



A Review of High School Completion Rates and Dropout Prevention for Students Identified with Limited English Proficiency

A Report to the 82nd Texas Legislature

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The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk

The University of Texas at Austin

Submitted to the Texas Education Agency

**In compliance with the General Appropriations Act, 81st Legislative Session,
Rider 51, Texas High School Completion and Success Initiative**

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Executive Summary

This report provides a review of high school completion rates for limited English proficient (LEP) students in Texas, discusses evidence-based dropout prevention strategies for LEP students, and makes recommendations for expanding and enhancing Texas' efforts to promote high school completion and success for LEP students. What follows are highlights from the report.

Demographics

- LEP students are a growing population in the Texas public school system. Since 1999, the LEP student growth rate in Texas has been nearly double that of the total student population. The LEP student population grew by 41.7% from the 1999–2000 school year to the 2009–2010 school year; the total student population grew by only 21.1% in the same 10-year period (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2010b).
- Approximately 91% of LEP students in Texas are identified as Hispanic and 92% speak Spanish as their first language (Public Education Information Management System [PEIMS], 2010).
- Approximately 89% of LEP students in all grades in Texas are identified as economically disadvantaged (PEIMS, 2010).

Dropout Statistics

- The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) defines a dropout as a student enrolled in grades 7–12 who does not return to public school the following fall; is not expelled; and does not graduate, receive a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die. Although the NCES definition includes students in grades 7 and 8, this report considers only data on students in high school, or grades 9 through 12.

- The annual dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number students who drop out of school during a single school year by the total number of students who enrolled the same year (TEA, 2010f).
 - The statewide annual dropout rate for all students in grades 9–12 for the 2008–2009 school year in Texas was 2.9%, which was a 0.3 percentage point decrease from the previous year.
 - The statewide annual dropout rate for LEP students in grades 9–12 for the 2008–2009 school year was 5.1%, which was a 0.7 percentage point decrease from the previous year.
- The longitudinal dropout rate is the percentage of students from the same class of beginning ninth-graders who drop out before completing their high school education (TEA, 2010f).
 - For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide longitudinal dropout rate for all students was 9.4%, which was a decrease of more than 1 percentage point from the previous year.
 - For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide longitudinal dropout rate for LEP students who were still classified as LEP during the last year that they attended school was 29.1%, which was a decrease of 1.7 percentage points from the previous year.
 - For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide longitudinal dropout rate for LEP students still classified as LEP in grades 9–12 was 19.7%¹.
 - For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide longitudinal dropout rate for students identified as LEP anytime during their K–12 education was 12.7%¹.
 - For the class of 2009, immigrant students, when compared to all other LEP students, had the highest grade 9 statewide longitudinal dropout rate, 29.5%, which was a decrease of 5.7 percentage points from the previous year.

- The graduation rate refers to the percentage of students in a class who graduated early or on time.
 - For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide longitudinal graduation rate was 80.6%, which was a 0.6 percentage point increase from the previous year.
 - For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide longitudinal graduation rate for LEP students still classified as LEP during their last year of school was 49.2%, which was an increase of 5.0 percentage points from the previous year.
 - For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide longitudinal graduation rate for LEP students still classified as LEP during grades 9–12 was 56.9%¹.
 - For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide longitudinal graduation rate for students identified as LEP anytime during their K–12 education was 72.3%¹.

Dropout Risk Factors and LEP Students

- Students drop out of school for many different reasons; however, educators can use certain risk factors to better identify students most at risk for dropping out of school (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). The most common risk factors include (but are not limited to) the following: (a) low reading and academic ability, (b) grade retention, (c) low socioeconomic status, (d) school mobility, (e) disciplinary problems, (f) drug and alcohol abuse, (g) truancy, (h) failed high school exit exams, and (i) English spoken as a second language (Balfanz, Herzog, & Maclver, 2007; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Rumberger, 2004).
- LEP students often exhibit multiple dropout risk factors. For example, in Texas during the 2008–2009 school year, 72% of high school LEP students were identified as being economically disadvantaged.

- Poor academic achievement is a strong predictor of dropping out (Swanson & Schneider, 1999). In grades 3–5, more than 80% of LEP students meet the panel-recommended standard for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) subtests of Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics; however, by grade 11, only 49% of LEP students meet the Reading/English Language Arts standard and 47% meet the Mathematics standard (TEA, 2010a).
- Grade retention significantly increases the probability of a student dropping out (Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002). LEP students in Texas have high school grade retention rates that are more than triple that of non-LEP students (TEA, 2010c).

Dropout Prevention Strategies

Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide (Dynarski et al., 2008), published by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), proposes six recommendations for preventing students from dropping out, which are divided into three categories: Diagnostic (Recommendation 1); Targeted Interventions (Recommendations 2, 3, and 4); and Schoolwide Interventions (Recommendations 5 and 6). These strategies, listed below, are considered to be effective for all children, not just LEP students.

1. Use data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.
2. Hire, train, and assign adult advocates to all students at risk for dropping out.
3. Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.
4. Identify programs to improve the behavior and social development of students at risk for dropping out.
5. Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.
6. Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve students after they leave school.

Recommendations

Despite the high dropout rate for LEP students, there is a paucity of research on preventing LEP students from dropping out. All of the dropout prevention strategies that the IES practice guide recommends are applicable to the LEP student population; therefore, this report suggests following those recommendations—with the following adaptations and additions that target LEP students.

1. Provide schools with electronic access to up-to-date, comprehensive, longitudinal, student-level data, so that schools can monitor students' progress and use the data as an early-warning system.
2. Increase the reporting of LEP student outcomes at the school, district, and statewide level by including more disaggregated data, such as separate categories for exited LEP students (1 and 2 years postexit), separate categories by language proficiency, separate categories by grade, and separate categories for students who were ever counted as LEP (LEP K–12) and LEP students in high school (LEP 9–12).
3. Provide adult advocates who have appropriate training and experience working with culturally and linguistically diverse students and match these advocates with LEP students at risk of dropping out.
4. Implement school, district, and statewide initiatives to integrate explicit instruction of academic vocabulary in kindergarten through grade 12.
5. Provide professional development for all teachers on English as a second language strategies and strategies for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.
6. Provide multiple pathways to graduation that are personalized and connected to college readiness and future careers.

1 — Introduction

In compliance with the General Appropriations Act, 81st Legislative Session, Rider 51a, Texas High School Completion and Success Initiative, our purpose was to examine the high dropout rates of limited English proficient (LEP) students in Texas and report the results to the Legislature. This report provides a review of high school completion and dropout rates for LEP students in Texas. In addition, this report discusses evidence-based dropout prevention strategies for LEP students and concludes with recommendations for expanding and enhancing Texas' efforts to prevent LEP students from dropping out and to promote high school success for LEP students.

2 – LEP Students in Texas

Sections 2.1 and 2.2 define who qualifies as LEP and report current demographics and enrollment growth rates for LEP students in Texas.

2.1 Texas Education and Administrative Codes

Texas defines LEP students as those “whose primary language is other than English and whose English language skills are such that the student has difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English” (Texas Education Code §29.052). Texas Administrative Code (§89.1225) states that for students to be identified as LEP, their parents must first have indicated on a home language survey that a language other than English is spoken at home, and the students must score below a certain percentile, depending on their age, on a state-approved language proficiency test.

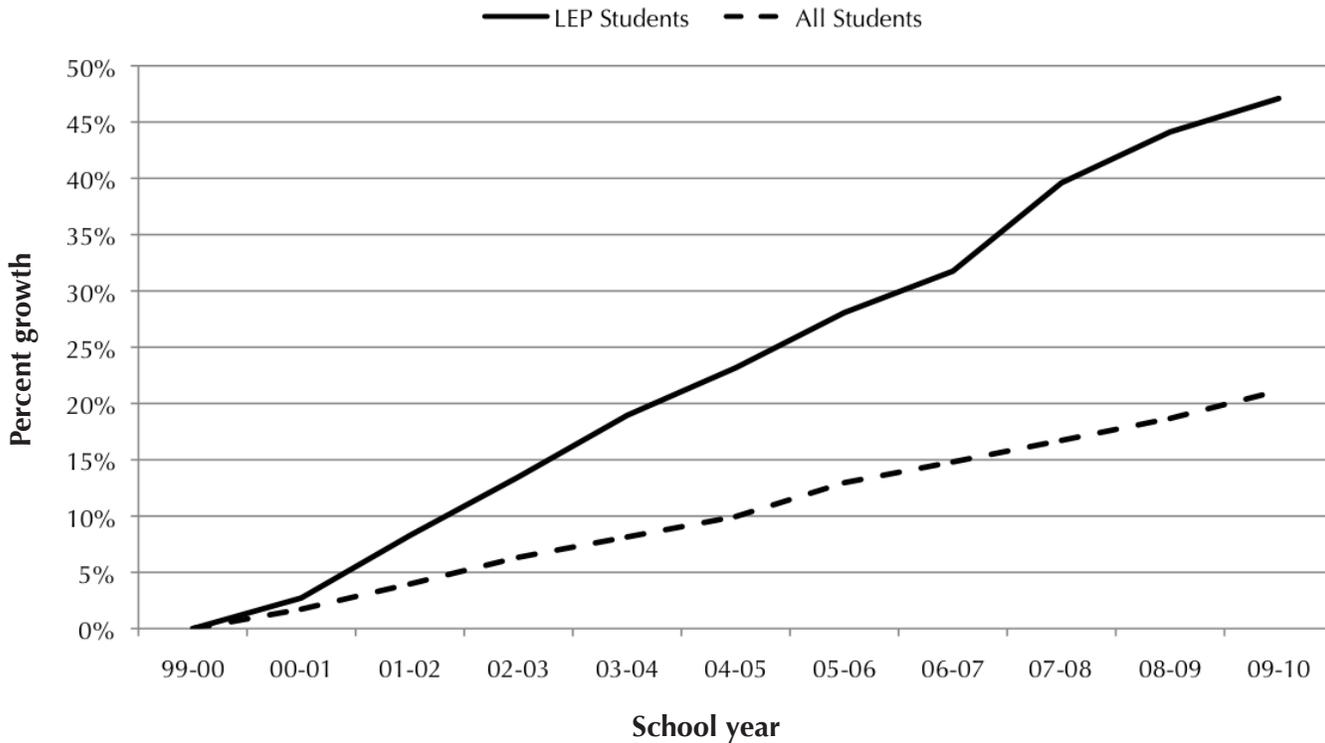
Texas Education Code §29.056(c) states that a language proficiency assessment committee may classify a student as LEP if one of the following criteria is met: (1) the student’s ability in English is so limited or the student’s disabilities are so severe that assessment procedures cannot be administered; (2) the student’s score or relative degree of achievement on the agency-approved English proficiency test is below agency-established levels of reasonable proficiency; (3) the student’s primary language proficiency score, as measured by an agency-approved test, is greater than the student’s proficiency in English; or (4) the language proficiency assessment committee determines, based on other information, including a teacher evaluation, parental viewpoint, or student interview, that the student’s primary language proficiency is greater than the student’s proficiency in English or that the student is not reasonably proficient in English. Students who have gone through the LEP identification process (Texas Education Code §29.056[c]) and who have been identified as LEP, as defined above, are referred to in this report as *LEP students*.

Texas Administrative Code (§89.1225) states that each school district with an enrollment of 20 or more LEP students in any language classification in the same grade level must offer a bilingual education program for these students in prekindergarten through the elementary grades. The code defines “elementary grades” as including at least prekindergarten through grade 5; grade 6 is included when clustered with elementary grades. All LEP students for whom a district is not required to offer a bilingual education program are required to receive an English as a second language (ESL) program, regardless of the students’ grade level and home language and regardless of the number of such students. Districts may join with other districts to provide bilingual education or ESL programs.

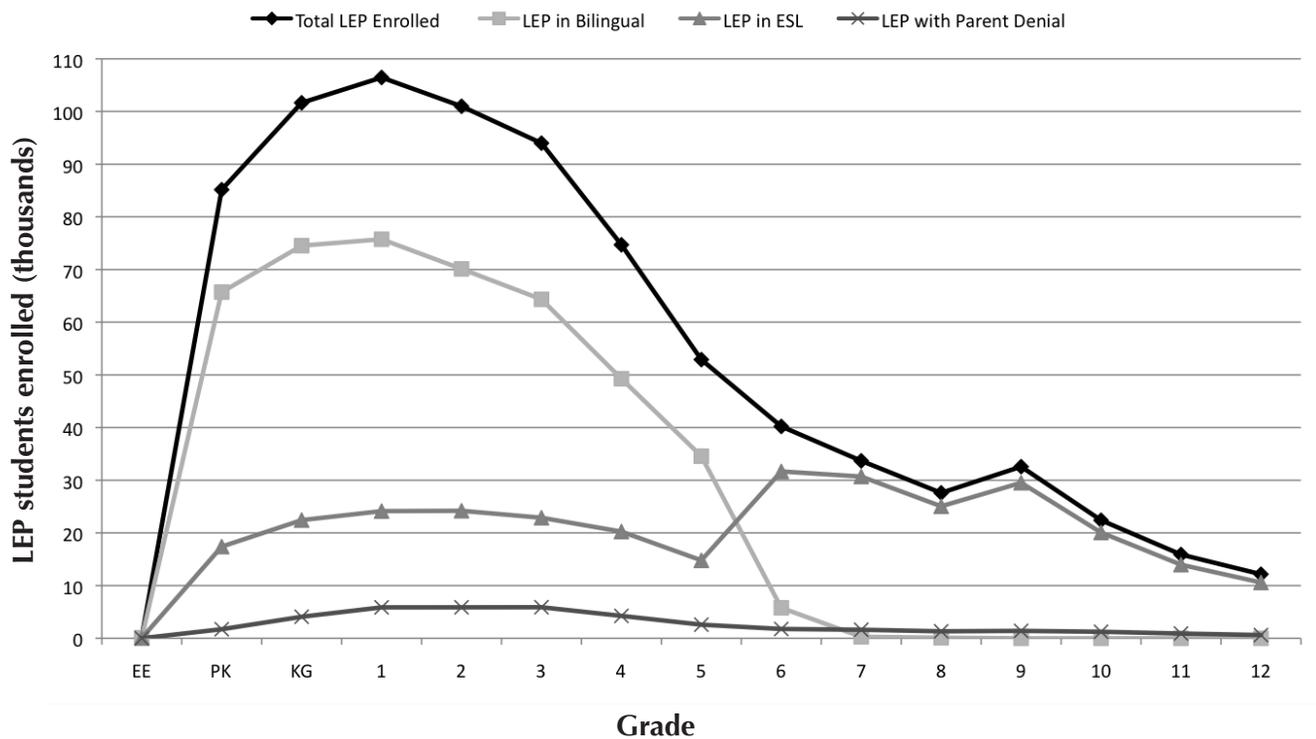
2.2 LEP Student Enrollment and Demographics

LEP students are a growing population in the Texas public school system. In the 2005–2006 school year, LEP students represented 14.2% of the total student population; that number increased to nearly 17% in 2009–2010. The LEP student growth rate in Texas is nearly double that of the total student population. The LEP student population grew by 41.7% from the 1999–2000 school year to the 2009–2010 school year; the total student population grew by only 21.1% in the same 10-year period (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2010b). Figure 1 depicts the population growth rates of LEP students and all students in Texas from 1999–2000 to 2009–2010.

Figure 1. Growth Rate of LEP Student Population in Texas
From 1999–2000 to 2009–2010 School Years



In grades 3–5, more than 65% of LEP students are enrolled in bilingual programs; by grade 6, only 15% are enrolled in bilingual programs; and beyond grade 6, less than one-tenth of 1% are enrolled in bilingual programs. These data are consistent with Texas education policy, which requires school districts to offer bilingual education services in the elementary grades but not beyond grade 5 (TEC 29.053). Figure 2 depicts the total enrollment and enrollment by bilingual and ESL program of LEP students for the 2009–2010 school year (TEA, 2010e).

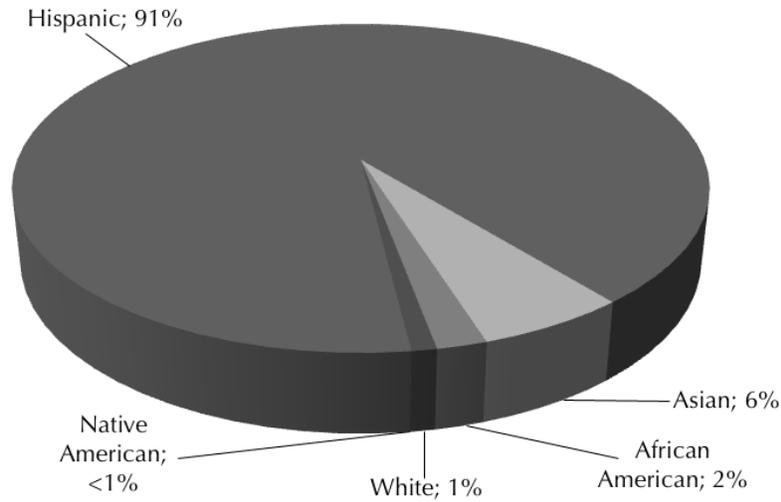
Figure 2. LEP Student Enrollment by Grade and Language Program, 2009–2010 School Year

During the 2008–2009 school year, Hispanics represented 91% of all high school LEP students; Asians represented the next largest subgroup, 6% of all LEP students (TEA, 2010b). Of the 125 different native languages of LEP students, Spanish was by far the most common: nearly 92% of LEP students in kindergarten through grade 12 (Public Education Information Management System [PEIMS], 2010). Approximately 89% of LEP students in kindergarten through grade 12 and 72% of high school LEP students were identified as economically disadvantaged (PEIMS, 2010). Although Spanish-speaking Hispanic students represent the largest proportion of LEP students, not all Hispanic students are LEP students. For example, in the 2009–2010 school year, there were more than 2.3 million Hispanic students and only 817,074 LEP students (TEA, 2010b). Table 1, adapted from *Enrollment in Texas Public Schools, 2009–10* (TEA, 2010b), shows enrollment by ethnicity, economic status, and English proficiency in Texas for the 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 school years. Figure 3 depicts LEP high school students by race/ethnicity for the 2009–2010 school year (PEIMS, 2010).

Table 1. Enrollment by Ethnicity, Economic Status, and English Proficiency, Texas Public Schools, 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 School Years

Group	Enrollment	
	2008–2009	2009–2010
All students	4,749,571	4,847,844
By ethnicity		
African American	671,871	679,351
Asian/Pacific Islander	169,774	180,008
Hispanic	2,275,098	2,354,042
Native American	16,713	18,984
White	1,616,115	1,615,459
Economically disadvantaged	2,686,259	2,853,177
Limited English proficient	800,554	817,074

Figure 3. LEP High School Students by Race/Ethnicity



3—Dropout Rates for LEP Students

Sections 3.1–3.5 review who qualifies as a dropout, how the annual and longitudinal dropout and completion rates are calculated, and the current annual and longitudinal dropout rates and related statistics for high school students in Texas.

3.1 Definition of a Dropout

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) defines a dropout as a student enrolled in grades 7–12 who does not return to public school the following fall; is not expelled; and does not graduate, receive a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die. Districts in Texas began submitting information under the more rigorous NCES definition and procedures in the 2005–2006 school year, and TEA has been reporting annual and longitudinal dropout and completion rates by using this definition for the last 4 years.

3.2 Calculating Dropout Rates for LEP Students in Texas

Dropout rates differ, depending on the purpose of the measure, the accuracy and availability of the data, the definition of a dropout, and the time period covered. *Annual* dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number students who drop out of school during a single school year by the total number of students who enrolled the same year (TEA, 2010f).

Longitudinal dropout rate is the percentage of students from the same class of beginning ninth-graders who drop out before completing their high school education (TEA, 2010f). Calculating the 4-year longitudinal dropout rate requires following a cohort of students for 4 years, from the time they enter grade 9 until the fall after their anticipated on-time graduation date. The 4-year longitudinal dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number students who drop out during those 4

years by the total number of students in that class. The 4-year longitudinal dropout rate requires the ability to link student records from a variety of sources for many different years; during that time, any errors in identifying information can prevent records from being linked. Despite the difficulties of creating and maintaining longitudinal data systems, they are considered the gold standard for calculating dropout, graduation, and completion rates (Hauser & Koenig, 2011).

3.3 Annual Dropout Rate

The statewide annual dropout rate for all students in grades 9–12 for the 2008–2009 school year in Texas was 2.9%, which means that 38,720 of such students were classified as dropouts. This figure represented a 0.3 percentage point decrease from the previous school year. The 2008–2009 annual dropout rate for LEP students was 5.1%, or 4,722 students, which was a 0.7 percentage point decrease from the previous school year (TEA, 2009).

LEP students who received ESL services dropped out less frequently than LEP students who did not, according to the annual dropout measure (TEA, 2009). For example, LEP students in grades 9–12 who received ESL/content-based support services had the lowest annual dropout rate: 4.2%, or 2,102 students (TEA, 2009). For the 2008–2009 school year, LEP students in grades 9–12 who did not receive ESL support services had the highest annual dropout rate: 7.4%, or 1,701 students. Of the 1,701 LEP students who dropped out did not receive ESL services, only 16%, or 278 students, had parents who denied ESL services (PEIMS, 2010). Table 2, adapted from *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 2008–09* (TEA, 2010f), reports the enrollment and dropout numbers and the annual dropout rate for the entire state and for LEP students in grades 9–12, disaggregated by language program.

Table 2. Total Number, Dropouts, and Annual Dropout Rate, LEP Students in Grades 9–12, by Language Program Instructional Model, Texas Public Schools, 2008–2009 School Year*

Group	Students		Dropouts		Annual dropout rate
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	%
All LEP students ^a	92,267	100	4,722	100	5.1
All ESL programs	69,381	75.2	3,021	64.0	4.4
ESL/content-based	50,004	54.2	2,102	44.5	4.2
ESL/pull-out	19,377	21.0	919	19.5	4.7
No services	22,885	24.8	1,701	36.0	7.4
State	1,356,249	100	38,720	100	2.9

* Parts may not add to 100% because of rounding.

a Includes current LEP students for whom information about services received in special language programs may be incomplete.

3.4 Longitudinal Dropout Rate

For the class of 2009, the grade 9 statewide 4-year longitudinal dropout rate for all students was 9.4%, which was a decrease of more than 1 percentage point from the previous class. For students identified as LEP anytime during their K–12 education¹, the 4-year longitudinal dropout rate was 12.7%; for students identified as LEP during grades 9–12¹, the 4-year longitudinal dropout rate was 19.7% (TEA, 2010f).

Students with high mobility, such as immigrants and migrants, are more likely to have extended periods of absence, which can lead to higher dropout rates (Allensworth, 1997). For the class of 2009, migrant students had a 4-year longitudinal dropout rate of 16.1%; however, this figure represented a decrease of 4.0 percentage points from the previous year (TEA, 2009). By definition, immigrant students were not born in the United States and have had fewer than 3 years of formal education in the United States or Puerto Rico (see P.L. 107–110 Title III, Part C, § 3301 [6]); fewer years of formal education in the United States puts these students at greater risk of dropping out of U.S. high schools (Allensworth, 1997). Although the immigrant dropout rate for the class of 2009 decreased

5.7 percentage points from the previous year (TEA, 2009), compared to all other student groups, immigrants still had the highest 4-year longitudinal dropout rate for the class of 2009, 29.5% (TEA, 2010f). Students who struggled to learn English and continued to be classified as LEP during the last year that they attended school had the second-highest (when compared to all other student groups) 4-year longitudinal dropout rate, 29.1%, which was a decrease of 1.7 percentage points from the previous year (TEA, 2010f). In summary, the data suggest that LEP students, regardless of subcategory (e.g., immigrant, identified in K–12, identified in 9–12), drop out at rates much higher than the statewide 4-year longitudinal dropout rate. Further, the highest dropout rates were observed when LEP students were identified in high school rather than in early grades.

In addition to the longitudinal dropout rate, the longitudinal graduation rate can be calculated by tracking a single student cohort over time. The longitudinal graduation rate refers to the percentage of students in a class who graduated early or on time. The statewide grade 9 longitudinal graduation rate was 80.6%, which was a 0.6 percentage point increase from the previous year (TEA, 2010f). The data suggest that when students are identified as LEP in early grades, their chances of graduating on time increase substantially (TEA, 2010f). For example, students who were still classified as LEP **during their last year in school** had a grade 9 longitudinal graduation rate of 49.2%, which was an increase of 5.0 percentage points from the previous year; students who were still classified as LEP **at any time during grades 9–12**¹ had a grade 9 longitudinal dropout rate of 56.9%; and students who were identified as LEP **sometime during their K–12 education**¹ had a grade 9 longitudinal dropout rate of 72.3%. These data indicate a 15.4 to 23.1 percentage point difference in graduation rates for LEP students, depending on when they were classified as LEP, and that the highest dropout rates are associated with students who were still classified as LEP during high school or during their last year in school (i.e., the year that they dropped out).

The longitudinal continuation rate also is calculated by tracking a single student cohort over time; it refers to the percentage of students in a class who did not drop out or graduate but continued to go to school in the fall following their projected on-time graduation date. The statewide grade 9

longitudinal continuation rate was 8.6% (TEA, 2010f). Students who were still classified as LEP **during their last year in school** had a grade 9 longitudinal continuation rate of 21.1%, which was a decrease of 3.4 percentage points from the previous year; students who were still classified as LEP **at any time during grades 9–12¹** had a grade 9 longitudinal continuation rate of 22.8%; and students who were identified as LEP **sometime during their K–12¹ education** had a grade 9 longitudinal continuation rate of 14.0%. Table 3, adapted from *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 2008–09* (TEA, 2010f), reports the longitudinal student counts, along with the longitudinal graduation, continuation, and dropout rates, disaggregated by student characteristic.

Table 3. Grade 9 Longitudinal Graduation, Completion, and Dropout Rates, by Student Characteristic, Texas Public Schools, Class of 2009*

Group	Class	Graduated		Continued		Received GED		Dropped out	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
At risk	144,581	104,831	72.5	19,367	13.4	2,427	1.7	17,956	12.4
Immigrant	2,895	1,705	58.9	329	11.4	8	0.3	853	29.5
Limited English proficient									
In K–12 ^a	79,743	57,667	72.3	11,184	14.0	752	0.9	10,140	12.7
In 9–12 ^b	25,717	14,640	56.9	5,864	22.8	136	0.5	5,077	19.7
In last year ^c	13,742	6,758	49.2	2,894	21.1	96	0.7	3,994	29.1
Migrant	2,794	1,935	69.3	350	12.5	60	2.1	449	16.1
State	308,427	248,500	80.6	26,667	8.6	4,404	1.4	28,856	9.4

* Parts may not add to 100% because of rounding. Students may be counted in more than one category. Student characteristics were assigned based on the year of a student's final status in the cohort.

a Students who were identified as LEP at any time while attending a Texas public school.

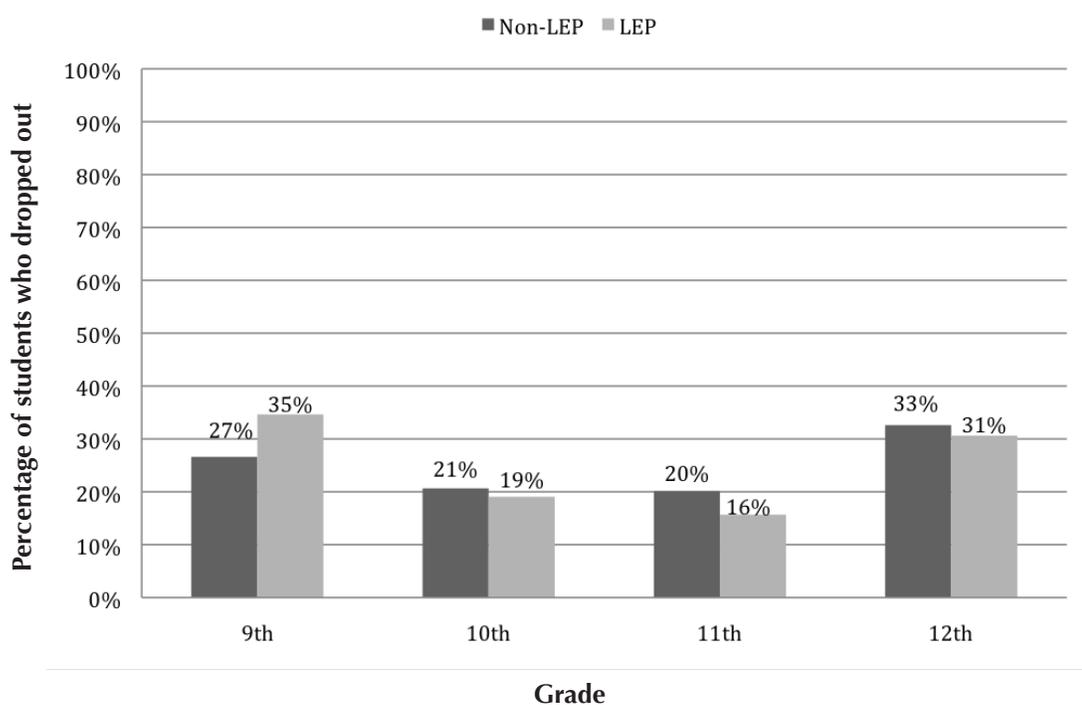
b Students who were identified as LEP at any time while attending grades 9–12 in a Texas public school; this group includes students who were previously identified and students who were identified during high school, such as immigrants and newcomers.

c Students who were identified as LEP in their last year in a Texas public school; this group includes students who were previously identified and students who were identified during their last year, such as immigrants and newcomers.

3.5 High School Dropout Rates by Grade

In the 2008–2009 school year, 68% of LEP students who dropped out did so in grades 9 or 12; 32% dropped out in grades 10 or 11 (PEIMS, 2010). The pattern for non-LEP students was similar; however, fewer non-LEP than LEP students dropped out in grade 9 and more non-LEP than LEP students dropped out in grade 11. The two groups had comparable dropout rates for grades 10 and 12. Figure 4 depicts the percentages of dropouts for non-LEP and LEP students for grades 9 through 12.

Figure 4. High School Dropouts by Grade for LEP and Non-LEP Students, 2008–2009 School Year



4—Dropout Risk Factors

Sections 4.1–4.4 discuss the process of students dropping out, dropout risk factors, and dropout risk factors that specifically pertain to LEP students.

4.1 How and Why Do Students Drop Out?

Students typically drop out by gradually disengaging and disconnecting from school (Balfanz et al., 2007). Students who drop out can physically disconnect from school, which is often reflected in poor attendance; in addition, they can mentally disengage from school, which can be reflected in poor academic achievement and behavior (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbini, 2001). The process of dropping out has been documented to start even as early as first grade (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Alexander et al., 2001); because the process of dropping out is gradual, it is possible for educators to intervene to prevent dropout.

4.2 Dropout Risk Factors and LEP Students

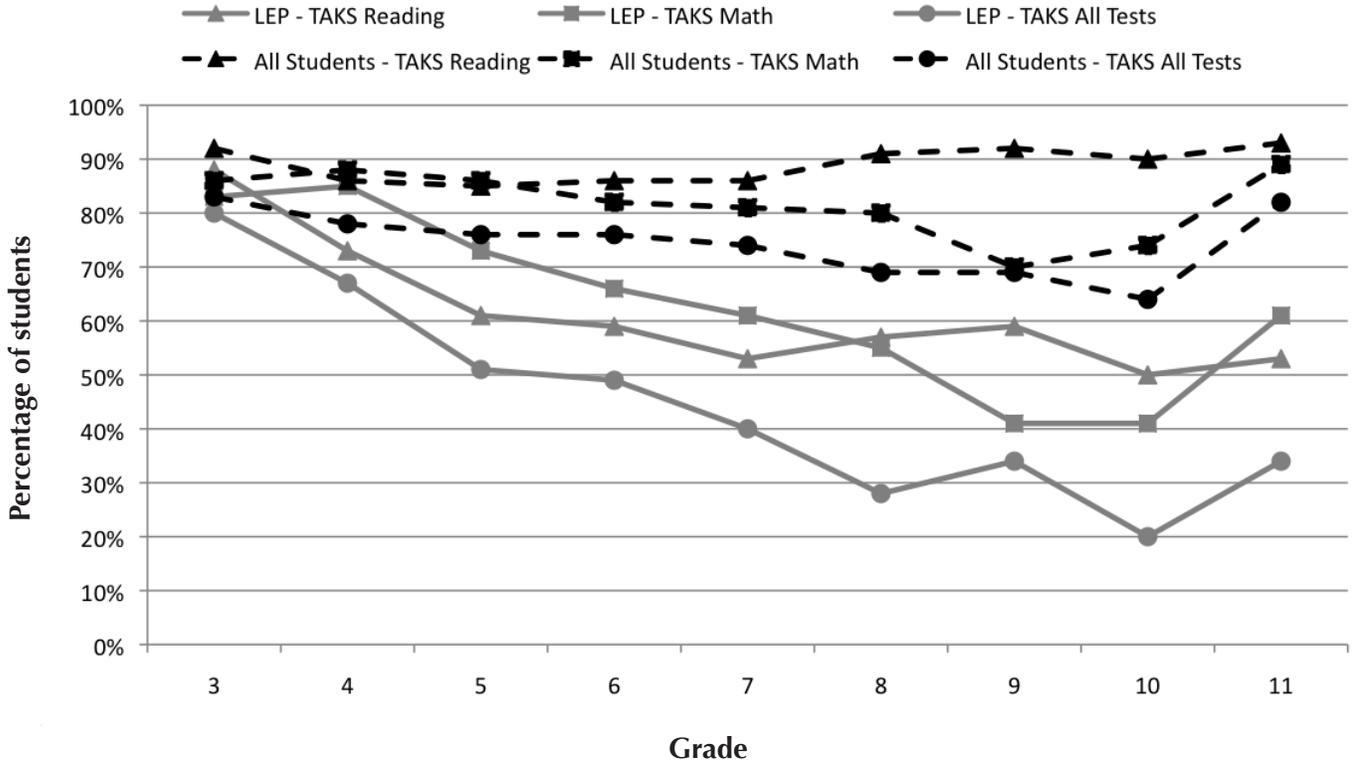
Students drop out of school for many different reasons; however, educators can use certain risk factors to better identify students most at risk for dropping out (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). Retention in the middle grades, poor attendance, poor grades in core subjects such as reading and mathematics, and poor behavior ratings are all associated with disengagement from school and high dropout rates (Balfanz et al., 2007). The most common risk factors for dropping out include (but are not limited to) the following: (a) low reading and academic ability, (b) grade retention, (c) low socioeconomic status, (d) school mobility, (e) disciplinary problems, (f) drug and alcohol abuse, (g) truancy, (h) failed high school exit exams, and (i) English spoken as a second language (Balfanz et al., 2007; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Rumberger, 2004). Although no one risk factor reliably predicts whether a student will drop out (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007), a combination of

risk factors greatly increases the likelihood of dropping out (Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt, & Chen, 2002); further, risk factors can compound over time, increasing the likelihood of a student dropping out of high school (Alexander et al., 1997; Alexander et al., 2001). LEP students often exhibit multiple dropout risk factors. For example, in Texas during the 2008–2009 school year, 72% of high school LEP students were identified as economically disadvantaged (PEIMS, 2010).

4.3 Academic Achievement and Dropping Out of School

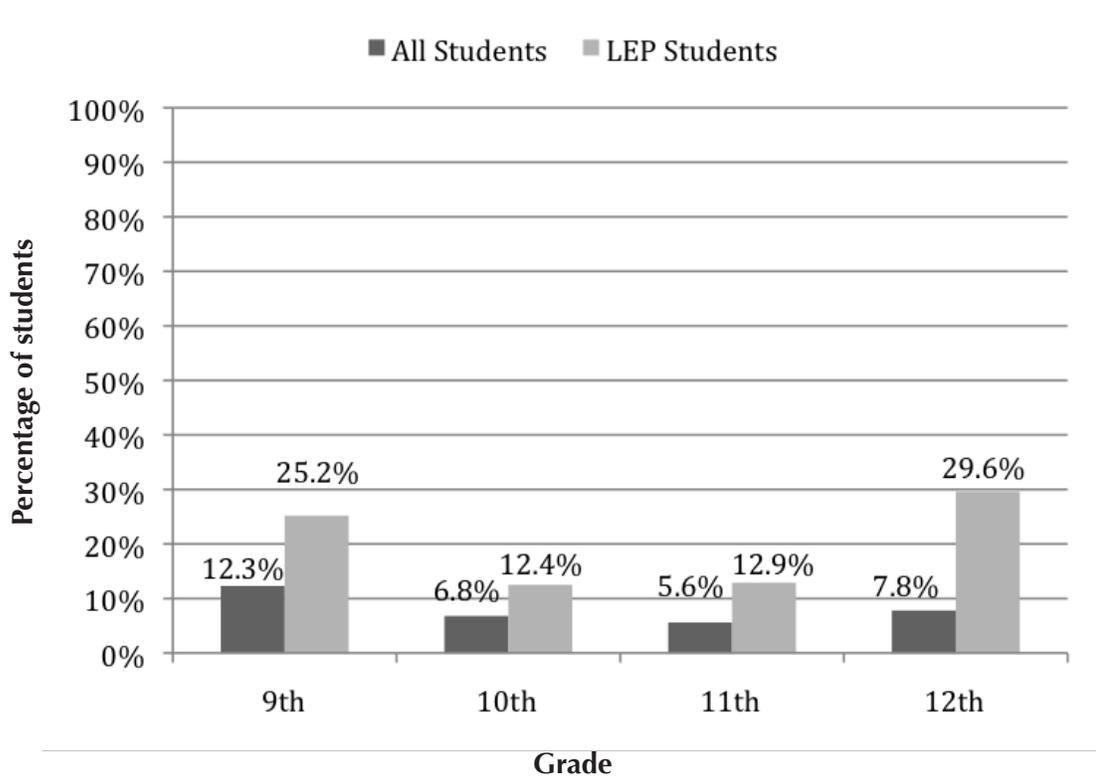
Poor academic achievement is a strong predictor of dropping out (Swanson & Schneider, 1999), and it is a risk factor that becomes more prevalent as LEP students progress through the public education system. At the earlier points in their academic careers (i.e., grades 3–5), more than 80% of LEP students meet the panel-recommended standard for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) subtests of Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics (TEA, 2010i), which is comparable to the rate of all students in Texas (TEA, 2010h). As LEP students progress to higher grades, the percentage who meet the panel-recommended standard for the TAKS decreases on average by almost 5 percentage points per grade; by grade 11, only 53% of LEP students meet the recommended standard for Reading/English Language Arts and 61% meet the standard for Mathematics (TEA, 2010i). When considering all TAKS subtests, 80% of LEP students meet the recommended standard in grade 3 and only 34% in grade 11 (TEA, 2010i). In contrast, when considering all students in the state, this group meets the recommended standard at consistent levels through grade 11 (within a few percentage points) in Reading/English Language Arts, and although this group experiences a dip in grades 9 and 10 for Mathematics and for all subtests, it recovers to a nearly 89% passing rate for Mathematics and just above 82% for all subtests by grade 11 (TEA, 2010h). Figure 5 depicts the percentage of students who met the panel-recommended standard for the TAKS by grade for the 2009–2010 school year.

Figure 5. Students Who Met the Panel-Recommended Standard for the 2010 TAKS Reading/English Language Arts Subtest, Mathematics Subtest, and All Subtests, by Grade



4.4 Grade Retention and Dropping Out

Grade retention significantly increases the probability of a student dropping out (Jimerson et al., 2002). The high school grade retention rates of LEP students in Texas can be more than triple that of non-LEP students (TEA, 2010c). For the 2008–2009 school year, the average retention rate for all students across all grade levels (K–12) in Texas was 4.0%; grade 9 had the highest retention rate, at 12.3%, followed by grade 12, at 7.8% (TEA, 2010c). In contrast, the average retention rate across all grades for LEP students was 5.4%; the grade 12 retention rate was the highest, at 29.6%, followed by grade 9, at 25.2% (TEA, 2010d). Figure 6 depicts the percentage of students retained in high school by grade and LEP status for the 2008–2009 school year.

Figure 6. High School Grade Retention, by Grade and LEP Status, 2008–2009 School Year

5—Dropout Prevention: Recommendations

Sections 5.1–5.7 review evidence-based strategies for dropout prevention. These dropout prevention strategies are not unique to LEP students, but instead are considered to be effective for all students at risk of dropping out.

5.1 Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Students From Dropping Out

Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide (Dynarski et al., 2008), published by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), is a review of research on evidence-based dropout prevention strategies. In addition to the review, the guide proposes six recommendations for preventing students from dropping out. These recommendations are divided into three categories: Diagnostic (Recommendation 1); Targeted Interventions (Recommendations 2, 3, and 4); and Schoolwide Interventions (Recommendations 5 and 6). Some of the IES recommendations address short-term or immediate ways of targeting students already at risk of dropping out; other recommendations focus on long-term prevention by reducing dropout risk factors, such as low academic achievement and low reading ability. The six IES recommendations are listed below with examples of dropout prevention strategies that specifically focus on LEP students.

5.2 IES Recommendation 1

Use data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.

Comprehensive, longitudinal, student-level databases can help to determine which students are on- or off-track to graduate on time (Hauser & Koenig, 2011). As some students become more proficient in English, they are no longer classified as LEP; however, little is known about this group. Further, students who continue to be classified as LEP over long periods of time have a higher risk of dropping out (Kim & Herman, 2009). Monitoring these dropout risk factors, especially during

transition periods (i.e., from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school) can be critical to identifying students in need of intervention that puts them back on track to succeeding in school and graduating (Hauser & Koenig, 2011). In addition, electronic access to such databases would allow schools to access the student-level data with greater efficiency and accuracy, which would in turn aid the creation and use of early-warning data systems. However, schools often do not have electronic access to students' records and, therefore, must go through each student's paper-based record by hand. Further, critical information, such as whether a student was ever classified as LEP, for how long, and his or her long-term academic achievement trend, would be much easier to access and interpret if the data were available electronically. Once students reach high school, electronic access to comprehensive, longitudinal, student-level databases would also facilitate early identification of students at risk of dropping out in grade 9 (Dynarski et al., 2008). For example, when a student begins to fail a core course, does not accumulate enough credits for promotion, or starts missing classes or entire school days, that student could be classified as being at risk of dropping out, and educators could plan, implement, and monitor interventions with the goal of helping the struggling student get back on track.

5.3 IES Recommendation 2

Hire, train, and assign adult advocates to all students at risk for dropping out.

ALAS: Achievement for Latinos Through Academic Success (Larson & Rumberger, 1995) is a middle school intervention that focuses on three factors that affect the probability of at-risk students dropping out: school, family, and community. All students are assigned a counselor/advocate, who monitors academic achievement, behavior, and attendance. Results indicate that the program had a substantial and practical positive impact on students who received the intervention. By the end of grade 9, the comparison group had failed twice as many classes, was twice as likely to be seriously behind in high school graduation credits, and was four times more likely to have excessive absences. Overall, the intervention had a tremendous impact; however, by the end of grade 12, there was

no significant difference in high school completion between the students in the intervention and comparison groups. Thus, if increasing graduation rates is the goal, ALAS-like interventions must continue throughout the high school years (Gándara, Larson, Mehan, & Rumberger, 1998).

5.4 IES Recommendation 3

Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.

Academic vocabulary knowledge and acquisition are central to the observed gaps in academic achievement and reading ability of LEP students (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). Recently, the Center for Research and Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners conducted two randomized control trial studies that evaluated the efficacy of integrating into middle school social studies instruction practices intended to enhance the vocabulary knowledge and comprehension of LEP students (Vaughn et al., 2009). Students in the treatment and control conditions used the same textbook, covered the same material over the same amount of time, and had the same teachers, so the opportunity to learn the material was equal between the two groups. The treatment condition used structured pairing or peer-mediated learning, which encouraged students to interact and practice producing language associated with the content. Treatment students were provided with an interactive and scaffolded structure to read and discuss ideas and concepts. In addition to the structured pairings, the treatment condition received enhanced vocabulary instruction, which provided opportunities to learn new words in text and/or video clips and to use graphic organizers to support word meanings and associations. Results of both studies indicated that the treatment group outperformed the control group on vocabulary and comprehension measures; effect sizes for both studies were large for vocabulary and medium for comprehension. Although the treatment was intended to improve vocabulary and comprehension in LEP students, LEP and non-LEP students in the treatment condition made equal gains. This finding suggests that structured pairing and enhanced vocabulary instruction is beneficial for all students, regardless of LEP status. This study did not change the curriculum that the students received, but instead addressed instructional

challenges that teachers face with LEP students, including (but not limited to) limited academic language, vocabulary, and background knowledge of the content area.

5.5 IES Recommendation 4

Identify programs to improve the behavior and social development of students at risk for dropping out.

The ALAS program (described in more detail in Recommendation 2; Larson & Rumberger, 1995) provided support through advocates to monitor and improve behavior in at-risk students. Students also were required to attend 10 weeks of problem-solving skills instruction during their first year of intervention, followed by prompting and counseling for 2 years. Although direct measures of behavior and social development were not reported, students who participated in the ALAS program failed half as many classes, were half as likely to be seriously behind in high school graduation credits, and were four times less likely to have excessive absences (Larson & Rumberger, 1995).

Check and Connect (www.checkandconnect.org) is a high school dropout prevention intervention designed to improve student engagement, encourage culturally responsive teaching, and promote high school completion. Check and Connect has seven core elements: routine monitoring of alterable indicators of engagement; individualized and timely intervention; relationship building; persistence plus, a persistent source of academic motivation and the consistent message that education is critical for students' future; tracking of mobile students as they move from school to school; problem-solving; and promotion of school affiliation through participation in school-related activities (www.checkandconnect.org/model). The What Works Clearinghouse recognizes Check and Connect as being effective, and multiple studies have demonstrated that the program's positive effects of students progressing and staying in school. Students who participated in Check and Connect were significantly less likely to have dropped out by the end of grade 9 than similar control group students—9% compared with 30% (Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, & Hurley, 1998). Further, students enrolled in Check and Connect were significantly less likely than similar control

group students to have dropped out by the end of the fourth year of follow-up—39% compared with 58% (Sinclair, Christenson, & Thurlow, 2005). However, similar to the ALAS program, there were no significant differences in high school completion between students who were enrolled in Check and Connect and similar control group students. Programs like Check and Connect and ALAS need to be sustained throughout a student’s secondary educational career to increase the likelihood of students completing high school.

5.6 IES Recommendation 5

Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.

It is frequently overlooked that a sense of school belonging plays a substantial role in a student’s academic success (Masten et al., 2005). Research on classroom perception, school belonging, and peer self-concept suggests that LEP students have a lower sense of school belonging than non-LEP students (Morrison, Cosden, O’Farrell, & Campos, 2003). Further, LEP students rate themselves as having less academic ability than their non-LEP peers (LeClair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009). Focused efforts must be made to promote a greater sense of school belonging for LEP students and to reduce their perceptions of lower self- and academic worth.

One way of personalizing the learning environment is using texts that are appropriate for LEP students (Drucker, 2003; García, 1994; Hernandez, 2003). Text coherence and the quality of the text can play a significant role in how well students comprehend what they read (Hernandez, 2003). When choosing texts for LEP students, teachers should consider the explicitness of the text, whether it has easily inferred causal relations, its relevance to the reader, how it considers the reader’s prior knowledge of the topic, and its cohesion (i.e., distance and placement of pronouns and their referents; García, 1994). Training teachers to critically evaluate texts to select and facilitate their use in classrooms with LEP students is a significant challenge; however, overcoming this challenge would allow greater access to text for LEP students and improvement in their overall academic achievement (Hernandez, 2003).

Meeting cultural and linguistic needs through bilingual education is another way of personalizing the learning environment of LEP students. Research indicates that LEP students who participate in bilingual education academically outperform their LEP peers who do not participate in bilingual education (Linholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006). In grades 3–5, when more than 65% of LEP students in Texas are enrolled in bilingual programs (TEA, 2010e), more than 80% of LEP students meet the panel-recommended standard for the TAKS subtests of Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics (TEA, 2010a).

5.7 IES Recommendation 6

Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve students after they leave school.

Providing professional development is essential to the evolution of teachers' instructional practices. A recent survey of more than 5,000 teachers in California found that most teachers received little to no professional development on the instruction of LEP students; further, most teachers stated the need to gain greater expertise for teaching LEP students (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). Additional training on effective teaching practices for LEP students is needed at all levels, including undergraduate and graduate programs and in-service workshops provided at the school, district, and state level.

Trained instructional coaches can be an effective way of integrating professional development into the classroom (Denton, Swanson, & Mathes, 2007). Instructional coaches can model effective instruction, provide individualized feedback to teachers, and help teachers to identify and use resources to enhance their instruction of LEP students. However, with the growing popularity of instructional coaches, it is important to recognize that the coaches themselves must be adequately trained in evidence-based methods and be sensitive to the nuances of working with special populations like LEP students (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; 2007).

Preparing students to graduate from high school is one of the primary goals of secondary education; however, equally as important is preparing students for what is to come after they graduate. Career academies and focus schools are “schools within schools” that connect students with peers, teachers, and community resources in a highly structured and disciplined environment, fostering academic success and mental and emotional health. The school within a school concept can provide the structure that at-risk students need (Stiles & Brady, 2007).

6— Recommendations for Preventing LEP Students in Texas From Dropping Out

Section 6 provides examples of how Texas addresses dropout prevention and provides recommendations for how Texas can improve its dropout prevention efforts. The guidance for preventing dropouts among LEP students in Texas is derived from multiple sources summarized in this document, primarily the IES dropout prevention guide (Dynarski et al., 2008). The recommendations listed in Table 4 follow the IES recommendations; further, applications or action steps for implementing each IES recommendation for the LEP population are listed. An additional column lists how TEA currently follows the IES recommendations and, when appropriate, suggestions for how TEA and Texas could improve or address the IES recommendations.

Table 4. Applications for Preventing LEP Students From Dropping Out, Based on IES Recommendations

Recommendations for Preventing LEP Students From Dropping Out	Current Use of IES Dropout Strategies in Texas and Potential Improvements
<p>IES Recommendation 1: Diagnostic <i>Use data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.</i></p>	
<p>1. Create longitudinal, student-level data systems with unique IDs that include data on student absences, grade retention, course credit, academic achievement, and LEP status.</p>	<p>School districts in Texas use PEIMS, introduced in 1988, which allows the submission of student-level data; however, real-time access to this data system is limited.</p>
<p>2. Have an individual or team at each school use the longitudinal data system as an early-warning system to monitor at-risk students before the transitions to middle and high school and to monitor students who have exited LEP status for a minimum of 2 years.</p>	<p>The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) monitors and re-evaluates students who have exited (transferred out of) a bilingual education or special language program under Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.056(g). If a student earns a failing grade in a subject in the foundation curriculum under TEC §29.002(a) during any grading period in the first 2 school years after the student has transferred, the LPAC determines whether the student should be reclassified in a bilingual education or special language program.</p>
<p>3. Increase the reporting of LEP student outcomes at the school, district, and state levels by including disaggregated data such as the following: (a) outcomes of exited LEP students (1 and 2 years postexit), (b) outcomes by language proficiency, (c) outcomes for students who were ever classified as LEP, and (d) outcomes by grade.</p>	<p>In compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), TEA uses the Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) to track the academic achievement of students enrolled in bilingual education/ESL, career and technical education, special education, and certain Title programs under NCLB that include LEP students.</p> <p>It is recommended that TEA increase the transparency of the data reported through PBMAS by disaggregating the data and including outcomes for LEP students by grade and language proficiency. In addition, it is recommended that PBMAS expand its reporting to include separate categories for students exited from LEP status within the previous 2 years and students exited more than 2 years ago.</p>

**Recommendations for
Preventing LEP Students From
Dropping Out**

**Current Use of IES Dropout Strategies in Texas
and Potential Improvements**

IES Recommendation 2: Targeted Interventions

Hire, train, and assign adult advocates to all students at risk for dropping out.

1. Provide opportunities for teachers, staff members, and mentors to connect personally with students by implementing evidence-based dropout prevention programs that incorporate adult advocates, such as Check & Connect (Christenson, Sinclair, Thurlow, & Evelo, 1999) and ALAS: Achievement for Latinos Through Academic Success (Larson & Rumberger, 1995).

TEA funds multiple advocate programs, including the following:

- Communities in Schools: Mentoring and academic support for students at risk of dropping out
www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4639&menu_id=814
- Amachi Mentoring: Mentoring for youth of incarcerated or paroled parents
www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4568&menu_id=814
- Texas GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs): Increasing early college awareness and readiness in traditionally underrepresented groups
www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4489&menu_id=814

2. Match adult advocates who have appropriate training and experience working with culturally and linguistically diverse students with LEP students at risk of dropping out.

It is recommended that programs recruit adult advocates who have experience working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Adult advocates must be appropriately trained and paired with LEP students at risk of dropping out.

Recommendations for Preventing LEP Students From Dropping Out

Current Use of IES Dropout Strategies in Texas and Potential Improvements

IES Recommendation 3: Targeted Interventions

Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.

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| <p>1. Implement school, district, and statewide initiatives to provide grade- and subject-specific academic vocabulary resources and to integrate explicit instruction of academic vocabulary into kindergarten through grade 12.</p> | <p>The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk developed an academic vocabulary resource for Education Service Center (ESC) Region XIII. This resource promotes the instruction of academic vocabulary by providing a list of key words, concepts, and principles in the English Language Arts and Reading and Mathematics Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills that will help English language learners in grades 5 to 7 in Texas read and understand text, develop subject matter literacy, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills.</p> |
| <p>2. Provide professional development on ESL strategies for all teachers who serve LEP students.</p> | <p>The English Language Proficiency Standards provide content area stakeholders with the requisite knowledge and skills to lead all English language learners in achieving academic language proficiency through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. ESC Region 20 provides face-to-face training, webinars, and online resources.</p> <p>The Limited English Proficient Student Success Initiative: Teacher Mentoring Institute is a TEA-funded project that supports new bilingual/ESL teachers of prekindergarten through grade 12. Teachers are trained in evidence-based instructional strategies that are effective for LEP students. In addition, resources and support materials are provided. Training is held face to face, with follow-up via webinar.</p> |
| <p>3. Promote bilingual and ESL teacher certification by remunerating teachers who successfully complete bilingual or ESL certification.</p> | <p>It is recommended that teachers who become bilingual or ESL certified and work in Texas public schools for at least 1 year after becoming certified be remunerated for the cost of certification.</p> |

**Recommendations for
Preventing LEP Students From
Dropping Out**

**Current Use of IES Dropout Strategies in Texas
and Potential Improvements**

IES Recommendation 4: Targeted Interventions

Identify programs to improve the behavior and social development of students at risk for dropout.

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| <p>1. Promote and expand middle and high school transition support programs.</p> | <p>The Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program provides services for students leaving grade 8 who are at risk of being retained in the grade 9 or dropping out. Grantees are required to provide a summer transition program, use an early-warning data system to identify and monitor grade 9 students who are off track for graduation, and provide ongoing interventions and activities throughout the school year.</p> <p>www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3629&menu_id3=814</p> |
| <p>2. Create partnerships with local organizations to foster and promote students' social engagement with their community.</p> | <p>The TEA-funded Collaborative Dropout Reduction Program promotes partnerships between public schools and community organizations, such as local businesses, local governments, law enforcement, and nonprofit organizations. The program matches students with mentors and advocates. Preliminary findings indicate the program resulted in statistically significant increases in students' mathematics scores and in the percentage of students who met the Mathematics TAKS standards.</p> <p>www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3690&menu_id3=814</p> |

IES Recommendation 5: Schoolwide Interventions

Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.

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| <p>1. Maintain bilingual education programs in elementary schools.</p> | <p>Texas requires districts to create bilingual education programs to serve LEP students from preschool through grade 5 (and grade 6 if it is clustered in the same elementary campus). TAKS scores indicate that these students are succeeding academically (see section 5.6 of this report).</p> |
| <p>2. Train teachers on how to choose and teach appropriate texts for LEP students.</p> | <p>It is recommended that teachers be trained and encouraged to use texts that are appropriate for LEP students.</p> |
| <p>3. Incorporate information and strategies for teaching LEP students into professional development for all teachers.</p> | <p>It is recommended that professional development programs for all teachers, not just bilingual/ESL teachers, include information and strategies for teaching LEP students.</p> |

Recommendations for Preventing LEP Students From Dropping Out

Current Use of IES Dropout Strategies in Texas and Potential Improvements

IES Recommendation 6: Schoolwide Interventions

Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve students after they leave school.

1. Provide professional development on ESL strategies for all teachers, especially teachers of LEP students.

The Limited English Proficient Student Success Initiative at TEA funds multiple teacher training resources, including the following:

- English Language Learner Web Portal
- LEP Technical Assistance and Support Center
- Online Bilingual/ESL Certification Preparatory Courses
- Project LUCHA (Language Learners at The University of Texas at Austin Center for Hispanic Achievement)
- Science and Technology for English Language Learners Achieving Results in Science
- Secondary ESL Institutes
- Social Studies for English Language Learners

www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147487063&menu_id=814

2. Provide multiple pathways to graduation and opportunities to connect learning to future career- or college-related skills.

The Dropout Recovery Pilot Program recruits dropouts and facilitates through a wide array of supports these students' completion of a high school diploma or allows them to demonstrate their college readiness.

www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3686&menu_id3=814

Early College High Schools are innovative schools near a college campus that allow students least likely to attend college an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and 60 college credit hours.

www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=4464&menu_id3=814

The Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Initiative provides academies, professional development centers, and a network designed to improve instruction and academic performance in science- and mathematics-related subjects at secondary schools.

www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=4470&menu_id3=814

7 — Conclusion

In compliance with the General Appropriations Act, 81st Legislative Session, Rider 51a, Texas High School Completion and Success Initiative, our purpose was to examine the high dropout rates of LEP students in Texas and report the results to the Legislature. This report reviewed high school completion and dropout rates for LEP students in Texas. In addition, it discussed evidence-based dropout prevention strategies for LEP students. The report now concludes with recommendations for expanding and enhancing Texas' efforts to prevent LEP students from dropping out and to promote high school success for LEP students.

7.1 LEP Students in Texas

LEP students are the fastest-growing student subgroup in the Texas public school system; since 1998, the LEP student population has grown at a rate double that of the total student population (TEA, 2010b). As a subgroup, LEP students have one of the highest dropout rates in Texas. For the 2008–2009 school year, LEP students had an annual dropout rate of 5.1%; students who had ever been classified as LEP, from kindergarten through grade 12, had a grade 9 longitudinal dropout rate of 12.7%; and students who were still classified as LEP during grades 9–12 had a grade 9 longitudinal dropout rate of 19.7%. Although the annual and longitudinal dropout rates for LEP students have been declining, focused efforts must continue to reduce the dropout rate.

TEA funds multiple programs that directly or indirectly prevent LEP students from dropping out and that foster academic success; however, many are pilot programs yielding promising, but not yet systemic (statewide), results. Although most of these programs require state and federal funding, the economic impact of dropouts is much more costly. For example, the 2012 class of dropouts is estimated to cost Texas upward of \$9.6 billion² over the course of the students' lifetimes (Alvarez et al., 2009). Thus, it is important for Texas to maintain its focus on preventing and recovering dropouts.

7.2 Why Do Students Drop Out?

LEP students are at greater risk of dropping out than non-LEP students. Students drop out of school for many different reasons; however, educators can use certain risk factors to better identify students most at risk of dropping out (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). In particular, LEP students often exhibit multiple dropout risk factors, such as speaking English as second language, low academic achievement, grade retention, and low reading ability. In addition, a majority of LEP students in Texas are identified as being economically disadvantaged, which is another dropout risk factor. Many of these dropout risk factors can be identified early, and, because the process of dropping out is gradual, it is possible for educators to intervene and prevent students from dropping out.

7.3 Dropout Prevention

Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide (Dynarski et al., 2008), published by IES, proposes six recommendations for preventing dropout that are divided into three categories: Diagnostic (Recommendation 1); Targeted Interventions (Recommendations 2, 3, and 4); and Schoolwide Interventions (Recommendations 5 and 6). These dropout prevention strategies, listed below, are considered to be effective for all students, not just LEP students.

1. Use data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.
2. Hire, train, and assign adult advocates to all students at risk for dropping out.
3. Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.
4. Identify programs to improve the behavior and social development of students at risk for dropout.
5. Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.
6. Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve students after they leave school.

7.4 Improving Dropout Prevention in Texas

This report described and elaborated on the six recommendations outlined in the IES dropout prevention guide, with specific attention on preventing LEP students from dropping out. It is recommended that Texas continue to use the IES dropout prevention strategies. In addition, the state could enhance its role in several areas. The first such area is diagnostics. As a result of the receipt of federal and private grants, TEA has outlined a new vision for its data system and has begun implementing multiple projects that will enable more real-time use of student-level data; however, the following recommendations should be considered when implementing the new statewide system.

1. School administrators and teachers need electronic access to student-level, longitudinal databases, so that long-term trends can be analyzed and data-based decisions can be made.
2. School administrators need to monitor student-level data associated with dropout risk factors, such as absences, tardies, and failed classes, starting at the elementary level, so that students can receive the intervention needed to get back on track to success.
3. Data reporting at the district, regional, and state level needs to be more detailed for LEP students. For example, academic outcomes need to be broken down by language proficiency, and recently exited LEP students and students who were ever classified as LEP need to be included in school, district, and statewide reports. Very little is known about the long-term academic outcomes of students exited from LEP status; improvements in data reporting will help educators to understand long-term trends and better isolate problem areas.

The second area in which the state could enhance its role is providing professional development on strategies for teaching LEP students to *all teachers*, not just bilingual/ESL teachers. It is important for the bilingual/ESL teachers to provide leadership in their school in regard to the best educational practices for LEP students; however, we cannot expect them to be solely responsible. All teachers must be given the tools and strategies to effectively instruct LEP students. Therefore, it is recommended that all teachers receive professional development on strategies for teaching LEP students.

It is also recommended that all new teachers become bilingual/ESL certified, so that they may better serve their LEP students and serve as a resource for other teachers in their school who have yet to become trained and certified.

The third and fourth areas in which the state could enhance its role are providing academic support and enrichment to improve the academic performance of LEP students and personalizing the learning environment and instructional process of LEP students. Academic failure is a primary risk indicator for dropping out, and academic vocabulary and literacy continue to be a challenge for LEP students in Texas. Thus, it is recommended that Texas implement school, district, and statewide initiatives to provide grade- and subject-specific academic vocabulary resources and to integrate explicit instruction of academic vocabulary and literacy in kindergarten through grade 12 to improve the academic outcomes of all students.

A final area in which the state could enhance its role is using the data gathered from the external evaluations of its dropout prevention programs to inform current and future practice regarding dropout prevention in Texas. Implementing evidence-based dropout prevention strategies and programs have put Texas on the path to reducing its dropout rate. Thus, it is recommended that TEA continue to externally evaluate dropout prevention programs and strategies and disseminate those findings and recommendations to better inform statewide dropout prevention efforts.

7.5 Final Remarks

Texas has established partnerships with institutions of higher education and other centers and organizations committed to training teachers and promoting the success of LEP students. Texas also has developed dropout prevention and intervention strategies based on the latest research. Continuing to train teachers on research-based dropout prevention strategies for LEP students and supporting policies that build on the early success of the state's research-based programs will accelerate the change needed to decrease LEP student dropout rates and to increase graduation rates among this growing population in Texas.

Endnotes

1. TEA reported this statistic for the first time in the 2008–2009 report *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools*.
2. The estimate is in 2009 U.S. dollars and includes cost per Texas dropout in lost wages, lost sales tax revenue, and welfare payments.

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