into the accessibility of the program and the exam itself to ensure the students are receiving the accommodations they may require. According to the New York State Education Department guide to the NYSITELL, students are required to have their accommodations given to them. “In general, students with disabilities must be provided with the testing accommodations specified in their IEPs/504 Plans when taking the NYSITELL. It is the principal’s responsibility to ensure that staff members providing testing accommodations are trained appropriately” (New York State Education Department, 2018). The testing and program processes require schools to satisfy any needs of the students that are given to them. The guide also highlights flexibility when it comes to test taking. For example, the guide shares that if students are injured or unable to write on their own they will be given a

scribe (New York State Education Department, 2018). The New York State Education Department ensures students have the academic accommodations they need in order to take the exam.

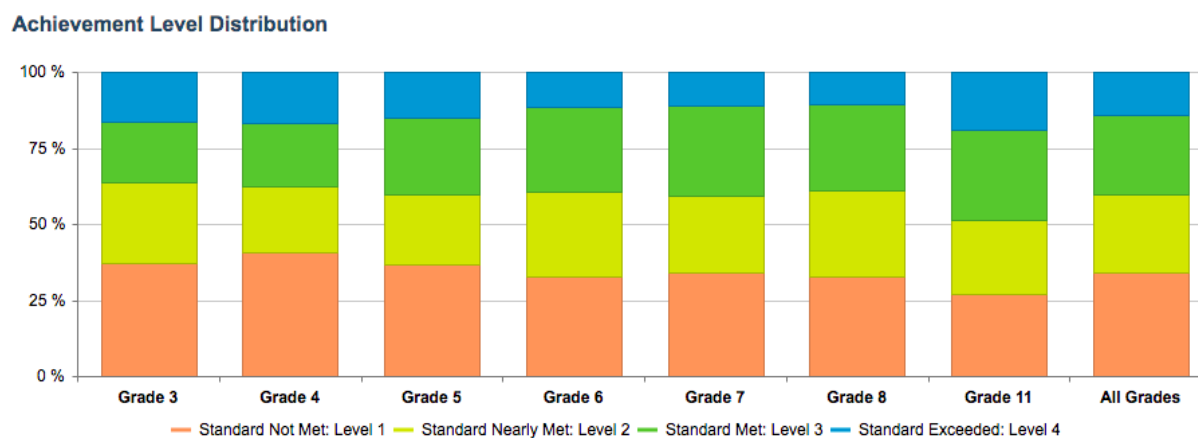
The NYSITELL program curriculum and NYSESLAT test have been reviewed in many different ways. The resources for teachers and educators allow them to ensure their students have the toolkit necessary to succeed in school. With the testing scores being positive, graduation rates fairly high, and accommodations provided to the necessary students, it can be said that NYSITELL is an effective program for teaching English Language Learners.

ELPAC Efficacy

California English Language Development Standards and the ELPAC exam were created by the California Department of Education in order to effectively educate English Language Learners in both charter and public schools within the state of California. The testing program and curriculum both cater to the needs of the students and work to ensure they improve with their English Language proficiency. In order to determine the efficacy of both aspects, the following section looks into the test scores, graduation rates, and accommodations available to English Language Learners.

To determine whether or not the curriculum is teaching the students effectively, the test scores of English Language Learners must be evaluated. **Figure 14** below shows a chart of information that shares the distribution of achievement scores across eight grades in the California public schools in the English Language Arts and Literacy (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, 2022).

Figure 14: Distribution of achievement scores across 8 grades



The orange sections depict the Ever ELL students, those who have at one time or another been ELL students, who have not met the standards. Yellow shows those who have nearly met the standard. Green shows those students who have met the standard and blue shows those who have exceeded the standard. In **Figure 14**, data from 2018-2019 depicts students who were currently English Language Learners as well as those who had tested out of the program (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, 2022). The students' test scores were fairly well spread out among all four levels of the scale in terms of whether or not they met the standard. This graphic depicts the student's skills after having gone through the curriculum, highlighting the rather effective nature of the standards and teaching methods of the California English Language Development Standards as over 50% of students were able to meet or nearly meet the standards (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, 2022).

When looking at the success of the curriculum and exam in California, it was crucial to determine whether or not the success continued throughout the students' educational careers. Ensuring the students graduate after participating in the ELL program helps to determine whether or not the program is effective. When looking at the California Department of Education graduation rates the reported totals were divided into several categories. In **Figure 15**, the graduation rates of English Learners were reported. The graduation rate of the class was just

under seventy percent which is just under the average graduation rate for all students standing at 83% (CA Dept of Education, 2022).

Figure 15: Graduation rates of ELL Students

Name	Cohort Students	Regular HS Diploma Graduates	Cohort Graduation Rate	Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements	Graduates Earning a Seal of Biliteracy	Graduates Earning a Golden State Seal Merit Diploma
Statewide Total	72,913	50,108	68.7%	12,891	2,565	4,353

Not only are the graduation rates fairly positive, but the dropout rates prove to be very low. As seen in **Figure 16**, data from 2018 shows the dropout rate of high school ELL students was less than six percent ((CA Department of Education, 2011). Being a low number, one can conclude that ELL students within the school systems are able to complete their educational careers with a high school diploma.

Figure 16: Graduation rates of all students

	Adjusted Grade 7 Dropouts	Adjusted Grade 8 Dropouts	Adjusted Grade 9 Dropouts	Adjusted Grade 10 Dropouts	Adjusted Grade 11 Dropouts	Adjusted Grade 12 Dropouts	Adjusted Ungraded Secondary Dropouts	Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Total	Grade 9-12 Enrollment Total	Annual Adjusted Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate
Statewide Total	281	225	2,472	1,554	1,806	6,253	66	12,151	225,051	5.4%

The final determination of whether or not the ELPAC and California Department of Education curriculum are effective is the ability to meet the accommodations of the ELL students who need to take the ELPAC test. Similarly to the other tests, the ELPAC offers what is called the Alternate ELPAC (California Department of Education, 2022). “The Alternate ELPAC was developed to ensure that all students are able to participate in an assessment that is an accurate measure of a student’s English Language proficiency (California Department of Education, 2022). For both the initial and summative assessments, students who are enrolled to take the exam have their IEP team determine what their needs are for the assessments and provide them with the proper accommodations (California Department of Education, 2022).

The state of California provides its students with a curriculum and testing system that allows English Language Learners to reach a proficient level in their skills, the proper accommodations for testing, and complete their educational journey with a high school diploma. With each of these criteria being met, it can be said that the California English Language Development Standards and ELPAC system is an effective program for teaching English Language Learners.

TELPAS Efficacy

The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System developed by the Texas Education Agency was designed to provide students, teachers, and administration with direction while also implementing an ESL program for English Language Learners (Texas Education Agency, 2022). In order to answer the research question, the TELPAS program needed to be evaluated based on the test scores, graduation rates, and accommodations available for English Language Learners.

Since the spring of 2012, students in the state of Texas have been required to take an exam known as the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness or STAAR. Students take these exams as they come to the testing grade, which begins in third grade and continues into middle and high school (Texas Education Agency, 2022). The state assessment program is consistent with the TEKS or the Texas statewide curriculum that must be taught in Texas schools. ELL students are also made to take this exam, however, the ELL exam, TELPAS, is a program that assesses the progress that ELL students make in their quest for learning the English language (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

As a way to evaluate the progress of the TELPAS program, the Texas Education Agency compared the testing scores of English Language Learners and all the students of Texas public schools (Sugarman and Geary, 2018). Below are the charts that compare the ELL students to the Texas student population as a whole in reading and writing, mathematics, science, and social studies (Sugarman and Geary, 2018).

Figure 17: Reading and Writing STAAR Testing Comparison

	Reading						Writing	
	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 7 (%)
Share of ELs passing	65	58	69	40	44	60	55	41
Share of all students passing	73	70	82	69	73	86	65	70

Figure 18: Mathematics STAAR Testing Comparison

	Grade 3 (%)	Grade 4 (%)	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 7 (%)	Grade 8 (%)
Share of ELs passing	75	70	81	60	49	74
Share of all students passing	78	76	87	76	70	85

Figure 19: Science and Social Studies STAAR Testing Comparison

	Science		Social Studies
	Grade 5 (%)	Grade 8 (%)	Grade 8 (%)
Share of ELs passing	58	48	31
Share of all students passing	74	76	63

The STAAR exam results of the English Learners achieving a passing score, versus all student's passing varies depending on the category. When it comes to the reading and writing subject matter, EL students in grades 3-5 were within a small deficit behind the passing scores for all students. However, as the students aged into grades 6-8, both reading and writing highlighted the differences between the two groups of scores (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

When it comes to mathematics, students had very similar scores as the language barrier is not as crucial to the success of the student. Science and social studies also highlighted the deficit between EL students and others as the scores grew to be farther apart (Texas Education Agency, 2022). The results of this comparison hint at the need for an increase in teaching beyond the low elementary grades. The charts also highlight the need for a focus on both science and social studies key terms within the curriculum.

Another evaluation method includes looking into the graduation rates of English Language Learners. The Texas graduation rates of ELL students, while lower than English speakers, are above the national level for the most recent year available, 2015-2016. For the class of 2017, the share of ELs to graduate within four years was 71 percent, compared to a group year graduation rate of 89 percent for all students. The national level and rate include 67 percent for ELs and 84 percent for all students (Sugarman and Geary, 2018). The statistics mentioned here share the success of the ELL programs as they aid students in completing their educational careers. The results of these facts reflect the effective nature of the TELPAS program for the Texas public schools.

The final evaluation method looks into the flexibility of the TELPAS exam for students with learning needs or disabilities. In order for a program to be effective, it needs to accommodate the needs of the English Language Learners. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System includes a branch known as the TELPAS Alternate that allows students to have their needs met (Texas Education Agency, 2022). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has developed this exam that meets the federal requirements mandated under the ESSA, ensuring school systems help students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the general assessments (Texas Education Agency, 2022). The TELPAS Alternate

can be changed to fit the needs of the student no matter what they include. The TEA site has created links for parents, educators, and students to ensure everyone has the tools for student success (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

Overall, the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System has created a curriculum and assessment method to ensure ELL students are able to pass the STAAR Texas exam. With the results the STAAR exams, graduation rates, and the alternative methods of testing, it can be stated that the TELPAS program is effective in its efforts to teach English Language Learners.

Conclusion

Each of these programs has worked to provide a framework for English Language Learners to not only to allow students to improve their English, but to increase their chances for a successful educational experience. Creating curriculums and exams like the ones reviewed in this dissertation allows educators to take advantage of resources that will elevate EL teaching.

World Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) is the most popular curriculum and assessment tool used with ELL students in our country and works to ensure ELL students are taught in ways that will help them excel.

The New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) works to provide a guide to educating students who do not speak fluent English and ensure they are given the skills necessary to succeed.

California developed the California English Language Development Standards, which were created to help students pass the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California, or ELPAC. This program and examination process allows students to work with educators and develop their English proficiency.

The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) provides teachers, administrators, and students with direct leadership and both a Bilingual and English as a Second Language Program for ELL students.

The programs that have been reviewed in this dissertation all incorporate aspects of ELL teaching that are effective in their approach to teaching English Language Learners. Each of these programs is successful in the education of non-native English speakers. They all help the educational systems produce productive members of society.

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