

DATA BULLETIN

English Language Learners in Connecticut

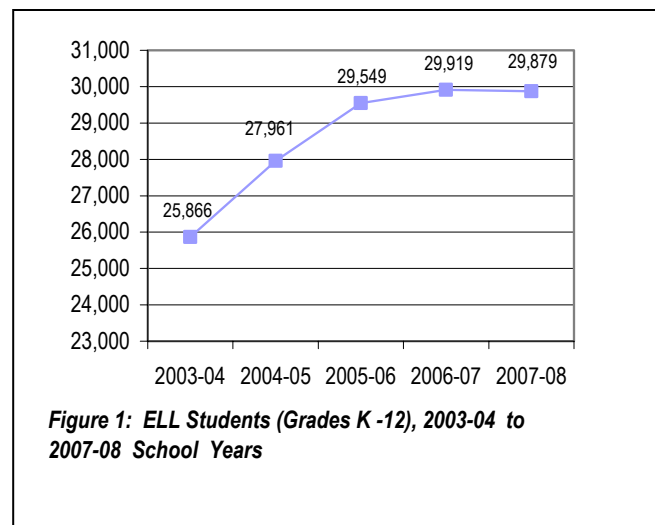
Although Connecticut is a small state, it has a rich cultural diversity which is reflected in its student population. In the 2007-08 school year, public school students (K-12) spoke a total of 161 different dominant languages. Dominant language refers to a combination of either the first language the student learned, the primary language their parents speak, or the principal language spoken by the child at home. English speakers (Table 1) accounted for the largest group of students (87 percent), followed by Spanish (8.6 percent) and all others (4.4 percent). However, over the last five years, the number of students whose dominant language was English fell (-2 percent) while those who spoke a non-English language grew (3.6 percent). As a result, the dominant language for nearly one in every seven students was not English (72,417 students).

Table 1: Top 12 Dominant Languages (Grades K-12), 2003-04 to 2007-08 School Years

Language	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	Change 2003 - 2007
English	493,988	494,725	492,516	489,455	483,886	-2%
Spanish	47,076	47,175	47,775	47,645	47,904	1.8%
Portuguese	2,893	3,015	3,036	2,991	2,976	2.9%
Polish	2,427	2,431	2,452	2,464	2,426	0%
Chinese	1,803	1,776	1,912	2,043	2,101	16.5%
Creole-Haitian	1,457	1,470	1,472	1,457	1,428	-2%
Albanian	1,080	1,095	1,098	1,114	1,149	6.4%
Vietnamese	1,128	1,151	1,152	1,134	1,137	.8%
Urdu	866	899	943	961	1,017	17.4%
Russian	819	783	849	885	913	11.5%
Arabic	741	811	832	879	897	21.1%
French	794	796	813	837	823	3.7%
All Others	8,791	8,911	8,954	9,322	9,646	9.7%
Total	563,863	565,038	563,804	561,187	556,303	-1.3%

English Language Learners (ELL)

Although there were 72,417 students with a dominant language other than English in the 2007-08 school year, only a subset of them (29,879 or 41.3 percent) were assessed as English language learners (ELL – Figure 1). ELL students lacked sufficient mastery of English in order to “assure equal educational opportunity in the regular school program” (CGS Section 10-17e). They are an increasingly important student subpopulation in Connecticut. From 2003 through 2007, the number of ELL students grew 15.5 percent while non-ELL students fell 2.2 percent. As a result, ELL students increased from 4.6 percent to 5.4 percent of all Connecticut students (K-12).



Dominant Language and ELL Identification

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), as well as state law, all local school districts must annually ascertain the dominant language of all new K-12 students and assess their English language proficiency by October 1. In 2003, the Connecticut State Board of Education recommended a three-step procedure (Table 2). The first step includes a preliminary assessment of the student's dominant language. For those whose dominant language is not English, a final determination is made upon the basis of either observation or testing. In 2007-08, 72,417 students had a dominant language other than English. An assessment of English proficiency is conducted for students with dominant language other than English that includes testing, an interview and a review of the school record. Students who have not demonstrated English language proficiency are considered English language learners (ELL) and are eligible for English language support services. In the 2007-08 school year, there were 29,879 ELL students.

Table 2: State Board of Education Recommended Steps for Identifying Dominant Language and ELL Students

Step	Process
1. Preliminary assessment of dominant language	Administration of a three-question survey including: First language spoken by the student; primary language spoken by parents/guardians at home; and primary language spoken at home by the student
2. Final determination of dominant language	Student observation or dual language test
3. English proficiency assessment of those with a dominant language other than English	Use of a standardized English proficiency test, oral interview in English and an examination of student's records including test scores and report cards

ELL Services

Parents of students identified as ELL are notified and informed about English language services available to their child including the option of "English immersion" (i.e., the regular education program taught in English). Services vary from district to district and often are determined by the number of ELL students present in a school. Services may include bilingual education, English as a Second Language programs (ESL), Language Transition Support Services (LTSS), dual language programs and tutoring.

When a school has 20 or more native language speakers of the same language in one building, it is required by State law to provide a bilingual program (CGS Section 10-17f). Since 1977, Connecticut has had legislation on bilingual education. In the 2007-08 school year, 29.1 percent of all ELL students were enrolled in a bilingual education program. Over the last four years, the number of ELL students in a bilingual program declined (Table 3) -3.8 percent, even though the total number of ELL students increased 6.9 percent. As a result, the share of ELL students in a bilingual program fell from 32.2 percent to

to 29.1 percent. Students may receive bilingual education for a maximum of 30 months and those who complete this without attaining English mastery must receive LTSS. In the 2007-08 school year, 19.3 percent of all ELL students received LTSS, up from 17.2 percent in 2003. Over the last four years, as more stringent ELL exit standards have been implemented, the number of students receiving LTSS increased by 20.1 percent.

Nearly half of all ELL students are either enrolled in an ESL program or are receiving other English language support services. Since the 2004-05 school year, the number of these students grew at a slightly higher rate than for all ELL students (7.5 percent vs. 6.9 percent). For the first time, Title III of NCLB provides federal funding for ESL programs that had been supported solely with local funds. During the last four years, the number of students whose parents refused language support services grew the fastest (46.1 percent). In the 2007-08 school year, one in every four students whose parents refused language support services was a special education student.

Table 3: ELL Students by Services, 2004-05 to 2007-08 School Years

ELL Program	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	Change 2004-07
Bilingual program	9,033	8,852	9,494	8,685	-3.8%
Language transition support services	4,801	5,681	5,609	5,768	20.1%
ESL or other type of English language support services	13,513	14,139	13,951	14,529	7.5%
Parent refused all English support services	614	877	865	897	46.1%
Totals	27,961	29,549	29,919	29,879	6.9%

Who are ELL Students?

Although more than 72,000 students in the 2007-08 school year had a dominant language other than English, less than half (29,879) were assessed as English language learners (ELL) based upon their level of English proficiency. ELL students are a diverse student population. Yet, there are also some characteristics that distinguish them as a group from non-ELL students.

Languages Spoken

In the 2007-08 school year, ELL students spoke 129 different non-English languages. Spanish accounted for the largest segment of ELL students (71.4 percent), followed by Portuguese (3.8 percent) and then Chinese, Polish, Creole-Haitian and Albanian, each approximately 2 percent of this group (Table 4). Spanish (92.7 percent) and Portuguese (2.1 percent) were the dominant languages for nearly all ELL students either currently enrolled in a bilingual education program or those students who have completed one.

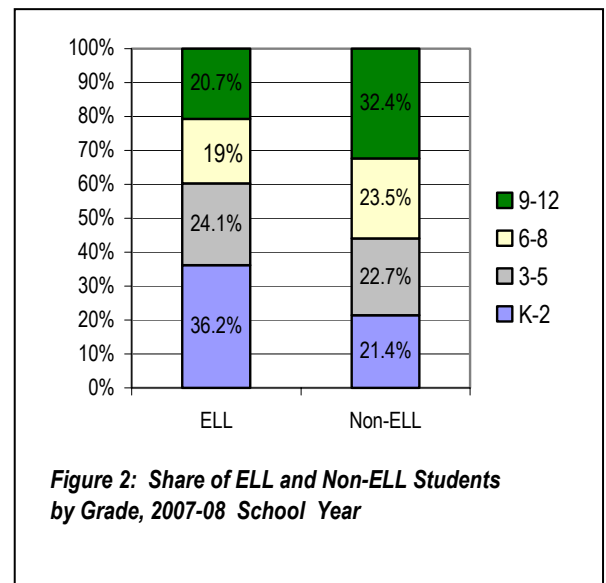
Over the last five years, among the most common languages spoken by ELL students, Russian grew the fastest (39.1 percent), followed by Chinese (19.1 percent) and Spanish (19 percent). Conversely during this time period, Serbo-Croatian (-44.5 percent) and Albanian (-10.8 percent) experienced the largest declines. Among smaller ELL language groups, Bengali (53.7 percent) and Turkish (39.7 percent) experienced the largest gains.

Table 4: Top 12 Dominant Languages of ELL Students (Grades K-12), 2003-04 to 2007-08 School Years

Language	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	Change 2003-2007
Spanish	17,923	19,380	20,635	21,262	21,333	19%
Portuguese	1,034	1,145	1,252	1,198	1,149	11.1%
Chinese	570	646	673	653	679	19.1%
Polish	726	765	819	761	650	-10.5%
Creole-Haitian	540	579	578	576	582	7.8%
Albanian	553	539	584	519	493	-10.8%
Vietnamese	356	410	430	398	378	6.2%
Arabic	309	349	368	381	361	16.8%
Urdu	330	361	360	323	330	0%
Russian	225	239	296	292	313	39.1%
Serbo-Croatian	524	501	429	351	291	-44.5%
French	270	289	289	287	281	4.1%
All Others	2,506	2,758	2,836	2,918	3,039	21.3%
Total	25,866	27,961	29,549	29,919	29,879	15.5%

Grade Level

ELL students are more clustered in the lower grades than their non-ELL counterparts. In the 2007-08 school year, over 36 percent were in kindergarten through grade 2 and 60.3 percent were in elementary school (K-5), compared, respectively, with 21.4 percent and 44.1 percent of non-ELL students (Figure 2). However, the highest increase in the number of ELL students over the last five years occurred in middle school (25.4 percent) and high school (18.4 percent), as compared with elementary school (11.8 percent). This may be related to the more stringent English language mastery standards required for students to exit ELL status that were recently implemented.



Race and Ethnicity

In the 2007-08 school year, Hispanics comprised 71.2 percent of ELL students, compared with just 13.3 percent of non-ELL students (Figure 3). Over the last four years, the number of Hispanic students identified as ELL grew slightly faster than the number of those who were non-ELL students (10 percent vs. 8.8 percent). Like Hispanics, Asian students were also a larger portion of the ELL than non-ELL student populations (10.8 percent vs. 3.5 percent). Since 2004, however, the number of Asian ELL students increased significantly slower than non-ELL students (.9 percent vs. 15.7 percent). Although blacks were a smaller portion of ELL as compared to non-ELL students, the number of black ELL students rapidly increased while non-ELL

black students declined (12.3 percent vs. -9 percent). White ELL and non-ELL students both declined (-4.3 percent and -4.8 percent, respectively).

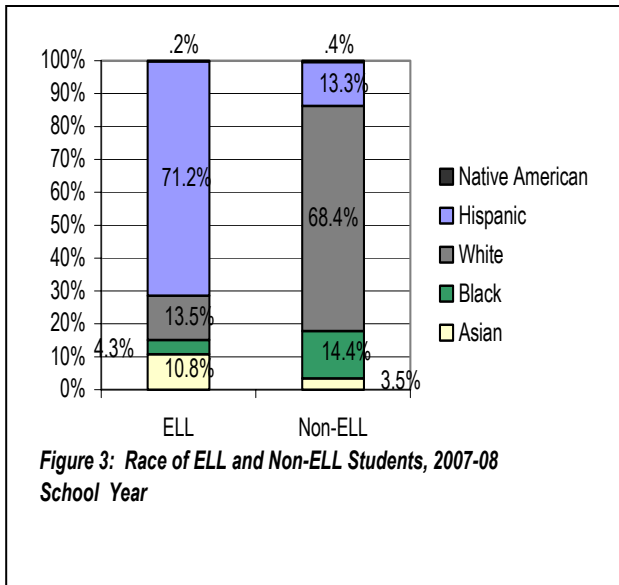


Figure 3: Race of ELL and Non-ELL Students, 2007-08 School Year

Eligibility for Free or Reduced Price School Meals
 In sharp contrast to the non-ELL population, most ELL students were eligible for either free or reduced price meals in the 2007-08 school year (Figure 4: 70 percent vs. 25.6 percent). While ELL students were just over 5 percent of all K-12 public school students in Connecticut, they accounted for 13 percent of all children eligible for free or reduced price meals. Over the last five years, the number of ELL students eligible for free or reduced meals grew nine times faster than the number of eligible non-ELL students (14.4 percent vs. 1.6 percent).

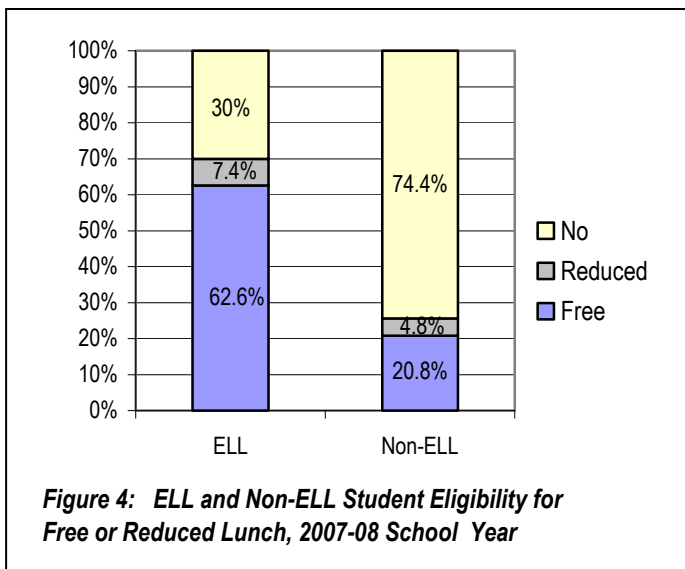


Figure 4: ELL and Non-ELL Student Eligibility for Free or Reduced Lunch, 2007-08 School Year

Special Education Status

In the 2007-08 school year, 12 percent of ELL students were also special education students, which was comparable to the share of non-ELL students in special education (10.9 percent). Typically, in prior years, fewer ELL students than non-ELL students were identified as special education students. However, over the last five years, the number of ELL students also identified as special education students increased by 67.4 percent (Figure 5). Quite distinct from this trend, the number of non-ELL special education students fell by 8.7 percent. As a result of these opposite trends, ELL students' share of the special education student subpopulation grew from 3.3 percent to 5.9 percent.

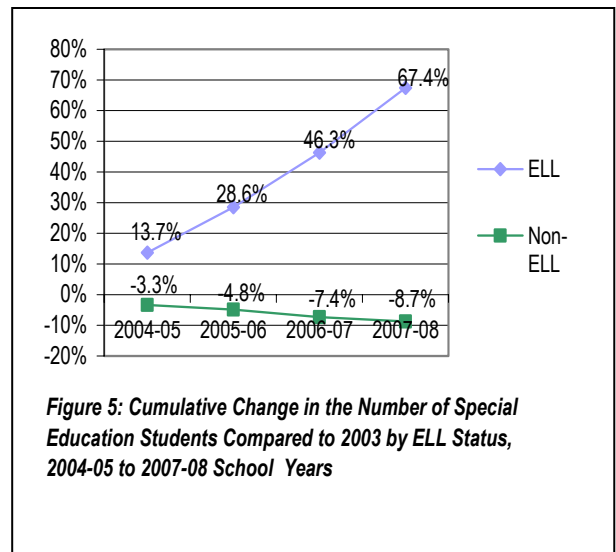


Figure 5: Cumulative Change in the Number of Special Education Students Compared to 2003 by ELL Status, 2004-05 to 2007-08 School Years

This graph depicts growth in the number of special education students for each year compared with 2003. For example, the number of ELL special education students in 2007 was 67.4 percent higher than in 2003.

Teachers of English Language Learners

Districts are encouraged by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to hire qualified Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) or bilingual educators. At the elementary level, highly qualified bilingual teachers are certified in elementary and bilingual education. At the secondary level, teachers are certified in bilingual education and the subject area they will teach. Certification is valid for five years and renewed for five years upon completion of professional development activities. If a district has a small number of ELL students and utilizes tutors, then it is encouraged to ensure that the tutors are supervised by a certified teacher and also that these teachers and tutors receive training in ESL. Title III of the *No Child Left Behind Act* provides federal funding to districts for the professional development of administrative personnel and teaching staff.

Bilingual and TESOL Teacher Full-time Equivalents (FTEs) and Vacant Positions

In the 2006-07 school year, 476.4 bilingual and 396.8 TESOL full-time equivalents (FTEs) provided instruction (Table 6). From 2002, the number of bilingual FTEs fell by 11.6 percent while TESOL FTEs increased 16.9 percent. This may, in part, reflect the demand for particular types of ELL services; for example, the number of ELL students in a bilingual program fell by 3.8 percent while those in an ESL program or receiving other language support services increased by 7.5 percent from 2004-05 through 2007-08 (Table 3).

Table 6: Bilingual and TESOL FTEs, 2002-03 to 2006-07 School Years

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Change 2002-2006
Bilingual	539.1	504.7	507.2	493.4	476.4	-11.6%
TESOL	339.5	336.2	368.8	378.4	396.8	16.9%

Table 7 summarizes the number of bilingual and TESOL teacher vacancies in Connecticut in 2006-07, as well as characteristics of the applicant pool. Bilingual education (PK-12) was designated as a teacher shortage area, as 40 percent of available bilingual teaching positions remained vacant due to the lack of qualified applicants. Fourteen percent of TESOL positions remained vacant. One factor contributing to the vacancies is the smaller pool of applicants for these types of positions. Comparing teacher hiring for 49 different subject areas, bilingual education ranked 35th in the number of median applications per position (5.5), while TESOL ranked 27th (8.5 applications). A second factor was the quality of the pool of applicants. The median rating that districts gave to the pool of applicants for bilingual education positions was the lowest score (1) denoting “few or no minimally qualified applicants.” For TESOL, the median rating was a 2 meaning “some acceptable applicants.” Furthermore, half of all bilingual teaching vacancies and 21 percent of all TESOL vacancies were filled by minimally qualified candidates. Districts may apply to the Commissioner of the State Department of Education for a one-year waiver to fill bilingual vacancies with TESOL teachers. In the 2006-07 school year, *not highly qualified teachers* (according to the NCLB definition) taught 4.7 percent of all ESL classes.

Table 7: Bilingual and TESOL Teacher Vacancies, 2006-07 School Year

	Positions Available	Vacancies Remaining, No Qualified Person Found	Minimally Qualified Hire	Durational Shortage Area Permits	1 st CT Certificates	Median Applicant Quality Rating
Bilingual, PK-12	53	21	26	11	12	1
TESOL, PK-12	43	6	9	6	87	2

Bilingual and TESOL Teacher Characteristics

Distinct from TESOL and all Connecticut teachers in the 2006-07 school year, bilingual teachers were predominantly members of racial or ethnic minorities (Table 8). They were also slightly less likely to be in their first year and less likely to have their master’s degree. Compared with all Connecticut teachers, bilingual teachers were somewhat older (more of them were 55 years and older) and they had more years of teaching experience. Significantly, nearly one-third of TESOL teachers were 55 years or older and were also older than all Connecticut teachers. TESOL teachers also had more years of experience and a larger proportion of them had a master’s degree as compared to all Connecticut teachers. The older age of this highly skilled group of teachers may become a crucial issue as the number of ELL students continues to increase.

Table 8: Characteristics of Bilingual and TESOL and All CT Teachers, 2006-07 School Year

	Female	Minority	1 st Year	MA	Age 55 and Over	Average Age	Average Experience
Bilingual	82.2%	82.7%	3.3%	71.2%	23.7%	46.1	16.1 years
TESOL	89.2%	24.4%	4%	89%	31.6%	48.7	15.8 years
CT	73.7%	7.4%	4.6%	79%	20.7%	44.3	14.6 years

ELL Student Assessment and Program Exit Standards

NCLB mandated that the English proficiency of all ELL students be annually assessed. Previously under Connecticut law, ELL students in mandated bilingual programs were the only ELL students assessed and required to meet the English Mastery Standard in order to exit language support services. In June 2002, the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted a linguistic assessment tool for all ELL students. In September 2003, it adopted a revised English Mastery Standard that all ELL students were required to meet in order to demonstrate English proficiency and exit any English language support services they were receiving. Once a student achieves English mastery, they are no longer considered to be an ELL student.

As part of the assessment for the English Mastery Standard, all ELL students in grades K-12 take the *LAS Links* annually. As noted by its publisher, CTB McGraw-Hill, *LAS Links* is a standardized NCLB-compliant instrument specifically designed to measure the language proficiency of ELL students and monitor their progress in acquiring English. It is not an achievement test of course content, but rather one designed to assess the English language skills necessary for mainstream classrooms and social usage.

LAS Links is based upon the theory that language acquisition is cumulative and multidimensional. Its test components include speaking, listening, reading and writing. The Connecticut State Board of Education adopted the English Language Learner Frameworks in 2004 which aligns ELL curriculum with *LAS Links*.

A second component of the English Mastery Standard is the test of academic mastery. For grades K-2, the instrument is the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), a standardized test in which students read passages orally and retell stories with minimal prompting. ELL students in grades 3-9 take the CMT and must achieve proficiency in mathematics and reading, and attain the basic level in writing in order to meet this portion of the Mastery Standard. ELL students in grades 10-12 must achieve at or above basic on the CAPT mathematics, reading and writing components in order to exit ELL status. ELL students enrolled in a U.S. school for less than one calendar year may be exempt from the reading and writing assessments of either the CMT or CAPT; however, they still must take the math and science components (science is assessed in grades 5, 8 and 10).

Table 9: ELL Assessment Requirements and Performance Standards to Demonstrate English Language Mastery and Exit ELL Status

Grade	Language Proficiency	Academic Mastery		
		Mathematics	Reading	Writing
K-2	LAS Links (Proficiency - Level 4)	-	Developmental Reading Assessment (K – Level 4, Grade 1 – Level 18 and Grade 2 – Level 28)	-
3-8	LAS Links (Proficiency - Level 4)	CMT4 (Proficient – Level 3)	CMT4 (Proficient – Level 3)	CMT4 (Basic – Level 2)
9	LAS Links (Proficiency - Level 4)	School Secure CMT Generation 3 Grade 8 (Proficient – Level 3)	School Secure CMT Generation 3 Grade 8 (Proficient – Level 3)	School Secure CMT Generation 3 Grade 8 (Basic – Level 2)
10-12	LAS Links (Proficiency - Level 4)	CAPT Third Generation (Basic)	CAPT Third Generation (Basic)	CAPT Third Generation (Basic)

For grades 3-8, smaller percentages of ELL than non-ELL students achieved proficiency on the math, reading and writing sections of the 2007 CMT (Figures 6-8). However, former ELL students performed as well or even better than non-ELL students, particularly on the writing section. This may highlight the significant positive effect of ELL programs for some students. Title III of NCLB requires states to monitor the academic progress of former ELL students for two years after they exit ELL status. For determining AYP, former ELL students are included in the ELL subgroup for two years following their exit from ELL status.

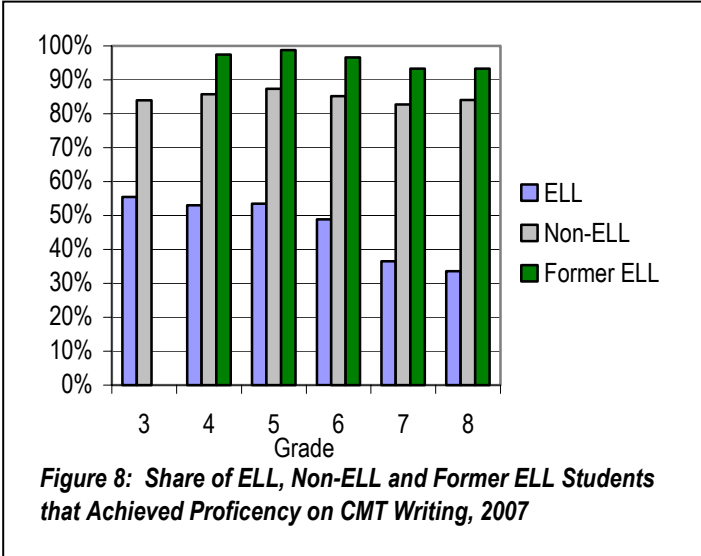


Figure 8: Share of ELL, Non-ELL and Former ELL Students that Achieved Proficiency on CMT Writing, 2007

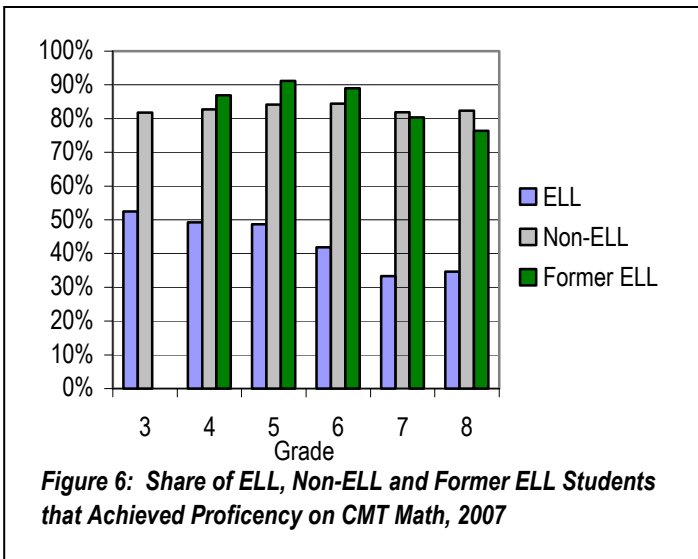


Figure 6: Share of ELL, Non-ELL and Former ELL Students that Achieved Proficiency on CMT Math, 2007

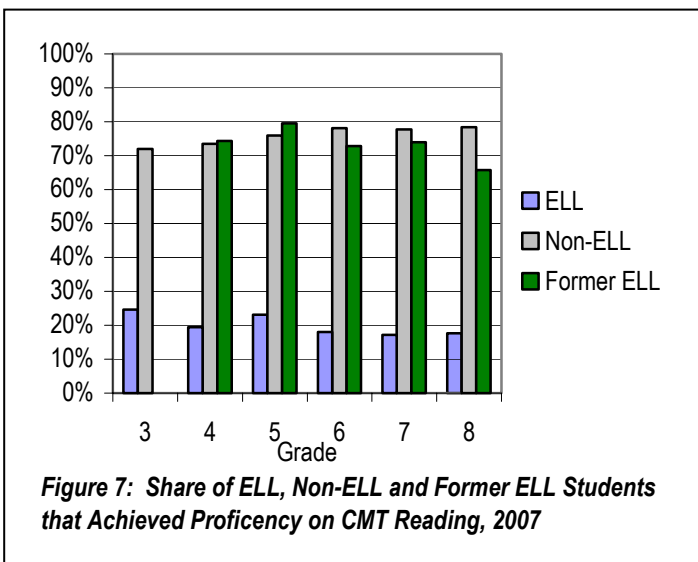


Figure 7: Share of ELL, Non-ELL and Former ELL Students that Achieved Proficiency on CMT Reading, 2007

On the CMT reading component, bilingual education students were about half as likely as other ELL students to attain either the levels of “proficient” (Figure 9: 6.4 percent vs. 11.5 percent), “goal” (5.7 percent vs. 9.3 percent) or advanced (.3 percent vs. .6 percent). Furthermore, almost one in five bilingual students did not have CMT reading scores compared to 5.2% of other ELL students. Students without a score were most likely exempted from the reading assessment because they were in their first academic year in a U.S. school.

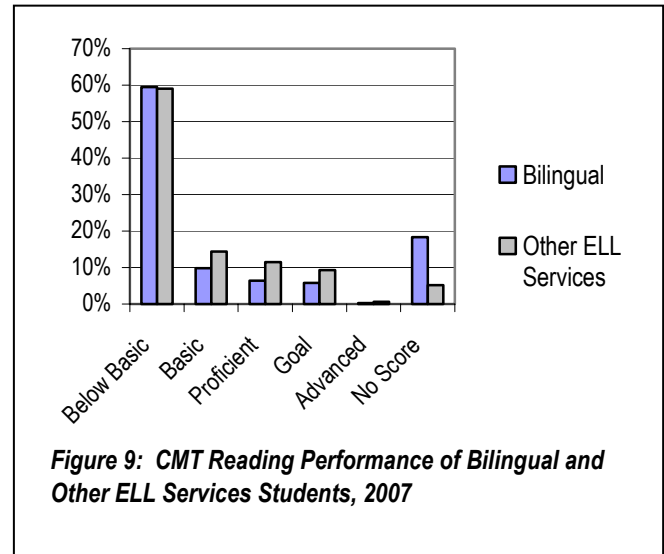


Figure 9: CMT Reading Performance of Bilingual and Other ELL Services Students, 2007

Conclusion

In the 2007-08 school year, one in seven children in Connecticut public schools had a dominant language other than English (72,417). A subset of these students (29,879) lacked sufficient mastery of English in order to perform adequately in mainstream classrooms and were therefore eligible for English language support services (English language learners – ELL). ELL students received a variety of English language support services including bilingual education (29.1 percent), language transition services (19.3 percent) and ESL/Other services (48.6 percent). Some parents refused services for their children and opted for “English immersion” i.e., the regular education program taught in English (3 percent). Over the last five years, both the number of public school students speaking a language other than English and ELL students increased (by 3.6 percent and 15.5 percent respectively). ELL students accounted for 5.4 percent of all students in the 2007-08 school year. The increased diversity of Connecticut’s student population presents the State with a variety of challenges as well as opportunities for enhancing its public education system. These challenges are particularly acute with the implementation of more stringent federal ELL accountability standards.

Crucial ELL issues for future study and consideration include:

- Improving current procedures and practices for ensuring proper identification of ELL students;
- Increasing the number and quality of ELL teachers. Examining reasons for the number of bilingual teaching vacancies and implications of the aging of bilingual and TESOL teachers as the number of ELL students increases;
- Monitoring reasons for the rapid increase in the number of ELL students also identified as special education; and
- Improving curriculum and pedagogy to ensure that ELL students meet academic standards and attain proficiency standards, particularly in light of NCLB requirements of all students demonstrating proficiency by 2013-14.