



Examining English Learner Testing, Proficiency, and Growth: Recovery Since the COVID-19 Pandemic

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This report examines trends in English learners' testing, proficiency, and growth throughout the eight most recent academic years (2018–2025) to explore the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on English learners' educational outcomes. Outcomes are disaggregated by students' Hispanic status.



WIDA Research

WIDA research expands knowledge on effectively teaching multilingual learners and assessing what they know and can do in a fair and valid way. We work in partnership with districts, states, and national experts to conduct research focused on understanding and supporting the highest quality educational practices and outcomes for multilingual learners to inform educators, policymakers, families/caregivers, and the research community.

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Introduction

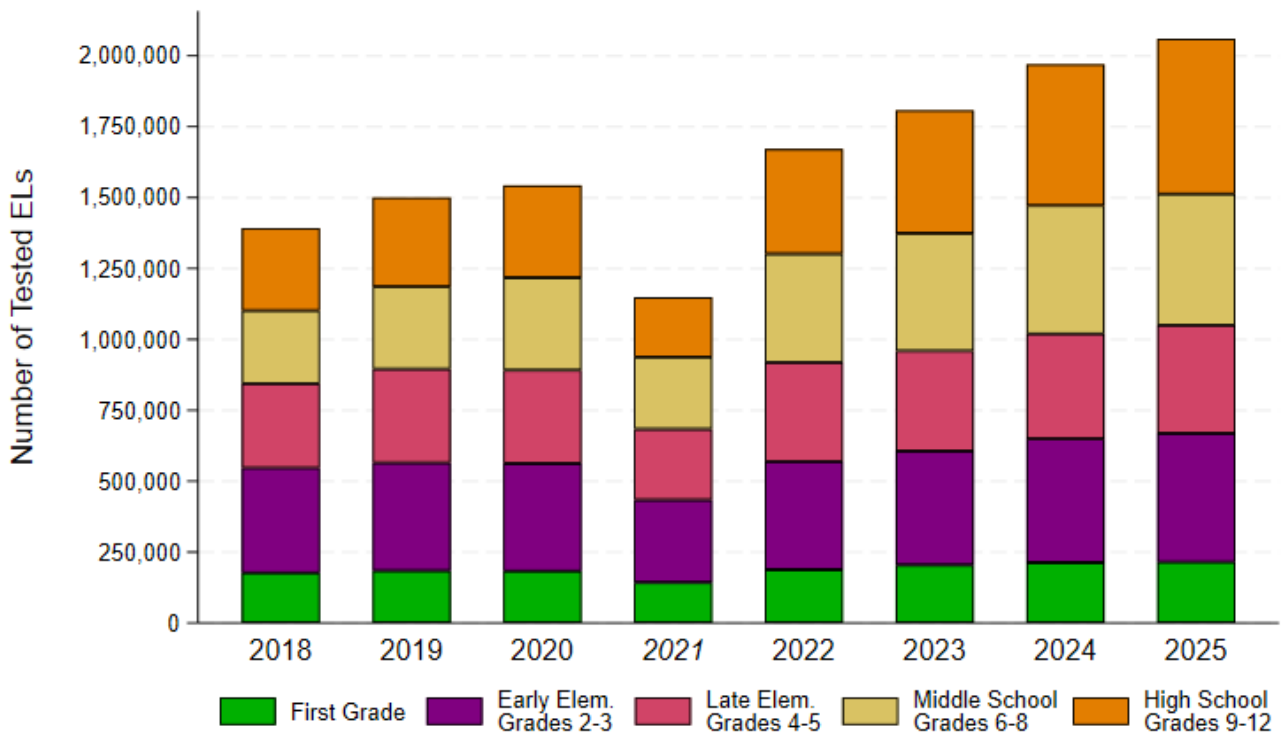
This report documents trends in academic English proficiency for the overall population of English learner (EL) students before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis draws on aggregated individual-level data from the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs Online assessment (ACCESS), taken yearly by students identified as ELs across the WIDA Consortium. We present the number of tested ELs as well as average proficiency and gain scores for academic years 2017–2018 through 2024–2025. This is the fourth report examining trends in EL proficiency and growth, adding the most recent ACCESS assessment data. In addition to annual growth, in this report we present comparisons of 3-year growth in English proficiency for cohorts of ELs who first enrolled before, during, or after the COVID-19 pandemic. We also disaggregate outcomes by EL subgroup to highlight differences for ELs identified as Hispanic or non-Hispanic. The report addresses five questions:

1. How many ELs were tested in academic years 2018 to 2025 across the WIDA Consortium?
2. What were the average scores for ELs in overall composite proficiency and in the four language domains of Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing?
3. How much growth, measured by average gains in ACCESS proficiency, did ELs demonstrate each year?
4. How did 3-year growth in English proficiency compare for students who first enrolled before, during, or after the COVID-19 pandemic?
5. How did outcomes differ for ELs identified as Hispanic or non-Hispanic?

English Learner Testing

Across the WIDA Consortium, the population of English learners has steadily increased over the last 8 years. Although many test scores were missing in 2021 due to pandemic-related disruptions, testing resumed as normal in 2022. Testing rates continued to increase over the last several years, with a total population of more than 2 million students in 2025. Figure 2a presents the number of tested ELs with non-missing Overall Composite Scale Scores for each of the eight most recent academic years.² Within the bar for each year, bar segments representing the population within each of the five grade-level clusters are stacked in ascending order: First Grade, Early Elementary (grades 2–3), Late Elementary (grades 4–5), Middle School (grades 6–8), and High School (grades 9–12).³

Figure 2a: English Learner Testing. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025⁴



² In each presented year, more than 97% of tested students have non-missing Overall Composite Scale Scores.

³ Aggregating by grade-level cluster accounts for differences in the ACCESS Online assessment across clusters. Details can be found in the Annual Technical Report for ACCESS for ELLs Online English Language Proficiency Test.

⁴ Counts and averages in all tables and figures are italicized for the 2021 academic year to emphasize that those values were not representative of the entire population of ELs across the WIDA Consortium in 2021, due to the substantial number of missing test scores. Because an estimated 30% of ELs did not take ACCESS Online in the spring of 2021, we advise caution in interpreting estimates of average EL proficiency in 2021 or comparing those values to the averages reported for other years.

Table 1: English Learner Testing. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	176,717	184,083	183,181	142,738	187,867	204,491	212,770	214,911
Grades 2–3	369,677	380,223	379,464	291,080	381,353	401,365	436,445	453,248
Grades 4–5	297,673	331,146	328,955	249,946	349,689	353,709	370,213	381,879
Grades 6–8	257,383	290,050	326,132	253,550	382,482	413,644	452,635	462,530
Grades 9–12	291,104	314,989	325,540	211,334	370,238	434,811	497,826	546,990
Total	1,392,554	1,500,491	1,543,272	1,148,648	1,671,629	1,808,020	1,969,889	2,059,558

Figure 2b also presents the number of tested ELs each year, but with separate groups of bars for each grade-level cluster. The left-most bar in each group represents the number of students tested in 2018, with additional bars in the group for the number of students tested in each subsequent year. Figure 2b shows that, while the overall population of tested ELs across the WIDA Consortium has increased over the last eight academic years (except for 2021), those increases have been unevenly distributed across clusters.

Figure 2b: English Learner Testing by Grade-Level Cluster. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

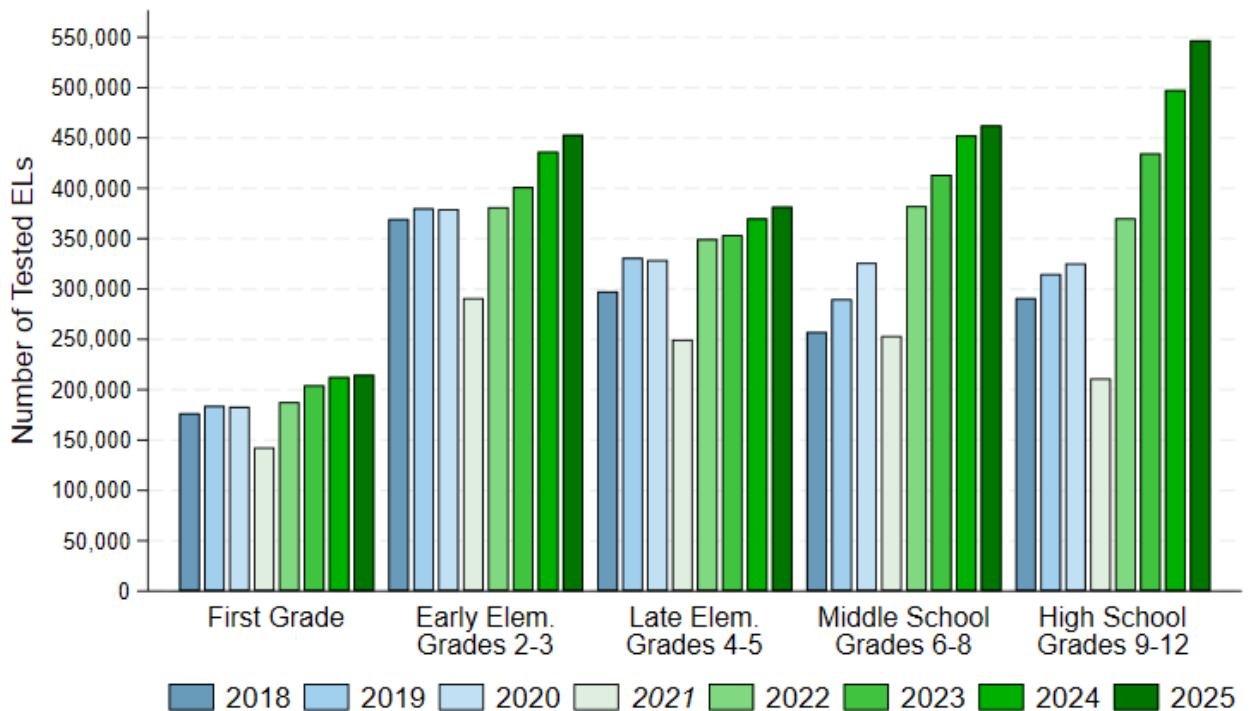


Table 2 shows relative increases in testing by grade level, where each year's percentage is proportionate to the size of the corresponding population size tested in that grade in 2017. Population increases have been notably higher in higher grades, suggesting that the composition of the EL population may be shifting (aging) over time.⁵

Table 2: Percentage Increase in Testing by Grade Since 2017. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	107%	111%	111%	86%	114%	124%	129%	130%
Grade 2	108%	112%	113%	86%	113%	120%	132%	134%
Grade 3	107%	108%	107%	83%	108%	113%	121%	129%
Grade 4	151%	155%	153%	118%	158%	163%	171%	178%
Grade 5	135%	168%	167%	125%	184%	183%	191%	194%
Grade 6	118%	140%	160%	116%	174%	184%	193%	194%
Grade 7	110%	123%	142%	114%	161%	182%	199%	202%
Grade 8	108%	115%	124%	101%	164%	173%	198%	207%
Grade 9	98%	104%	110%	69%	138%	157%	169%	178%
Grade 10	132%	127%	129%	90%	141%	186%	214%	224%
Grade 11	134%	158%	150%	102%	166%	185%	236%	266%
Grade 12	136%	168%	188%	111%	195%	218%	245%	305%
Total	114%	122%	124%	92%	134%	144%	156%	163%

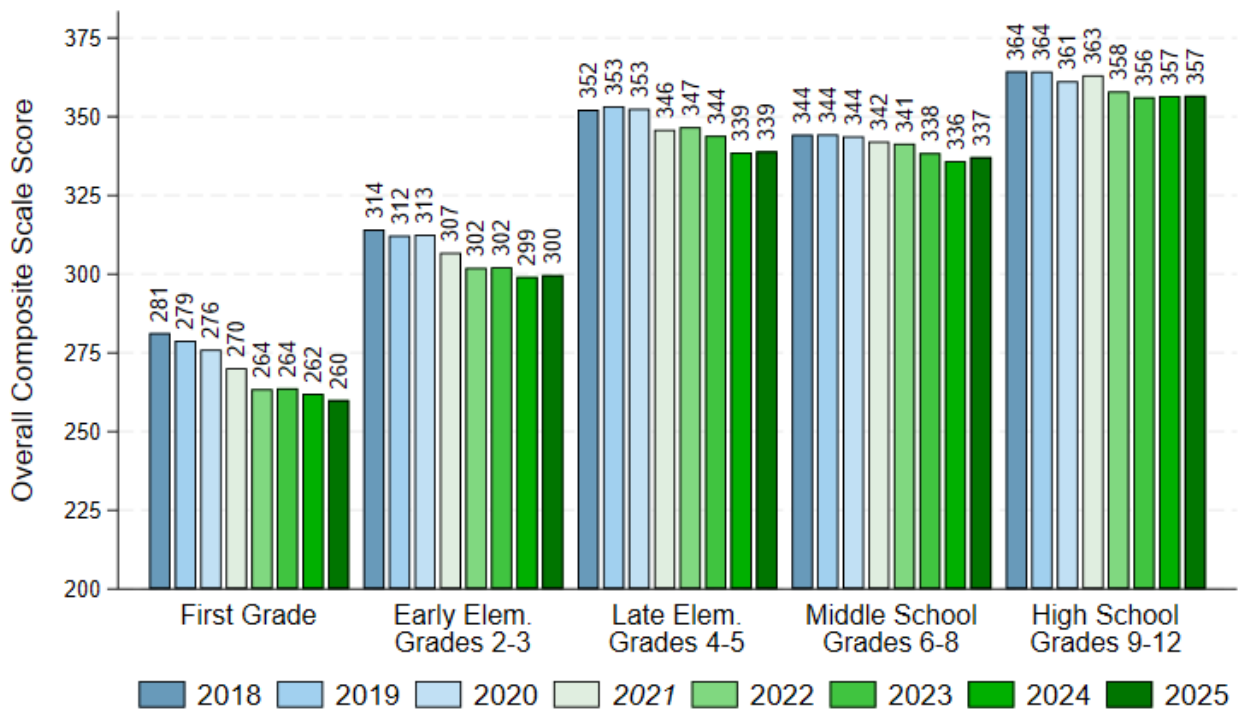
⁵ Preliminary analyses suggest that increases in the number and percentage of returning students are outpacing increases in the number and percentage of newcomer students across the WIDA Consortium, but trends vary widely by state and district.

English Learner Proficiency

Overall Composite Proficiency

Figure 3 presents the average English language proficiency of ELs across the WIDA Consortium for academic years 2018–2025, as measured by overall composite scale scores on the ACCESS Online assessment. As in Figure 2b, Figure 3 shows separate groups of bars for each grade-level cluster; the left-most bar in each bar group represents the average overall composite scale score of tested ELs in that grade-level cluster in 2018, with additional bars in the group representing the averages for each subsequent year. As shown by the bars for 2021–2023, overall proficiency declined for several years after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This downward trend continued in 2024 for all grade-level clusters. In 2025, however, overall English proficiency continued to decline only for the youngest learners.⁶ In other clusters, average scores held steady or increased by one scale score point in 2025, relative to 2024.

Figure 3: Overall Composite Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025



⁶ In addition to a two-point decline in average overall composite scale scores for first graders as reported in Figure 3, average overall composite scale scores for students in kindergarten were also slightly lower in 2025 than in 2024. Kindergarten scores are not included in this report, however, as the ACCESS assessment for kindergarteners is administered via paper, while this report focuses on ACCESS Online.

Table 3: Overall Composite Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	281	279	276	270	264	264	262	260
Grades 2–3	314	312	313	307	302	302	299	300
Grades 4–5	352	353	353	346	347	344	339	339
Grades 6–8	344	344	344	342	341	338	336	337
Grades 9–12	364	364	361	363	358	356	357	357
Average	334	334	334	329	328	327	326	326

For the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, overall English proficiency for ELs across the WIDA Consortium was not lower in 2025 than in the previous year. Scores remain substantially lower than pre-pandemic averages, however, with the largest overall proficiency declines found in earlier grade levels.

Figures 4a–4d present the corresponding averages in student test scores for the four language domains of Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing, as measured by cluster-average scale scores in each domain for each year (cf. Figure 3). Importantly, while ACCESS scores are vertically scaled within each domain and are therefore comparable across grades and clusters, scale scores are not comparable across domains. Therefore, the averages for one domain cannot be directly compared to the averages for another. We therefore focus on each domain separately, describing trends without direct comparisons across domains in terms of scale score points.

Proficiency in Reading

Compared to the other tested language domains, consortium-average scale scores in Reading have been relatively consistent throughout the last 8 years. Reading proficiency continues to trend downward, however, as shown by the bars representing 2025 averages for each of the clusters in Figure 4a.

Figure 4a: Reading Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

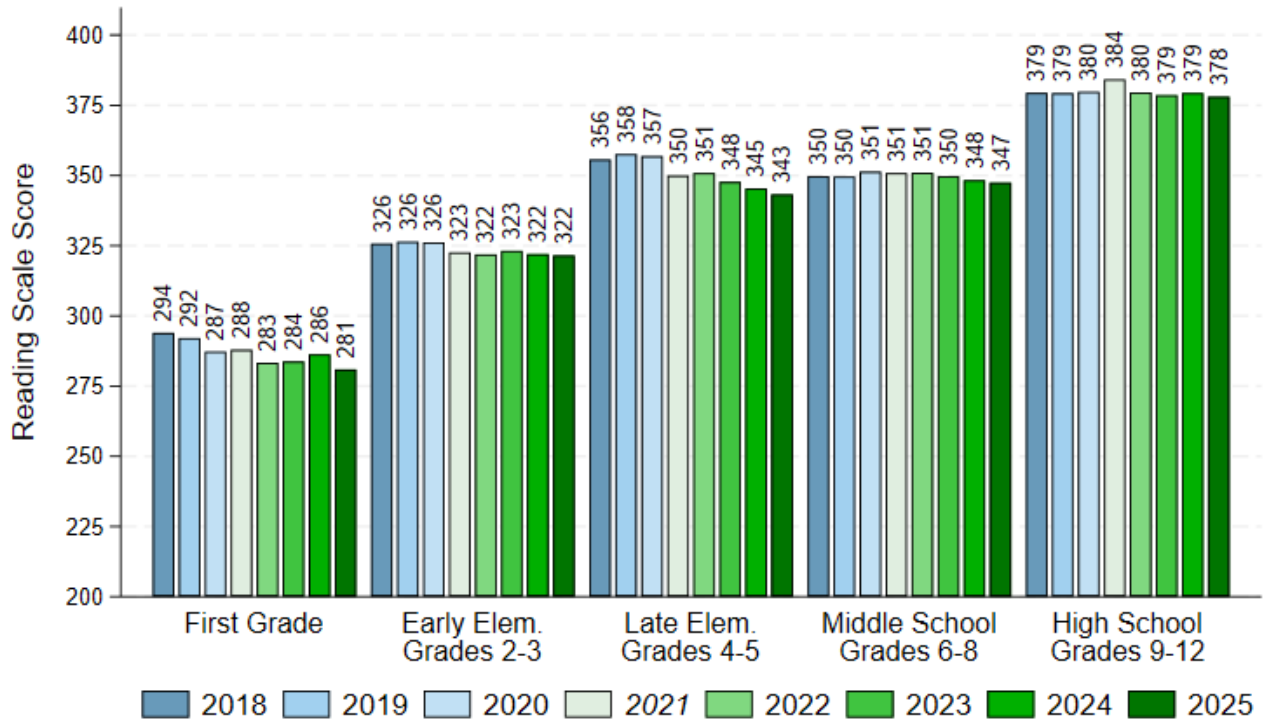


Table 4a: Reading Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	294	292	287	288	283	284	286	281
Grades 2–3	326	326	326	323	322	323	322	322
Grades 4–5	356	358	357	350	351	348	345	343
Grades 6–8	350	350	351	351	351	350	348	347
Grades 9–12	379	379	380	384	380	379	379	378
Average	344	345	345	342	343	343	343	342

Proficiency in Listening

Figure 4b shows that average proficiency in the Listening domain has continued to decline for many ELs across the WIDA Consortium. Scores in both grade 1 and the early elementary (grades 2–3) cluster especially exhibit a continued downward trend, while scores in the later clusters also remain below pre-pandemic averages.

Figure 4b: Listening Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

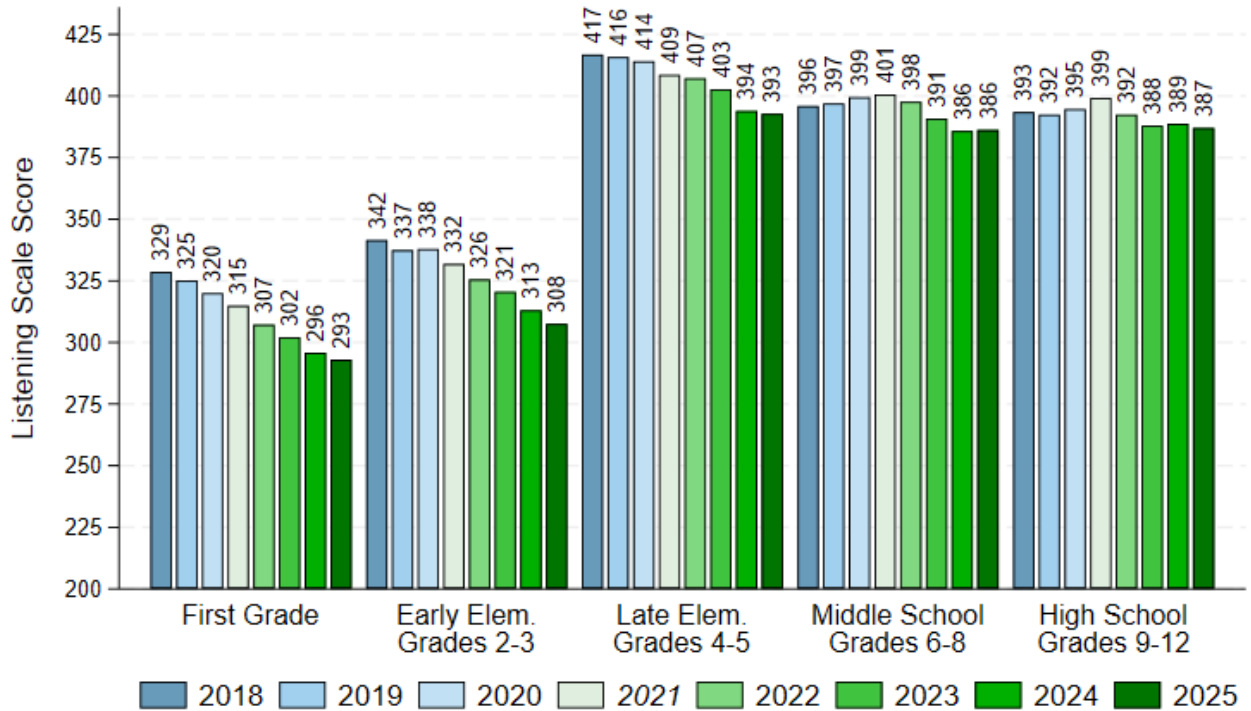


Table 4b: Listening Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	329	325	320	315	307	302	296	293
Grades 2-3	342	337	338	332	326	321	313	308
Grades 4-5	417	416	414	409	407	403	394	393
Grades 6-8	396	397	399	401	398	391	386	386
Grades 9-12	393	392	395	399	392	388	389	387
Average	377	376	377	374	372	367	362	361

Proficiency in Speaking

Average scores in the Speaking domain reflect relatively low variability in most grade-level clusters. Scores in grade 1 have continued to decline since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, as shown in Figure 4c. In other grade-level clusters, students' Speaking proficiency in 2025 was equal to or only slightly lower than pre-pandemic averages.

Figure 4c: Speaking Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

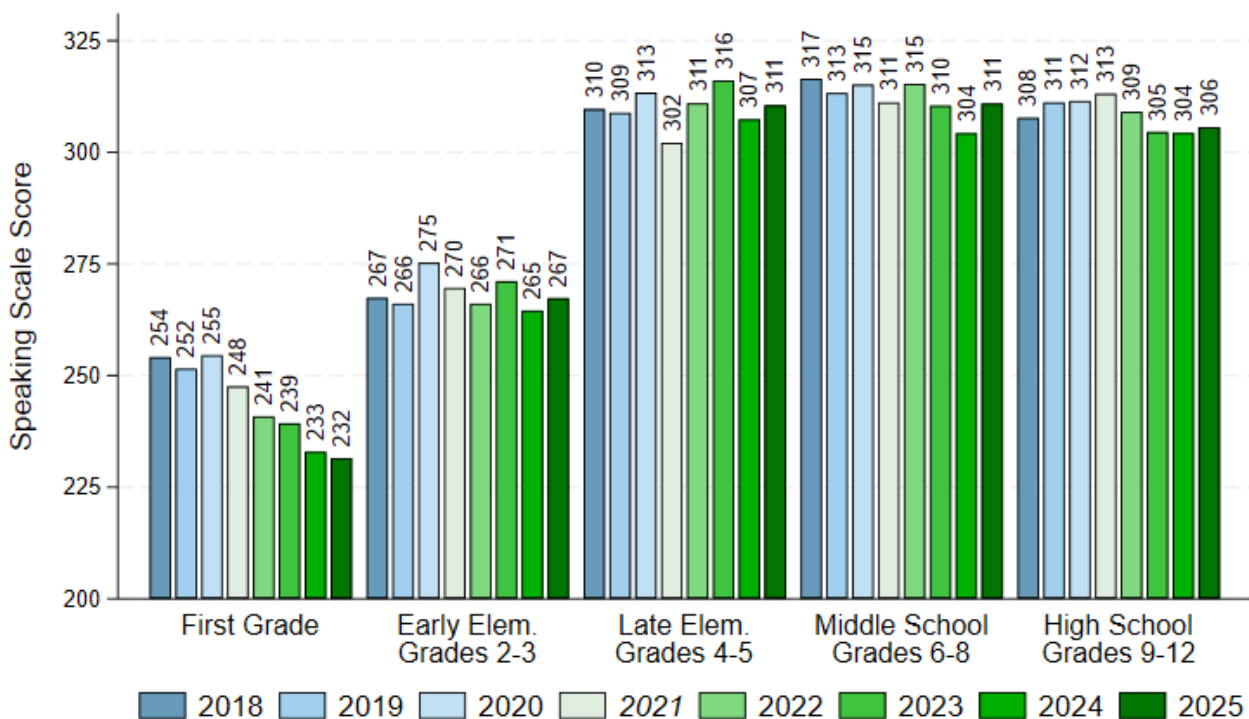


Table 4c: Speaking Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	254	252	255	248	241	239	233	232
Grades 2–3	267	266	275	270	266	271	265	267
Grades 4–5	310	309	313	302	311	316	307	311
Grades 6–8	317	313	315	311	315	310	304	311
Grades 9–12	308	311	312	313	309	305	304	306
Average	292	292	297	291	293	293	288	292

Proficiency in Writing

Average proficiency in the Writing domain declined across all grade-level clusters after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, however, that downward trend has leveled off. Although Writing scores have not returned to pre-pandemic averages, average Writing proficiency for students in all clusters was higher in 2025 than in 2024.

Figure 4d: Writing Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

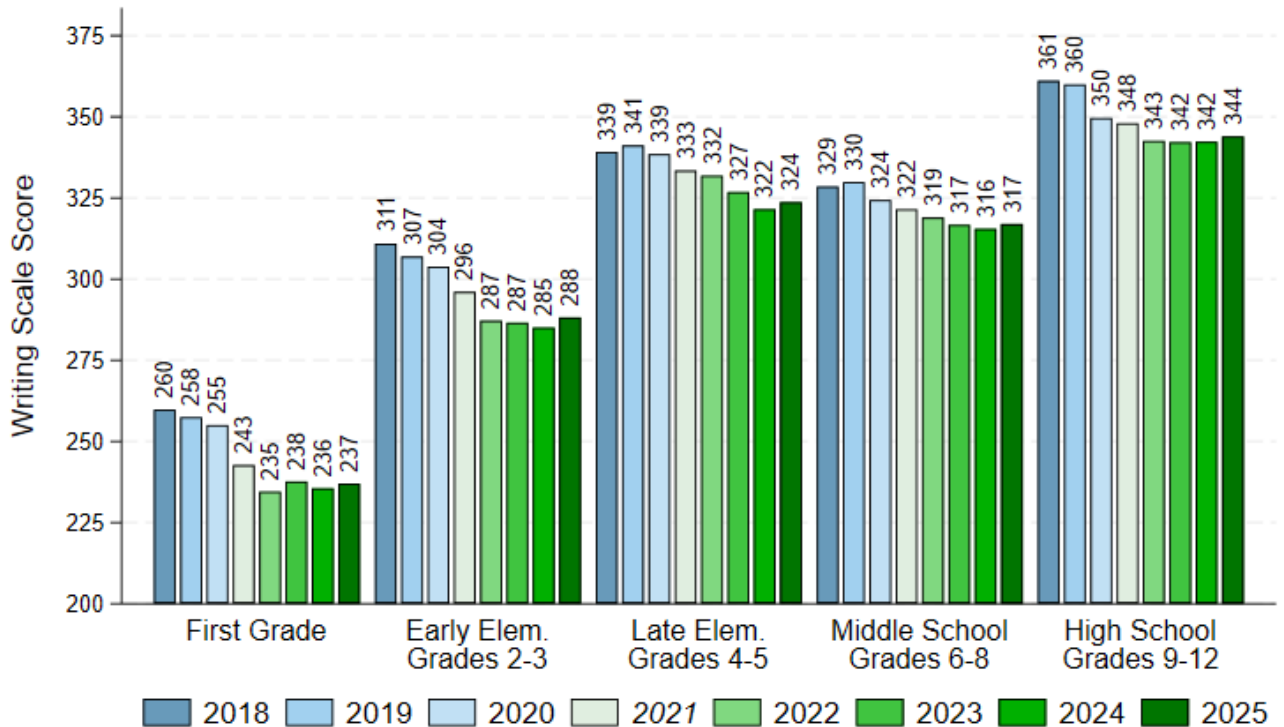


Table 4d: Writing Proficiency in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	260	258	255	243	235	238	236	237
Grades 2–3	311	307	304	296	287	287	285	288
Grades 4–5	339	341	339	333	332	327	322	324
Grades 6–8	329	330	324	322	319	317	316	317
Grades 9–12	361	360	350	348	343	342	342	344
Average	324	324	319	313	310	309	308	311

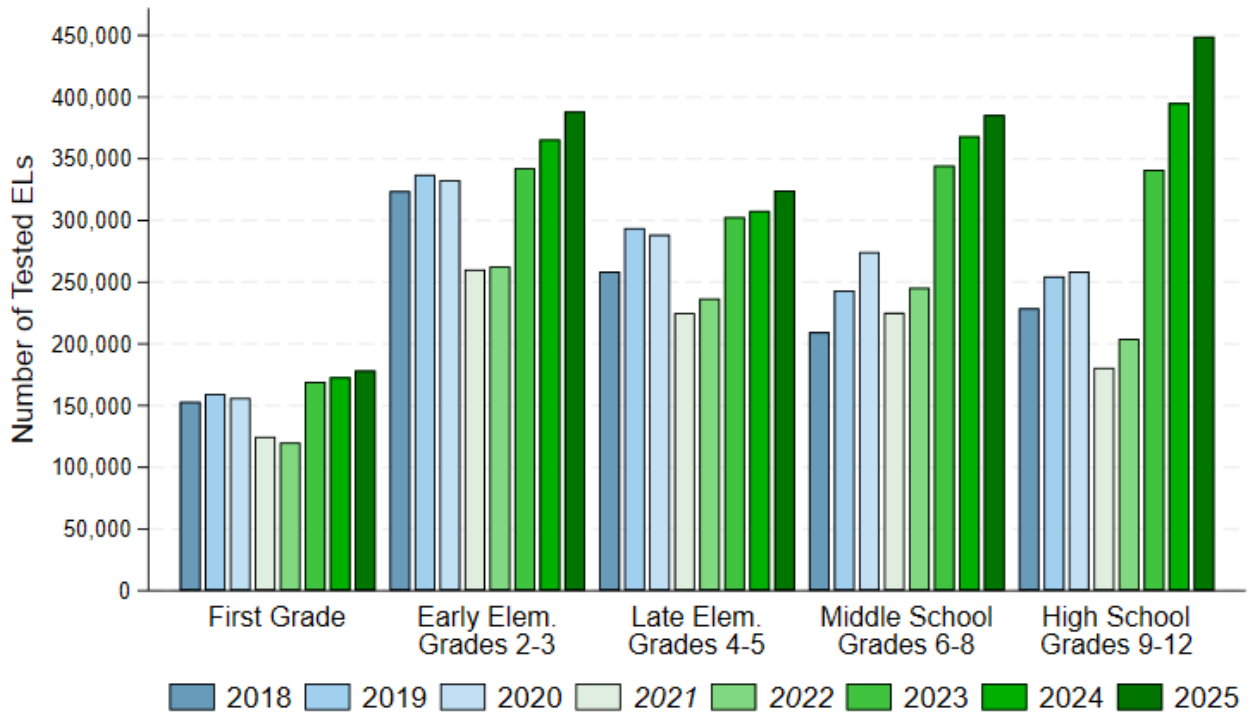
Summary of Proficiency in Individual Domains

Average scale scores for the Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing domains presented in Figures 4a–4d corroborate the overall stagnation of composite proficiency reported in Figure 3. Scores in 2024 and 2025 mark a continued decline in students’ receptive skills, with small decreases across all grade-level clusters in both the Reading and Listening domains. Apart from a slight decrease in first-grade Speaking scores, however, students’ average proficiency in both Speaking and Writing was higher in 2025 than 2024 for all grade-level clusters. Although consortium-average Writing scores remain below pre-pandemic averages, Speaking scores in 2025 approached pre-pandemic averages in most grade-level clusters. Overall, while average proficiency exhibited downward trends across all domains and clusters following the pandemic, scores from the most recent administrations of ACCESS Online reflect modest recovery in students’ average domain proficiency.

Annual English Learner Growth

Figures 3 and 4a–4d track average proficiency for all tested ELs in the WIDA Consortium, providing a snapshot based on the population in each academic year. Because the EL population changes each year, however—new students are identified as ELs while others reclassify out of English learner status—we also present average annual growth estimates for the last eight cycles.⁷ Growth estimates are calculated from student-level differences in scale scores across adjacent years, aggregating individual student gains in English language proficiency to the cluster level for each of the growth cycles presented. Figure 5 graphs the number of ELs in each academic year for whom overall composite scale score gains can be calculated, based on consecutive annual assessments.⁸

Figure 5: English Learner Testing Based on Annual Growth. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025



⁷ Annual growth estimates are calculated by subtracting each individual student’s prior-year overall composite scale score from the student’s current-year overall composite scale score, then aggregating across students. Therefore, the growth cycle for 2018 represents the average gain in individual students’ overall composite proficiency from academic year 2016–2017 to 2017–2018.

⁸ Average growth estimates are based on the population of students with non-missing Overall Composite Scale Scores. Students are excluded from the average for a given growth cycle if they are missing one or more domain scores in one of the two years used to calculate mean overall composite proficiency growth (based on overall composite scale score differences) in that cycle.

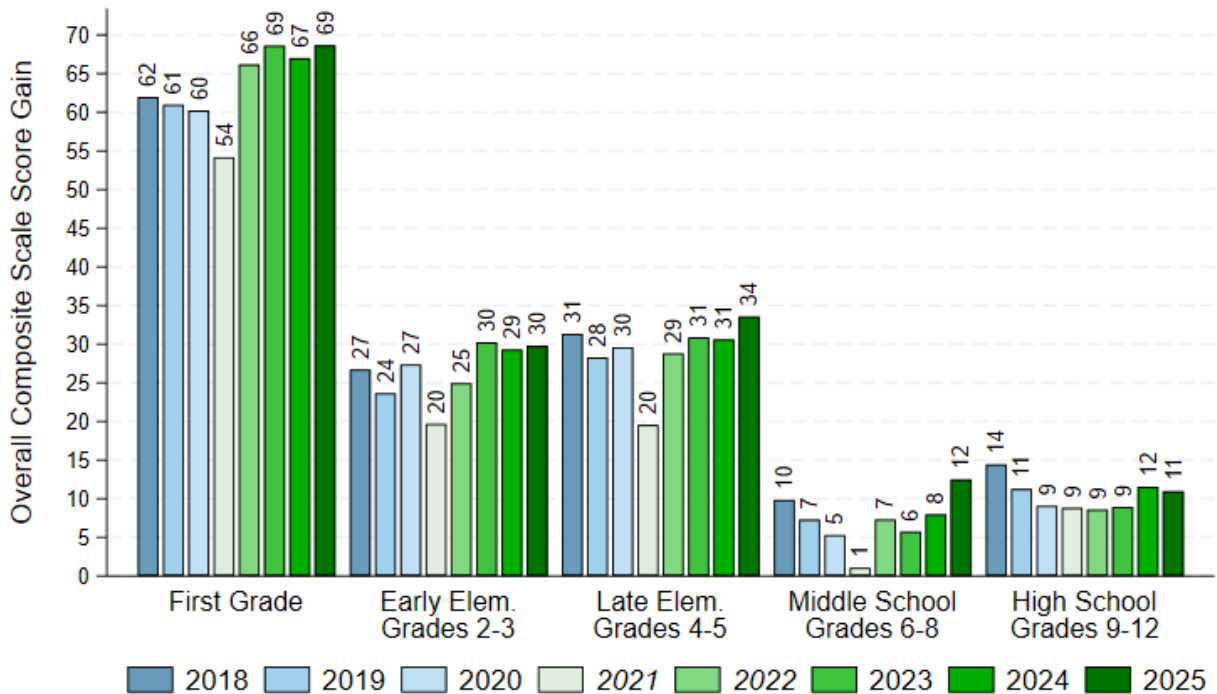
Table 5: English Learner Testing Based on Annual Growth. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	152,733	159,534	156,390	125,095	121,104	169,413	173,244	178,591
Grades 2–3	289,193	326,185	334,794	263,782	329,008	344,798	368,558	391,457
Grades 4–5	242,274	284,105	287,392	227,328	304,388	305,558	310,708	327,485
Grades 6–8	198,085	237,290	276,266	228,688	323,620	348,672	373,258	390,249
Grades 9–12	219,238	251,197	262,604	184,888	290,160	347,753	403,928	458,408
Total	1,101,523	1,258,311	1,317,446	1,029,781	1,368,280	1,516,194	1,629,696	1,746,190

Annual Overall Composite Growth

Figure 6 presents average growth in overall composite proficiency for individual ELs in each of the last eight growth cycles. While average proficiency across the WIDA Consortium remained low in 2024 and 2025, relative to pre-pandemic averages, many students reported higher proficiency gains than in prior growth cycles. Average growth in the last three cycles was higher for many English learners than pre-pandemic average growth, especially for students in elementary grades. Growth for middle school ELs increased in both 2024 and 2025, while growth for high school ELs in both years was higher than in any year since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite dropping slightly from 2024 to 2025. In all other clusters, the gain scores from 2025 were higher than in 2024.

Figure 6: Annual Overall Composite Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025⁹



⁹ Overall proficiency growth averages in this figure, as well as the domain-specific growth averages in Figures 7a–7d, are italicized for the growth cycles of 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 to emphasize the possibility that those values may not be representative of the entire population of English learners across the WIDA Consortium in 2020–2021 and 2021–2022, due to the substantial number of missing test scores. Because many EL students did not take the

Table 6: Annual Overall Composite Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	62	61	60	54	66	69	67	69
Grades 2–3	27	24	27	20	25	30	29	30
Grades 4–5	31	28	30	20	29	31	31	34
Grades 6–8	10	7	5	1	7	6	8	12
Grades 9–12	14	11	9	9	9	9	12	11
Average	27	24	24	18	23	24	24	26

Figures 7a–7d present corresponding averages in students’ score growth within the individual language domains of Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing, as measured by aggregated individual student gains in each domain. As noted in the description of trends in average proficiency for each domain, scale scores (and therefore scale score growth averages) are not comparable across domains. Averages for one domain cannot be directly compared to the averages for another. We focus on each domain separately, describing trends in scale score gains without direct comparisons across domains in terms of scale score points.

ACCESS Online test in the spring of 2021, we advise caution in interpreting the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 estimates of average EL growth or comparing those values to the averages reported for other growth cycles.

Annual Reading Growth

In most clusters, average gains in Reading proficiency were slightly lower in 2025 than in 2024. Gains in the Reading proficiency of first-graders remained higher than pre-pandemic averages, however, while gains for students in the middle school cluster returned to pre-pandemic averages. Overall, recent gains in other clusters were higher than the low growth seen in the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 cycles—which may not be representative, given the high rate of missing test scores in 2021 (see footnotes 4 and 5).

Figure 7a: Annual Reading Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

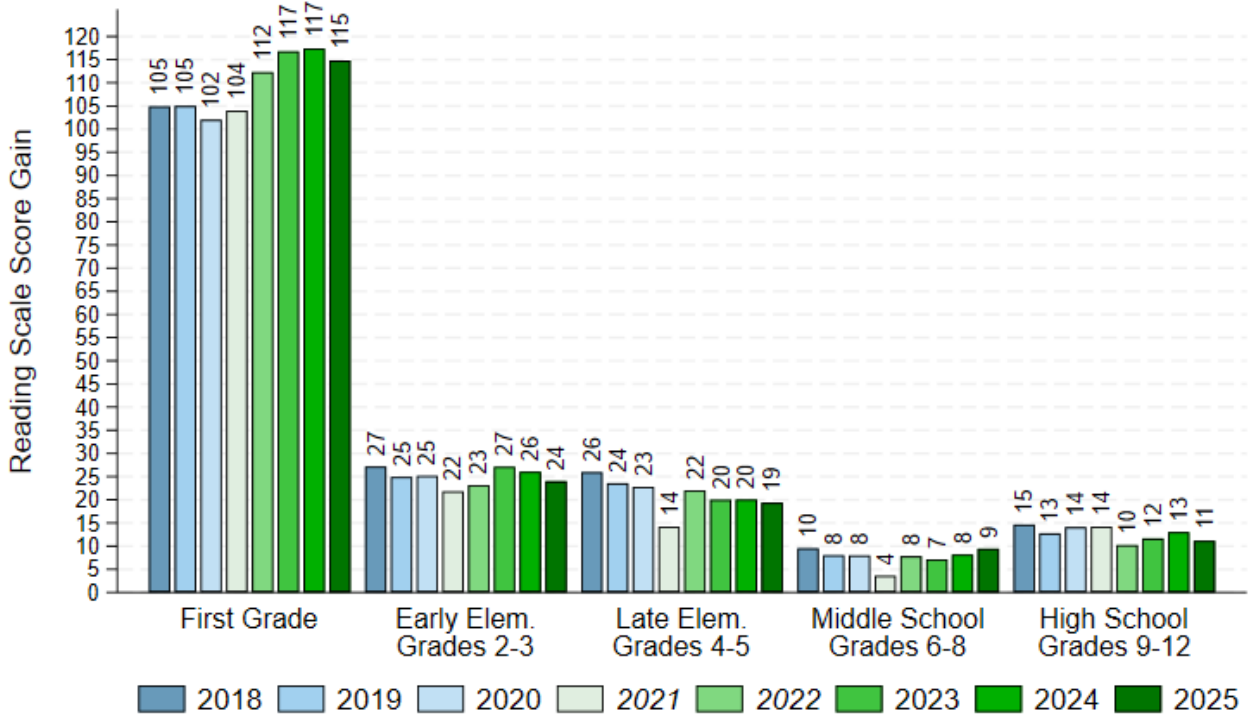


Table 7a: Annual Reading Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	105	105	102	104	112	117	117	115
Grades 2-3	27	25	25	22	23	27	26	24
Grades 4-5	26	24	23	14	22	20	20	19
Grades 6-8	9	8	8	4	8	7	8	9
Grades 9-12	15	13	14	14	10	12	13	11
Average	31	29	28	25	27	28	27	26

Annual Listening Growth

For the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, growth in Listening for ELs across most grade-level clusters was nearly as high or higher compared to pre-pandemic averages. Figure 7b shows that growth in Listening declined somewhat for the early elementary and high school clusters but was higher than 2024 averages for students in grade 1 as well as late elementary and middle school grades. In those clusters, gains in Listening proficiency were higher in 2025 than average gains in 2018 through 2020.

Figure 7b: Annual Listening Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

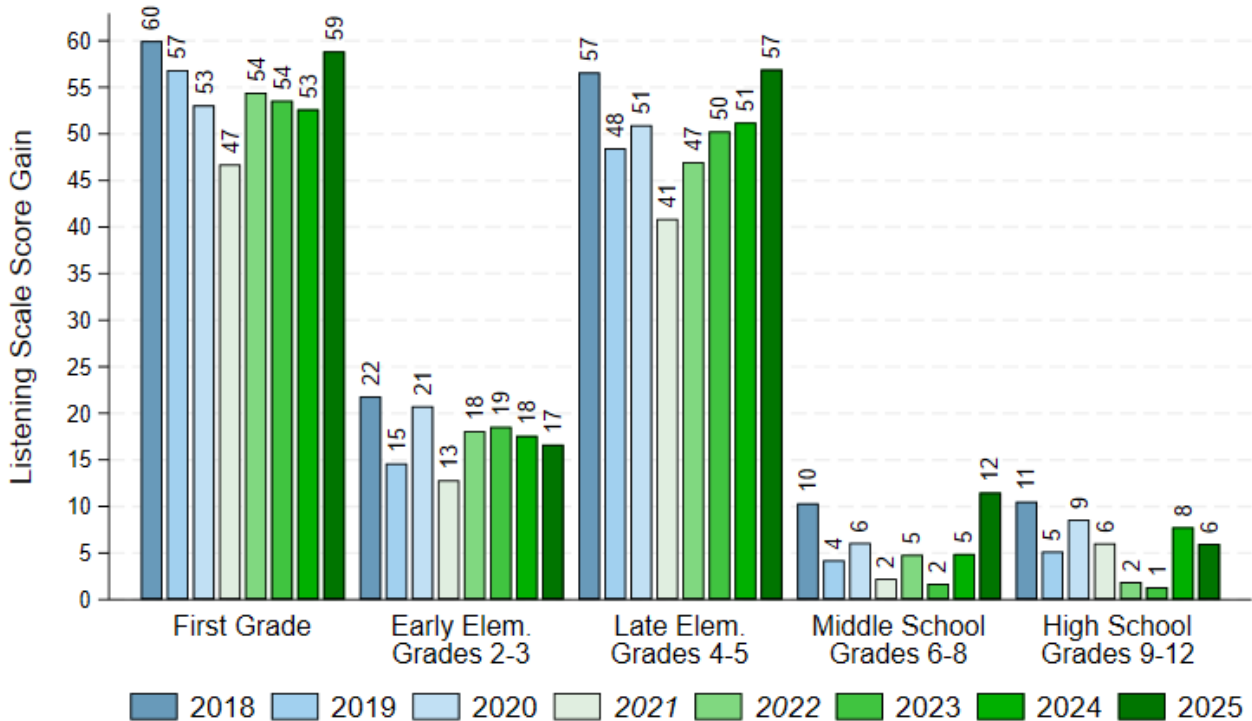


Table 7b: Annual Listening Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	60	57	53	47	55	54	53	59
Grades 2-3	22	15	21	13	18	19	18	17
Grades 4-5	57	49	51	41	47	50	51	57
Grades 6-8	10	4	6	2	5	2	5	11
Grades 9-12	11	5	9	6	2	1	8	6
Average	30	24	26	20	22	21	23	25

Annual Speaking Growth

Figure 7c shows that, across all grade-level clusters, average gains in Speaking proficiency during the most recent two growth cycles exceeded average gains in the years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although growth rates did dip during the pandemic, growth rates since then appear to have rebounded.

Figure 7c: Annual Speaking Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

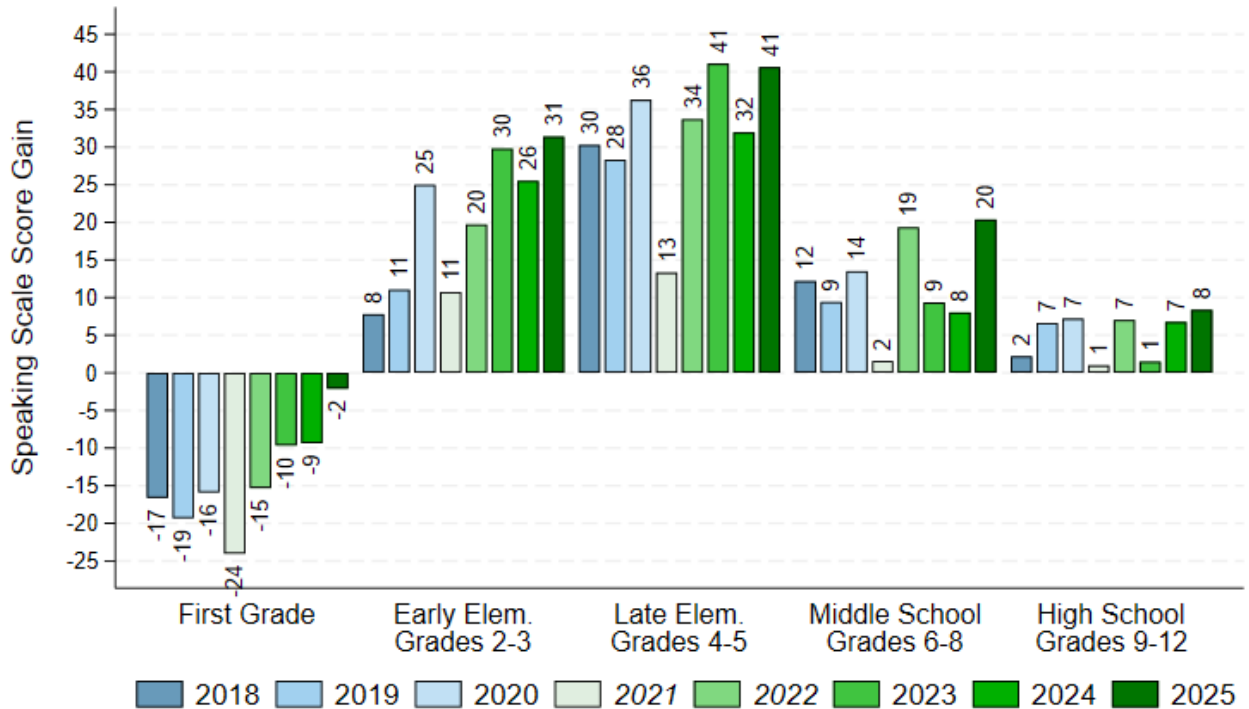


Table 7c: Annual Speaking Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	-17	-19	-16	-24	-15	-10	-9	-2
Grades 2-3	8	11	25	11	20	30	26	31
Grades 4-5	30	28	36	13	34	41	32	41
Grades 6-8	12	9	14	2	19	9	8	20
Grades 9-12	2	7	7	1	7	2	7	8
Average	9	10	17	3	16	17	14	21

Annual Writing Growth

Figure 7d shows that, despite large declines in the average growth of Writing proficiency for ELs during the COVID-19 pandemic, growth rates in most grade-level clusters have increased for several straight years. In many clusters, average growth in the last two cycles exceeded pre-pandemic averages.

Figure 7d: Annual Writing Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

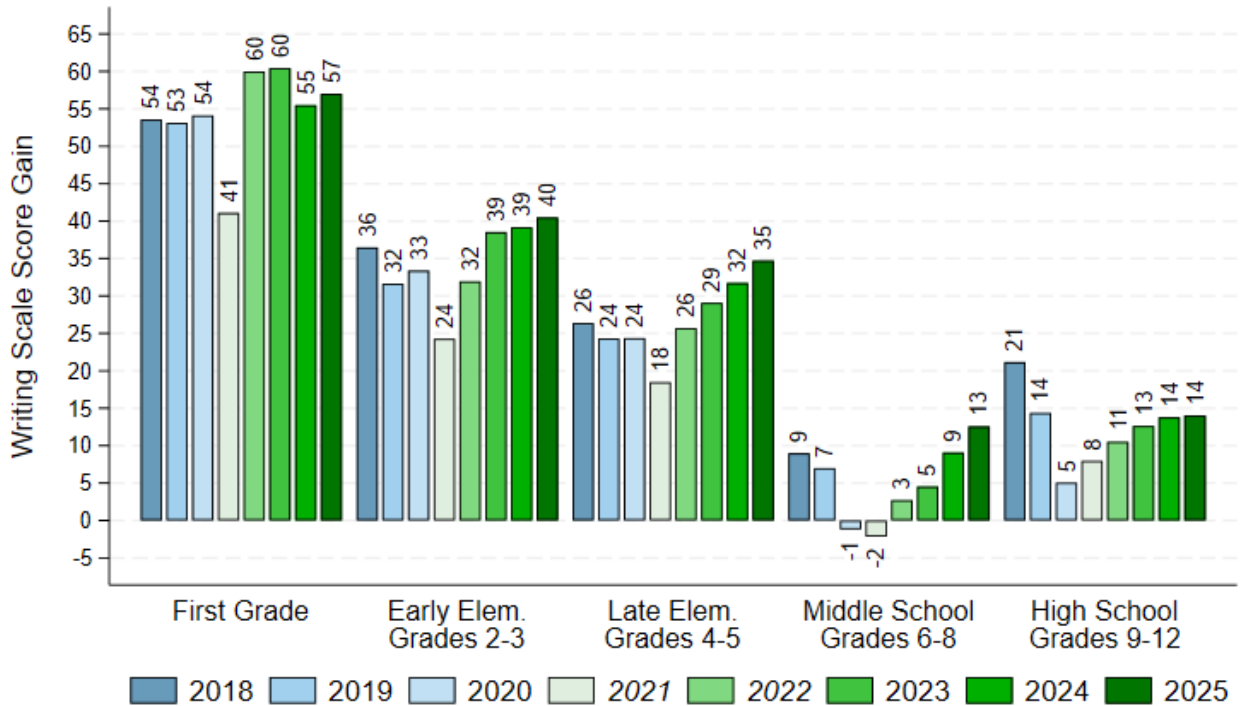


Table 7d: Annual Writing Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	54	53	54	41	60	60	56	57
Grades 2–3	37	32	33	24	32	39	39	40
Grades 4–5	26	24	24	18	26	29	32	35
Grades 6–8	9	7	-1	-2	3	5	9	13
Grades 9–12	21	14	5	8	11	13	14	14
Average	29	25	21	16	23	25	26	28

Summary of Annual Growth in Individual Domains

Figures 6 and 7a–7d track annual growth for all tested ELs in the WIDA Consortium, providing a measure of how individual students’ English language development progressed, on average, in each of the last eight annual growth cycles. The figures reveal sustained positive growth trends: gains in 2025 were higher than in 2024 for most domains and grade-level clusters, and students’ productive skills (Speaking and Writing) in particular demonstrated growth that exceeded pre-pandemic levels across all clusters. Although scores suggest that students’ growth in Reading still lags somewhat behind pre-pandemic levels on average, gain scores remain high for first-graders and middle schoolers. Trends in Listening scores, meanwhile, suggest that recent growth meets or exceeds pre-pandemic levels for the majority of tested students.

Three-Year English Learner Growth

To extend our examination of ELs' annual growth, we leverage the longer history of ACCESS Online data now available to present trends in 3-year English language proficiency growth. Whereas the annual growth charts (Figures 7a–7d) showed average individual-level gains from one academic year to the next, here we examine aggregate individual-level gains over six growth cycles, each spanning four academic years.

Figure 8 graphs the number of students in each academic year for whom an overall composite scale score gain can be calculated, based on non-missing annual assessments in the first and last academic year of each growth cycle.¹⁰ For example, the left-most bar represents the 138,485 students who reported a non-missing overall composite scale score in grade 3 in 2020, as well as a non-missing overall composite scale score in 2017, which for this grade group would have been recorded by the Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs test. The next five bars in this left-most grouping represent average growth in the remaining growth cycles: aggregate gains from kindergarten to grade 3, calculated for 2018 to 2021, 2019 to 2022, 2020 to 2023, 2021 to 2024, and 2022 to 2025, respectively.¹¹ The second grouping of bars represents average gains within the same growth cycles but calculated for students who reported scores in grade 4 or 5 at the end of each cycle (and therefore had non-missing scores from grade 1 or 2 at the beginning of each cycle). The third set of bars represents gains from grades 3–5 to grades 6–8, and the fourth (right-most) set of bars represents gains from grades 6–9 to grades 9–12.

¹⁰ Growth estimates are calculated from the population of students with non-missing Overall Composite Scale Scores. Students are excluded from the average for a given growth cycle if they are missing one or more domain scores in one of the two years used to calculate average overall composite proficiency growth in that cycle. Growth estimates are calculated based on years (e.g., 2017 to 2020), rather than grade levels; therefore, initial grades are illustrative and not necessarily accurate for all students.

¹¹ As in previous figures, bars representing averages calculated using scores from 2021 are noted in the legend with italics to emphasize that those averages were not representative of the full population, due to a higher proportion of missing test scores. Those bars also share the same light green color, whether the averages they represent were calculated using 2021 scores as the last year of the growth cycle (i.e., growth from 2018 to 2021) or the baseline year (i.e., 2021 to 2024).

Figure 8: English Learner Testing Based on 3-Year Growth. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

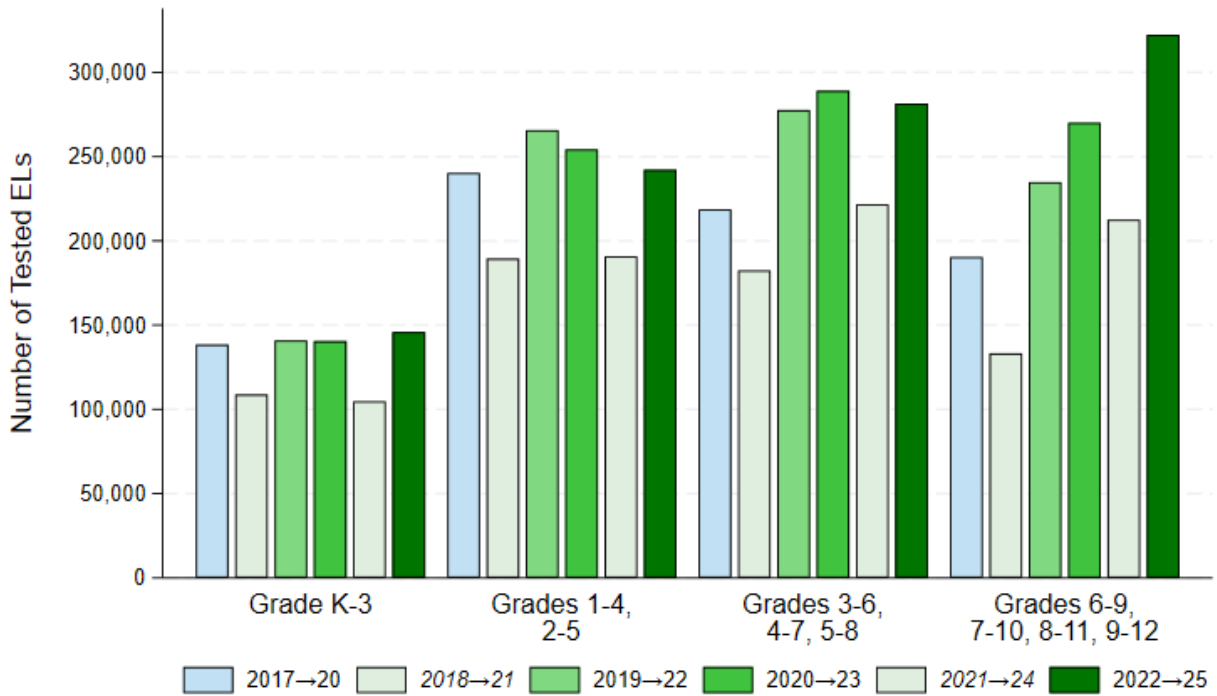


Table 8: English Learner Testing Based on 3-Year Growth. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster Transition	2017→20	2018→21	2019→22	2020→23	2021→24	2022→25
Kindergarten to Early Elem.	138,485	108,873	140,967	140,495	104,859	145,897
Early Elem. to Late Elem.	240,352	189,491	265,717	254,304	190,781	242,194
Late Elem. to Middle School	218,719	182,528	277,629	289,057	221,668	281,569
Middle to High School	190,440	133,276	234,833	270,134	212,629	322,206
Average	787,996	614,168	919,146	953,990	729,937	991,866

Figure 9 shows the average overall composite scale score growth that ELs made across the six examined growth cycles. It is important to recognize that these figures and the averages they depict reflect only the growth of ELs who had calculable 3-year gain scores. For example, the right-most bar represents gains for students who had non-missing overall composite scale scores for grades 9–12 in 2025 and also had non-missing overall composite scale scores in 2022, the baseline year for that growth cycle; students who had a non-missing overall composite scale score in 2022 but exited EL services before 2025 would not be included in that calculation. The figures therefore present a measure of long-term growth for only those students receiving EL services throughout the span of each depicted growth cycle.

Figure 9: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

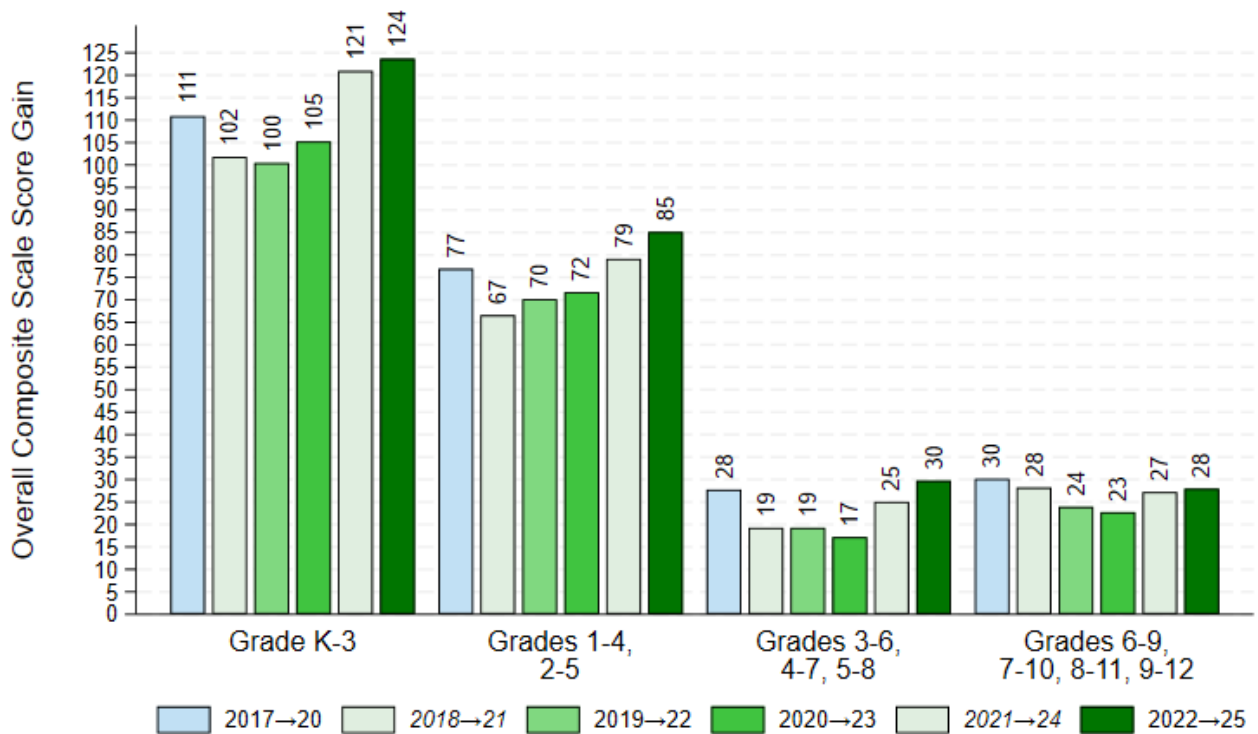


Table 9: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth in the WIDA Consortium. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster Transition	2017→20	2018→21	2019→22	2020→23	2021→24	2022→25
Kindergarten to Early Elem.	111	102	100	105	121	124
Early Elem. to Late Elem.	77	67	70	72	79	85
Late Elem. to Middle School	28	19	19	17	25	30
Middle to High School	30	28	24	23	27	28
Average	58	50	48	46	54	57

Summary of Three-Year Overall Composite Growth

The presented trends reveal that 3-year growth decreased for several cycles following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lower growth during the pandemic is shown by relatively low average aggregate gains from academic year 2019 to 2022 and 2020 to 2023, which were not affected by the higher rates of missing test scores in 2021. On average, individual students made 10 to 12 fewer scale score points of growth in overall composite proficiency during those two growth cycles, relative to the growth cycle that ended just before the pandemic. Excluding cycles with averages calculated using 2021 scores, 3-year growth was lowest overall for elementary school students in the 2019 through 2022 growth cycle. Three-year growth within the middle school and high school clusters, however, was lowest in the 2020 through 2023 cycle.

The most recent growth cycle, though—spanning 2022 to 2025—showed aggregate gains of 57 scale score points over 3 years of growth, just one point lower than the pre-pandemic mean. Three-year growth has increased for younger EL students in particular: gains from kindergarten to grade 3 were 13 scale score points higher for the 2022 to 2025 growth cycle than in the 2017 to 2020 cycle, approximately equivalent to one-third of one year's average annual growth rate for students in that grade range prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, 3-year growth for middle school ELs in the most recent cycle exceeded pre-pandemic levels, and growth for high school ELs in the most recent two cycles has nearly recovered to pre-pandemic averages.

Disparities by Hispanic Status

As in the prior edition of this report, we highlight subgroup analyses potentially relevant to many students, educators, and researchers. Specifically, we present trends over the last eight academic years in average overall composite proficiency, as well as annual and 3-year growth disaggregated by Hispanic status for each grade-level cluster. Across the WIDA Consortium, more than two-thirds of ELs are identified as Hispanic. This report documents continued evidence of lower average English language proficiency for Hispanic ELs relative to their non-Hispanic English learner peers. Subgroup averages in overall composite proficiency show that differences by Hispanic status were larger in 2024 and 2025 for most grade-level clusters. The disaggregated annual growth trends, on the other hand, reveal that disparities in annual overall composite scale score growth between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students have decreased, on average, since an overall peak during the pandemic. For example, high overall annual growth rates for middle schoolers in 2025 were driven in part by a return to pre-pandemic annual growth rates for non-Hispanic ELs, but rates were even more strongly boosted by gains in Hispanic EL growth. This finding demonstrates how overall trends may obscure important subgroup differences within the EL population. Recognizing that there is tremendous variation within overall averages, even when disaggregated by subgroup—not to mention the limitations in categorizing students by demographic labels—we nonetheless share select disaggregated findings to promote conversation around identifying subgroups of students who may have faced additional barriers before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Disparities in Overall Composite Proficiency¹²

The previous edition of this report documented how overall composite scale score averages had declined since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic for all grade-level clusters through 2023 and, additionally, that averages for Hispanic students had declined at an even faster rate than for non-Hispanic students. While data for 2023 suggested that the disparity between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students may have decreased somewhat in that academic year, overall averages show that the disparity in 2024 was again higher than at any point in the history of ACCESS Online scores—and was even worse in 2025. We present trends disaggregated by grade-level cluster to reveal some of the nuances within overall averages. We also emphasize that the following figures and tables represent data collected across contexts that may vary drastically in terms of EL policy, instruction, and demographics. Relatedly, reported Hispanic status is one potentially relevant aspect of students' dynamic identities, but we acknowledge that many factors affect how students enter and exit EL status. The following analyses therefore represent one of many potential inquiries into students' English language development over the last 8 years.

¹² Analyses of disparities by Hispanic status exclude all observations from five WIDA States with very high missing data rates, as high as 98% missing Hispanic status in some state-year combinations. For the remaining states, 124,205 observations with missing Hispanic status are dropped (less than 1% of remaining student-year observations).

Figure 10a shows average overall composite scale score disaggregated by Hispanic status for each year 2018 through 2025. Average proficiency continued to decline for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students across the WIDA Consortium. Although the difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic first-graders was somewhat smaller on average in 2023, average scale scores further decreased in 2024 and 2025 for Hispanic students, especially relative to non-Hispanic students, resulting in larger disparities.

Figure 10a: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 1). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

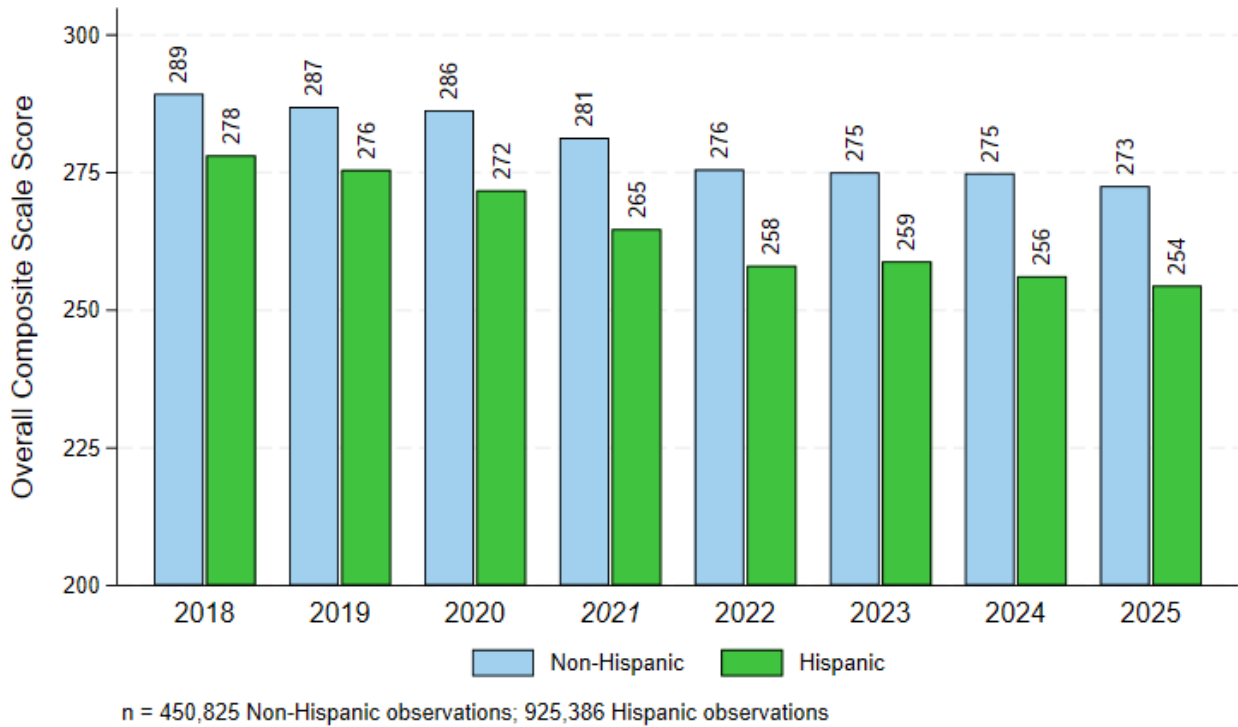
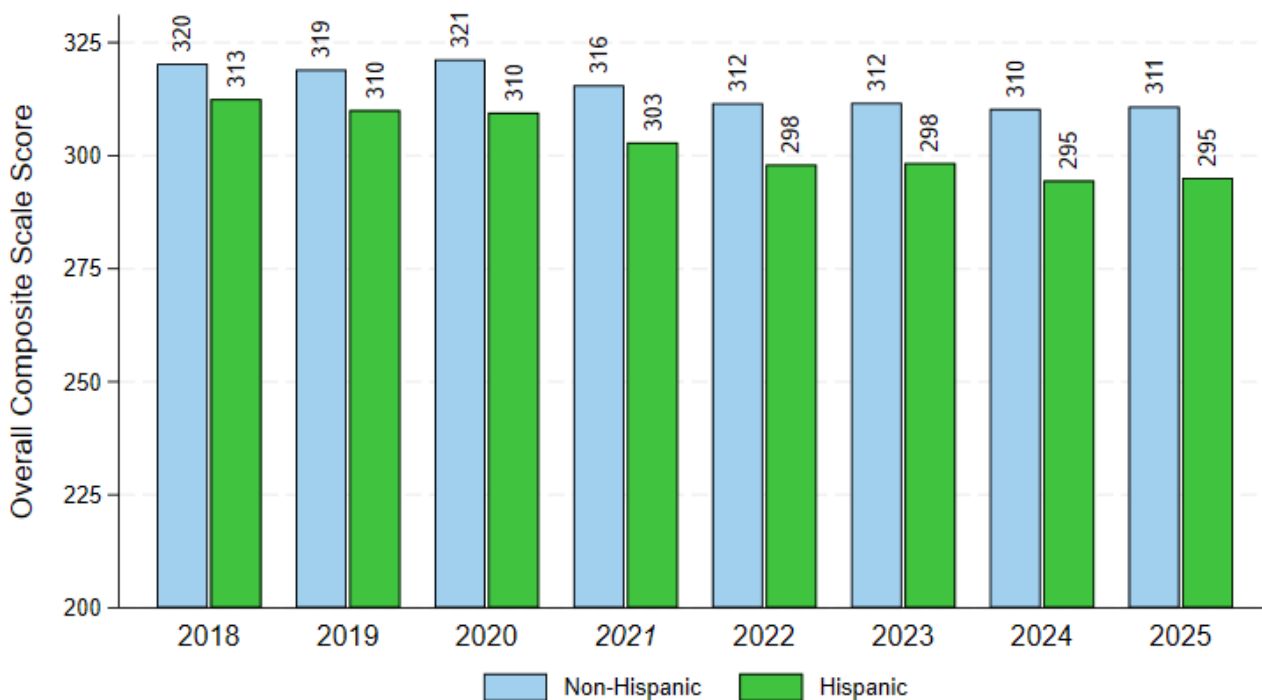


Table 10a: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 1). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	289	287	286	281	276	275	275	273
Hispanic	278	276	272	265	258	259	256	254
Difference	11.2	11.4	14.5	16.6	17.5	16.2	18.7	18.1

Figure 10b reflects the same overall trend as overall averages and differences between students in early elementary school (grades 2–3) who are identified as Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic. Average overall composite scale scores declined for both subgroups following the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but averages decreased more for Hispanic students than for their non-Hispanic peers. After a small decrease in the difference between the subgroups in 2023, the disparity increased in 2024 and was almost as high in 2025.

Figure 10b: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 2–3). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025



n = 889,679 Non-Hispanic observations; 1,929,616 Hispanic observations

Table 10b: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 2–3). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	320	319	321	316	312	312	310	311
Hispanic	313	310	310	303	298	298	295	295
Difference	7.9	9.0	11.7	12.6	13.6	13.3	15.9	15.8

Figure 10c shows that average overall composite scale scores declined after the COVID-19 pandemic for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in late elementary school (grades 4–5). The disparity between the subgroups was smaller in 2023 but increased in 2024 and again in 2025, representing the largest gap in the history of ACCESS Online scores.

Figure 10c: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 4–5). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

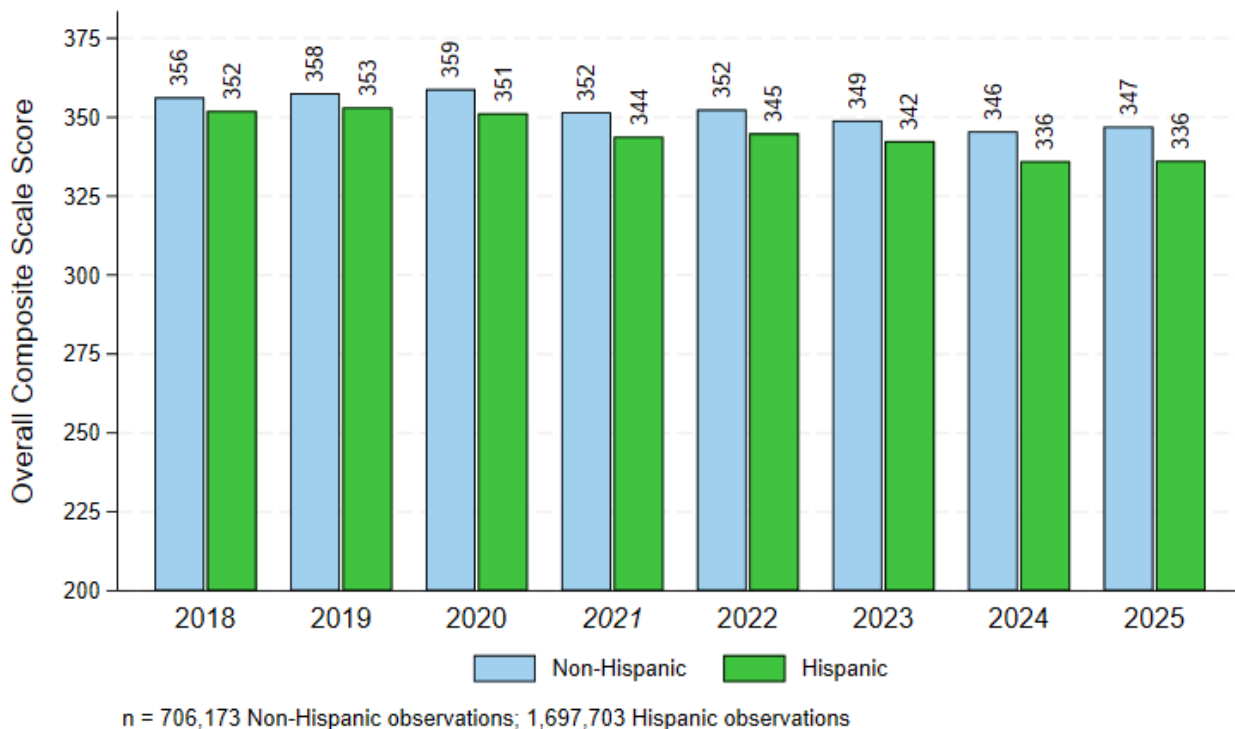
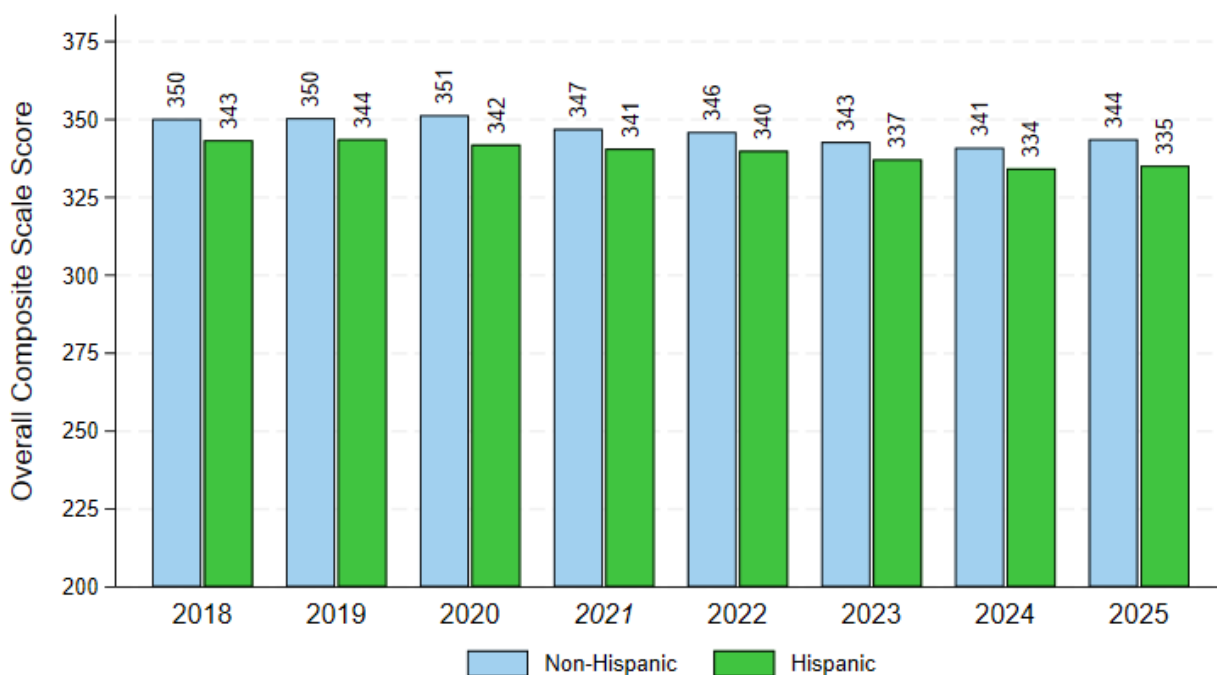


Table 10c: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 4–5). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	356	358	359	352	352	349	346	347
Hispanic	352	353	351	344	345	342	336	336
Difference	4.3	4.5	7.7	7.8	7.6	6.6	9.5	10.8

Figure 10d documents how average overall composite scale scores also declined for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic middle school students (grades 6–8) following the COVID-19 pandemic. Decreases were smaller within this grade-level cluster, though, relative to other clusters. Differences by Hispanic status peaked in 2020 but then were smaller than pre-pandemic disparities and declining overall 2021 to 2023. The disparity increased in 2024, however, and again in 2025.

Figure 10d: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 6–8). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025



n = 703,872 Non-Hispanic observations; 1,823,281 Hispanic observations

Table 10d: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 6–8). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	350	350	351	347	346	343	341	344
Hispanic	343	344	342	341	340	337	334	335
Difference	6.9	6.7	9.4	6.3	6.0	5.6	6.7	8.5

Figure 10e shows how overall composite scale scores declined on average for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in high school (grades 9–12) following the COVID-19 pandemic. While the disparity between these subgroups decreased in 2024, relative to 2023, average scores remained relatively flat in 2025.

Figure 10e: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 9–12). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

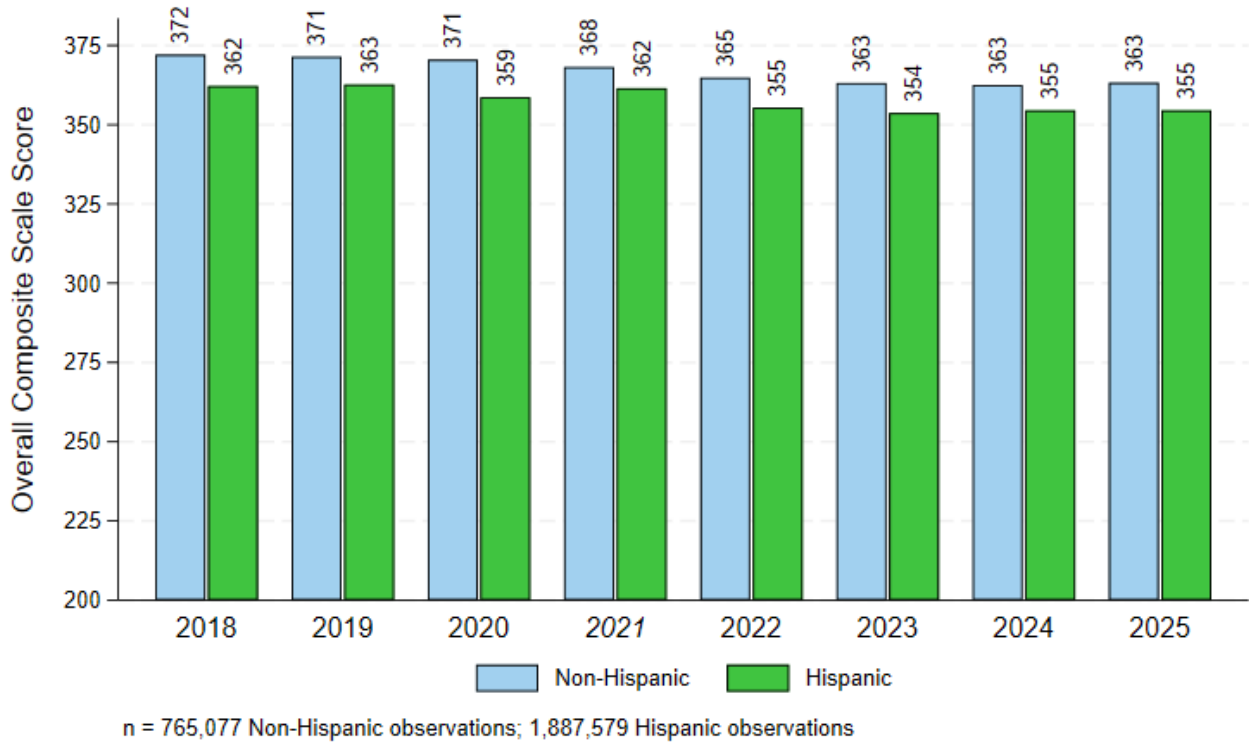


Table 10e: Overall Composite Proficiency by Hispanic Status (Gr. 9–12). ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	372	371	371	368	365	363	363	363
Hispanic	362	363	359	362	355	354	355	355
Difference	9.9	8.7	11.9	6.7	9.4	9.4	8.0	8.7

Summary of Disparities in Overall Composite Proficiency

Figure 11 documents the average disparity between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students' average overall composite scale scores by grade-level cluster in 2018 through 2025. The trends shown in Figure 11 reveal that cluster-level disparities have increased overall since the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly within the earlier grades where students are more likely to be identified as ELs. Overall, Hispanic students' overall proficiency remains lower on average than non-Hispanic students', and that gap was higher in 2025 than in any other year in ACCESS Online data. Disparities by Hispanic status have declined somewhat within high school grades, however, relative to a peak in 2020, and gaps in 2025 were smaller than in 2024 for ELs in early elementary school (grades 1–3).

Figure 11: Overall Composite Proficiency Disparities by Hispanic Status. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

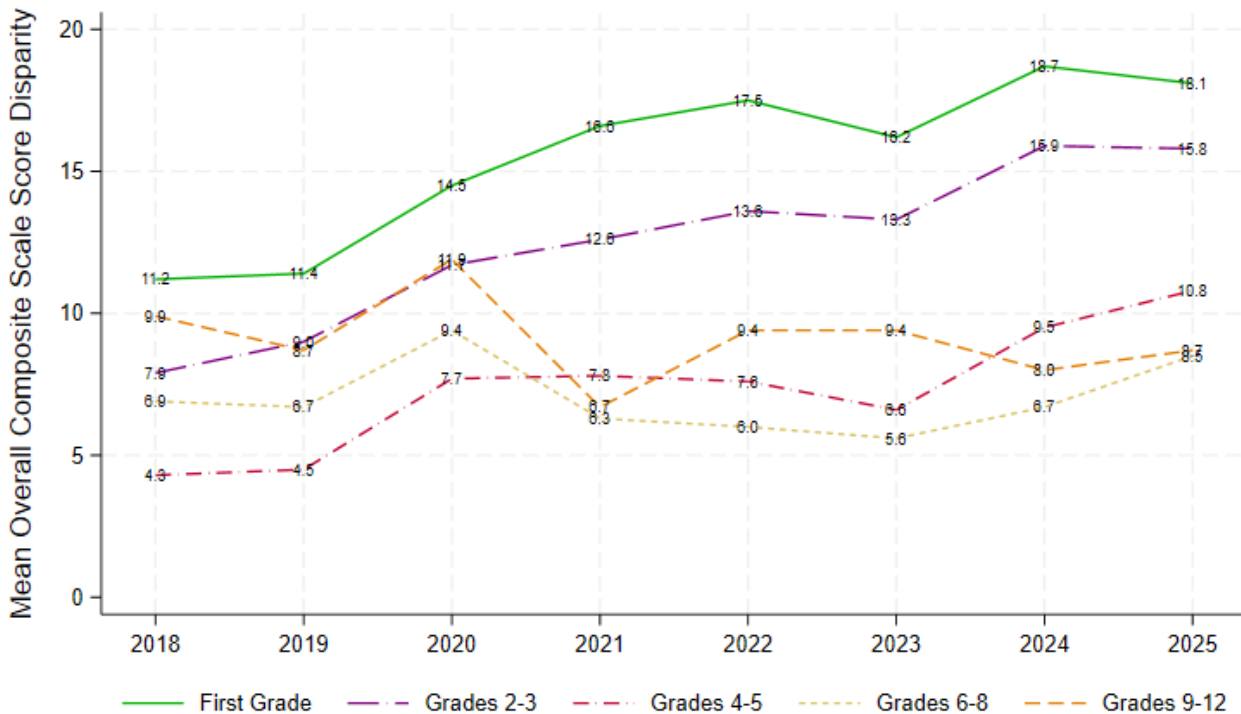


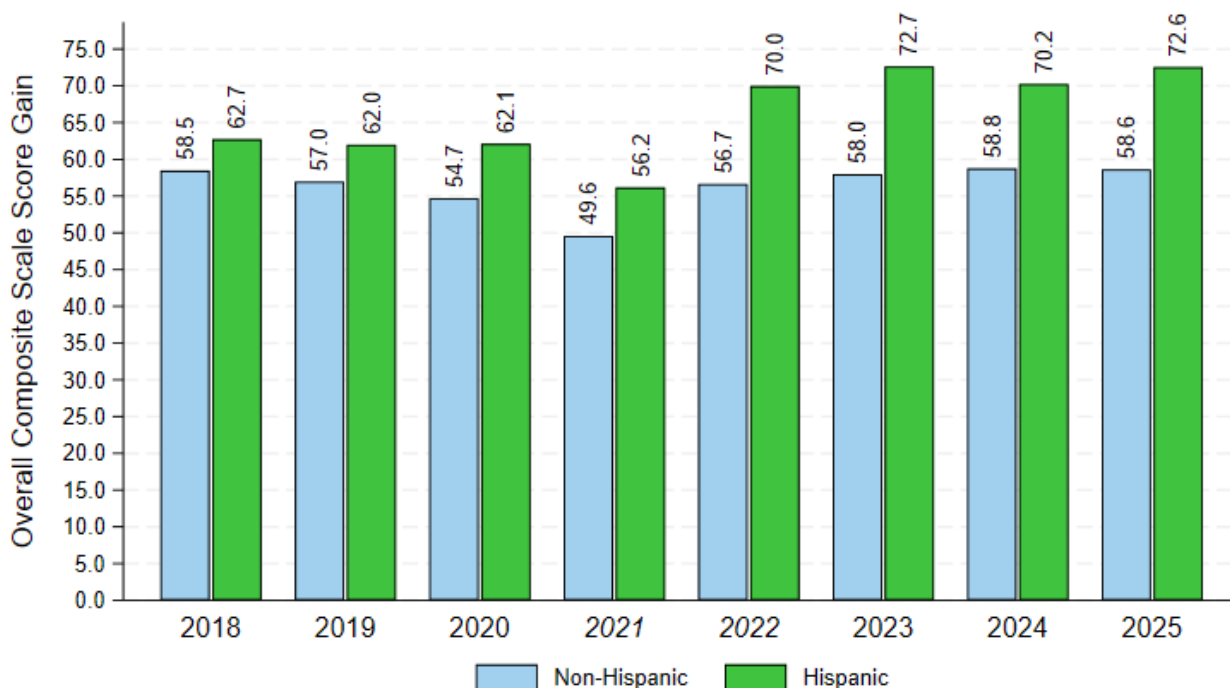
Table 11: Overall Composite Proficiency Disparities by Hispanic Status. ACCESS Online, 2018–2025

Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	11.2	11.4	14.5	16.6	17.5	16.2	18.7	18.1
Early Elem. (2–3)	7.9	9.0	11.7	12.6	13.6	13.3	15.9	15.8
Late Elem. (4–5)	4.3	4.5	7.7	7.8	7.6	6.6	9.5	10.8
Middle School (6–8)	6.9	6.7	9.4	6.3	6.0	5.6	6.7	8.5
High School (9–12)	9.9	8.7	11.9	6.7	9.4	9.4	8.0	8.7
Average	6.7	5.9	8.3	7.3	8.1	7.4	8.8	9.9

Disparities in Annual English Learner Growth

Figure 12a presents average annual overall composite scale score growth for students in grade 1 for the growth cycles of 2017–2018 through 2024–2025, disaggregated by Hispanic status. Average annual growth for both subgroups dropped in 2021—especially for non-Hispanic ELs in grade 1, whose growth has since rebounded and held steady at approximately pre-pandemic levels. Growth for Hispanic ELs, meanwhile, increased after the dip in 2021 and has remained consistently higher than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, higher average annual growth rates from kindergarten to first grade in recent cycles (Figure 6) was driven primarily by gains for Hispanic ELs, whose recent annual growth rates averaged nearly 10 points higher than pre-pandemic annual growth. Meanwhile, annual growth for non-Hispanic ELs over the last three cycles has averaged only 2 points above pre-pandemic averages.

Figure 12a: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 1). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025



n = 355,554 Non-Hispanic observations; 781,182 Hispanic observations

Table 12a: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 1). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	58.5	57.0	54.7	49.6	56.7	58.0	58.8	58.6
Hispanic	62.7	62.0	62.1	56.2	70.0	72.7	70.2	72.6
Difference	-4.3	-5.0	-7.4	-6.6	-13.3	-14.7	-11.5	-13.9

Figure 12b presents the annual growth of ELs in grade 2 and grade 3, disaggregated by Hispanic status. Hispanic ELs in early elementary grades historically demonstrated lower growth than their non-Hispanic peers, prior to the pandemic. Annual growth rates for both subgroups declined after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but growth rates since 2023 have been higher than pre-pandemic averages for both subgroups. Average annual growth remains lower for Hispanic students, however, relative to non-Hispanic ELs in early elementary grades.

Figure 12b: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 2–3). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

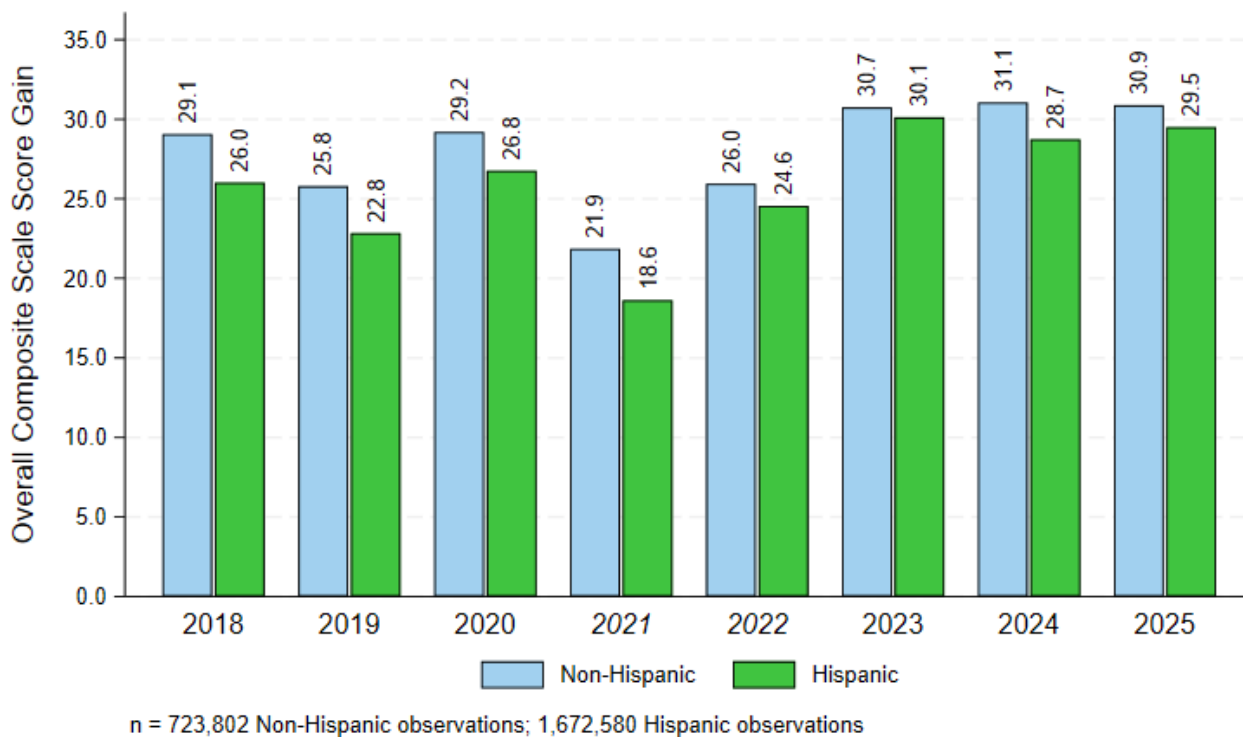
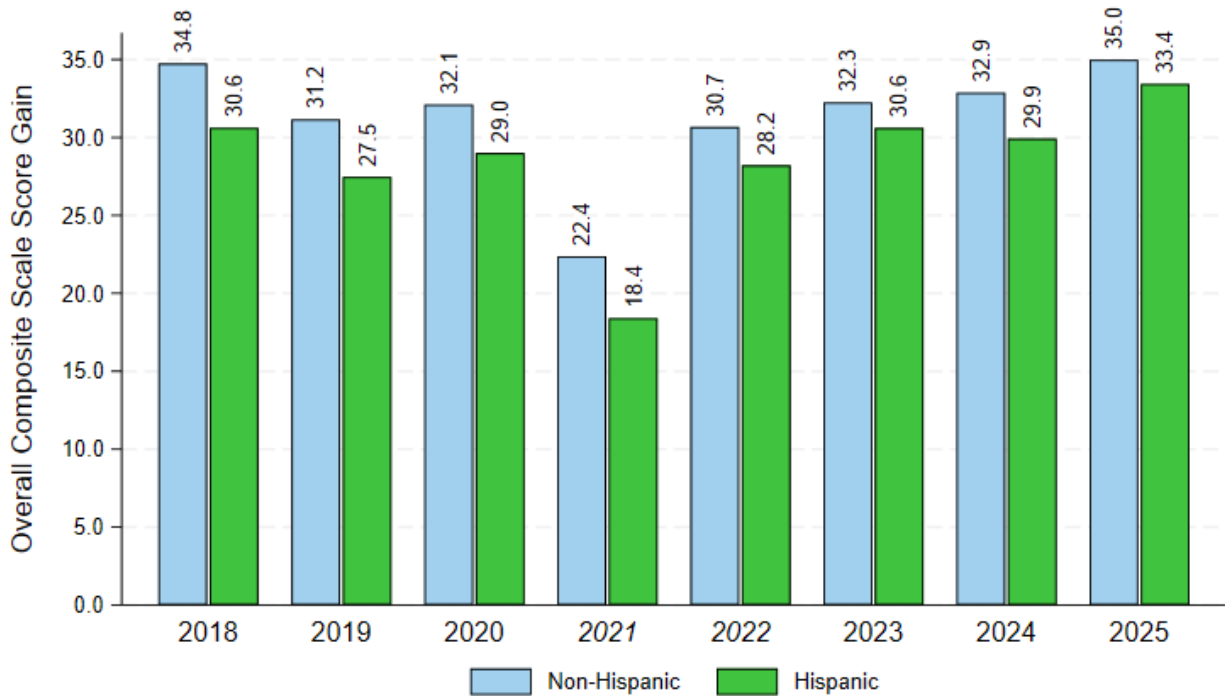


Table 12b: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 2–3). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	29.1	25.8	29.2	21.9	26.0	30.7	31.1	30.9
Hispanic	26.0	22.8	26.8	18.6	24.6	30.1	28.7	29.5
Difference	3.1	3.0	2.4	3.2	1.4	0.6	2.3	1.4

Figure 12c shows that annual growth for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic ELs in late elementary school (grades 4–5) dropped dramatically in 2021. Annual growth since 2023, however, has been higher than the pre-pandemic averages for both subgroups—both Hispanic and non-Hispanic ELs in 2025, on average, demonstrated the largest growth for this grade-level cluster in ACCESS Online history. Hispanic growth, however, has been lower than non-Hispanic growth in all presented growth cycles for this grade-level cluster.

Figure 12c: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 4–5). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025



n = 559,658 Non-Hispanic observations; 1,477,282 Hispanic observations

Table 12c: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 4–5). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	34.8	31.2	32.1	22.4	30.7	32.3	32.9	35.0
Hispanic	30.6	27.5	29.0	18.4	28.2	30.6	29.9	33.4
Difference	4.1	3.7	3.1	4.0	2.5	1.6	2.9	1.6

Figure 12d shows that the average annual overall composite scale score growth of ELs in middle school (grades 6–8) was declining for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in the academic years leading up to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Annual growth in the first year of the pandemic was almost zero for Hispanic students. Since then, however, annual growth has gradually rebounded for both subgroups, and average growth in 2025 was higher than in any prior ACCESS Online growth cycle for middle schoolers, regardless of Hispanic status. Average annual growth for Hispanic ELs remains lower than non-Hispanic growth in grades 6–8, however.

Figure 12d: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 6–8). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

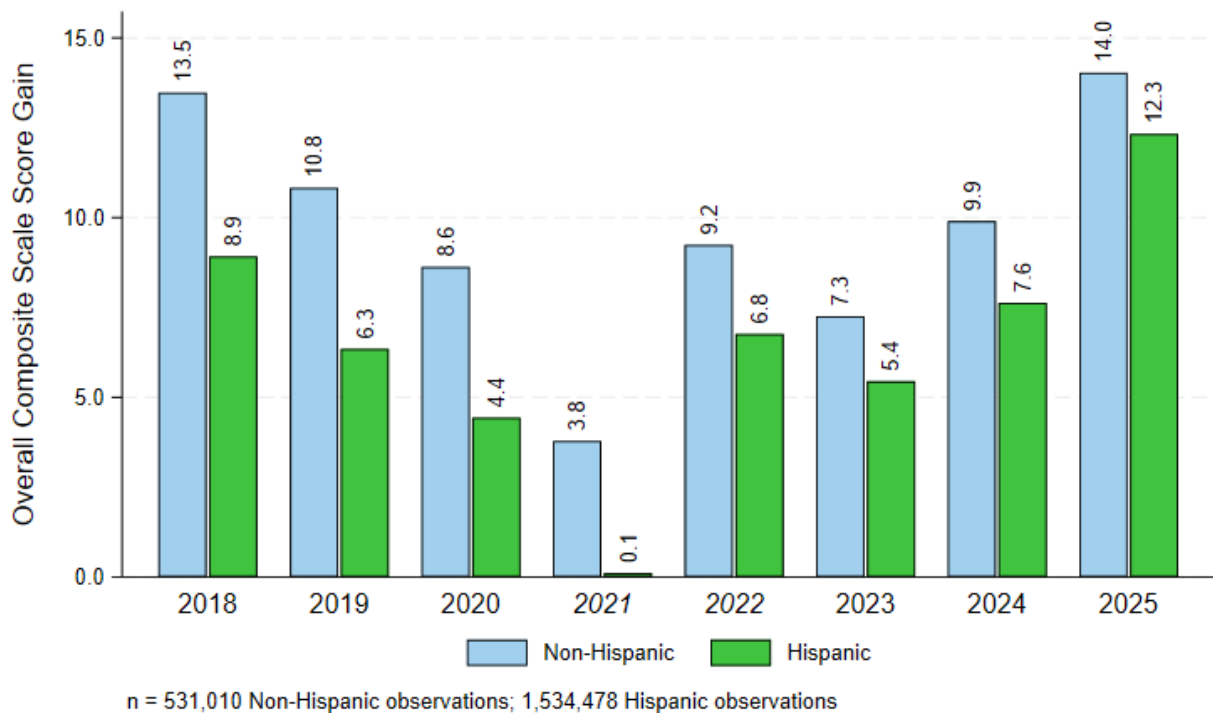


Table 12d: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 6–8). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	13.5	10.8	8.6	3.8	9.2	7.3	9.9	14.0
Hispanic	8.9	6.3	4.4	0.1	6.8	5.4	7.6	12.3
Difference	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.7	2.5	1.8	2.3	1.7

Figure 12e shows trends in average annual overall composite scale score growth for ELs in high school (grades 9–12) over the last eight growth cycles, disaggregated by Hispanic status. Growth was declining for both subgroups, even prior to the pandemic, but reached relative lows in 2021 through 2023. Throughout the growth cycles affected by the pandemic, the difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic annual growth narrowed, to the point where growth for both subgroups was approximately equivalent in 2023 and nearly so in 2024. Growth for both subgroups increased in 2024, but 2024 and 2025 growth rates remain lower than 2018 and 2019 averages, and Hispanic growth in 2025 was lower than in 2024, while growth for non-Hispanic high schoolers was higher in 2025 than 2024, creating a larger gap than in the past few years.

Figure 12e: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 9–12). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

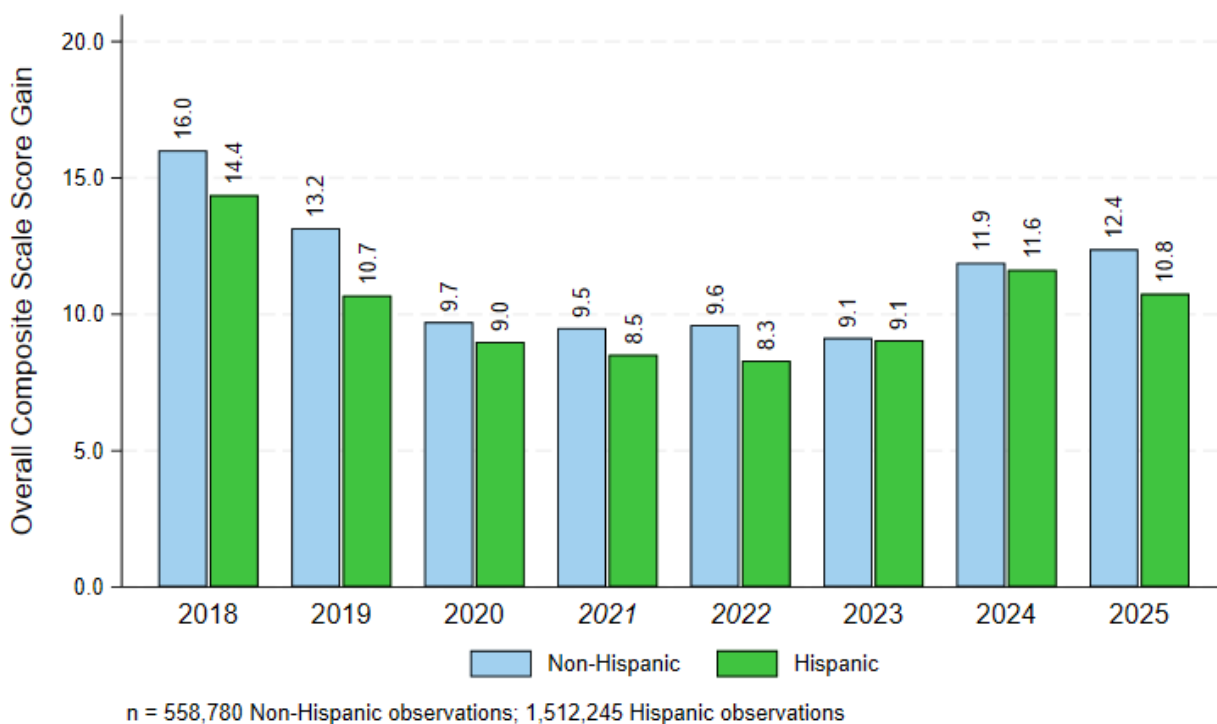


Table 12e: Annual Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 9–12). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Subgroup	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-Hispanic	16.0	13.2	9.7	9.5	9.6	9.1	11.9	12.4
Hispanic	14.4	10.7	9.0	8.5	8.3	9.1	11.6	10.8
Difference	1.6	2.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	0.1	0.3	1.6

Summary of Disparities in Annual Overall Composite Growth

Figure 13 graphs the average differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic ELs' average annual overall composite scale score growth, disaggregated by grade-level cluster. The figure shows how trends in the difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic annual growth are most different for ELs in grade 1, while the trends for older grade-level clusters are more similar to each other. Differences by Hispanic status have decreased overall since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, except for an uptick in 2025 for ELs in high school (grades 9–12). Recent increases in average annual growth for younger ELs has been driven primarily by gains for Hispanic students. In other grade-level clusters, gaps have narrowed—but gains for Hispanic students continue to lag behind annual growth for non-Hispanic ELs.

Figure 13: Annual Overall Composite Growth Disparities by Hispanic Status. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

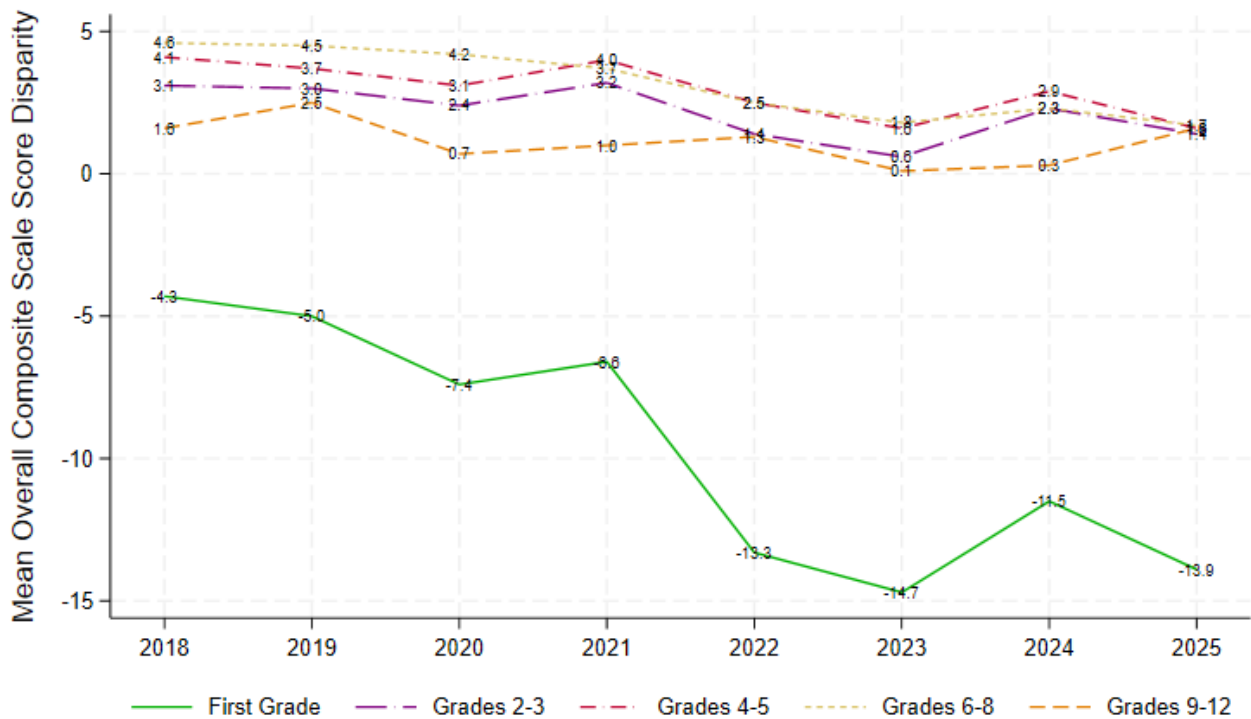


Table 13: Annual Overall Composite Growth Disparities by Hispanic Status. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

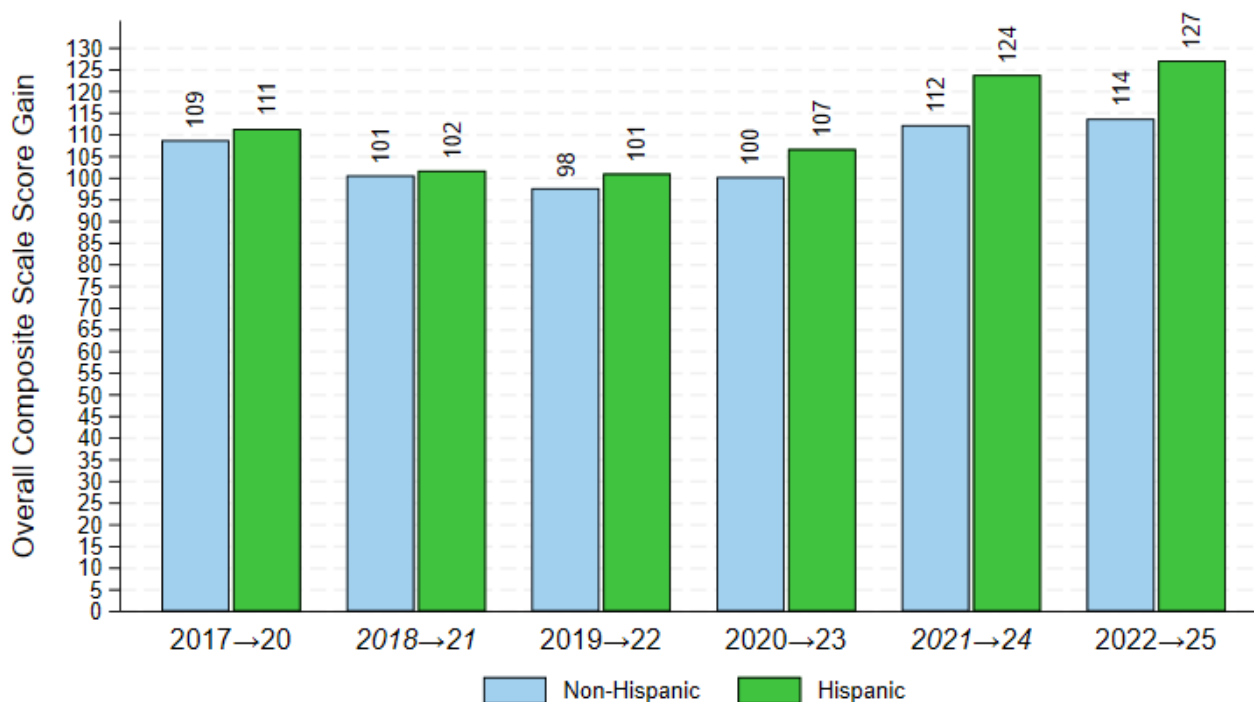
Cluster	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grade 1	-4.3	-5.0	-7.4	-6.6	-13.3	-14.7	-11.5	-13.9
Early Elem. (2–3)	3.1	3.0	2.4	3.2	1.4	0.6	2.3	1.4
Late Elem. (4–5)	4.1	3.7	3.1	4.0	2.5	1.6	2.9	1.6
Middle School (6–8)	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.7	2.5	1.8	2.3	1.7
High School (9–12)	1.6	2.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	0.1	0.3	1.6
Average	2.7	3.0	2.5	3.3	1.5	1.0	2.1	1.2

Disparities in Three-Year English Learner Growth

In addition to presenting trends in the differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic ELs' annual growth, we also leverage the longer timeline of ACCESS Online data now available to present differences in ELs' growth in 3 years of instruction, again disaggregated by Hispanic status. Whereas the figures showing differences in annual growth (Figures 12a–12d) represent average individual-level gains from one year to the next, here we examine aggregate gains over six cycles, each spanning four academic years (cf. Figures 8–9).¹³

Figure 14a presents trends in 3-year growth disaggregated by Hispanic status for students transitioning from kindergarten to grade 3.¹⁴ After growth declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, 3-year growth in the two most recent cycles exceeded pre-pandemic levels for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. Echoing the findings for differences by Hispanic status in annual growth among early learners, 3-year growth has increased more for Hispanic ELs relative to their non-Hispanic peers.

Figure 14a: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 2–3). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025



n = 201,351 Non-Hispanic observations; 520,690 Hispanic observations

¹³ As in previous figures, bars representing averages calculated using scores from 2021 are noted in the legend with italics to emphasize that those averages were not representative of the full population due to a higher proportion of missing test scores.

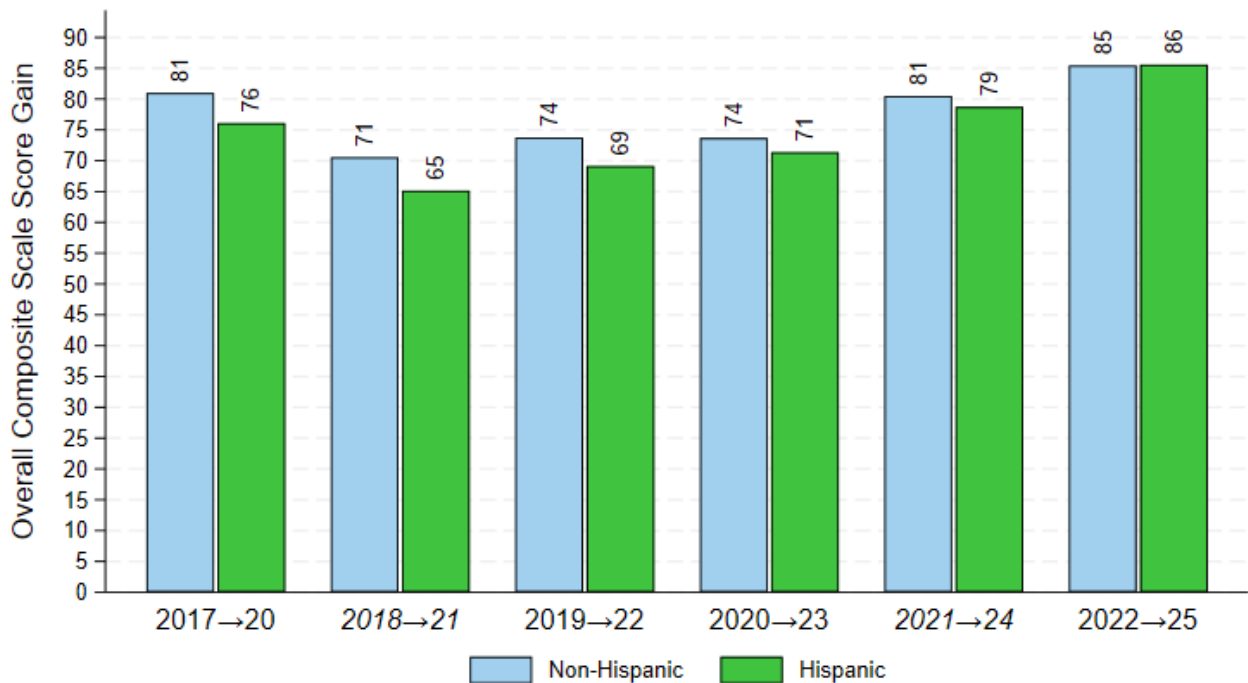
¹⁴ Because growth estimates are calculated based on academic years rather than grade levels, initial grades are illustrative and not necessarily accurate for all students (cf. Footnote 9). For the early elementary grade-level cluster (growth ending in grade 3), roughly 95% of non-Hispanic students and 92% of Hispanic students entered kindergarten in 2017.

Table 14a: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 2-3). ACCESS Online, 2017-2025

Subgroup	2017→20	2018→21	2019→22	2020→23	2021→24	2022→25
Non-Hispanic	109	101	98	100	112	114
Hispanic	111	102	101	107	124	127
Difference	-2.6	-1.1	-3.4	-6.5	-11.6	-12.4

Figure 14b presents trends in 3-year growth disaggregated by Hispanic status for students transitioning from early elementary (grades 1-2) to late elementary (grades 4-5). The chart shows that growth slowed for both subgroups during cycles affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the cycle ending in 2021 showing the lowest overall 3-year growth for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic ELs. Since then, growth rates have trended upward for both subgroups. Although 3-year growth for Hispanic students lagged somewhat behind non-Hispanic students' growth prior to the pandemic, Hispanic ELs' growth for the cycle ending in 2025 was higher than non-Hispanic ELs' growth for the first time in the history of ACCESS Online data.

Figure 14b: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 4-5). ACCESS Online, 2017-2025



n = 329,147 Non-Hispanic observations; 940,061 Hispanic observations

Table 14b: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 4-5). ACCESS Online, 2017-2025

Subgroup	2017→20	2018→21	2019→22	2020→23	2021→24	2022→25
Non-Hispanic	81	71	74	74	81	85
Hispanic	76	65	69	71	79	86
Difference	4.9	5.4	4.6	2.3	1.8	-0.1

Figure 14c presents trends in 3-year growth disaggregated by Hispanic status for students transitioning from elementary school (grades 3–5) to middle school (grades 6–8). Three-year growth for this group was lowest overall in the growth cycle ending in 2023 (i.e., the cycle almost entirely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic). Average growth in the most recent cycle exceeded pre-pandemic levels—but only because of increases in Hispanic growth, which was higher for the cycle ending in 2025 than any previous cycle. The growth for non-Hispanic ELs in this cycle was lower than pre-pandemic averages but higher than any other growth cycle since the one ending in 2020. Differences by Hispanic status have been trending downward since 2020; the 3-year growth disparity in 2025 was smaller than in any prior growth cycle presented.

Figure 14c: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 6–8). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

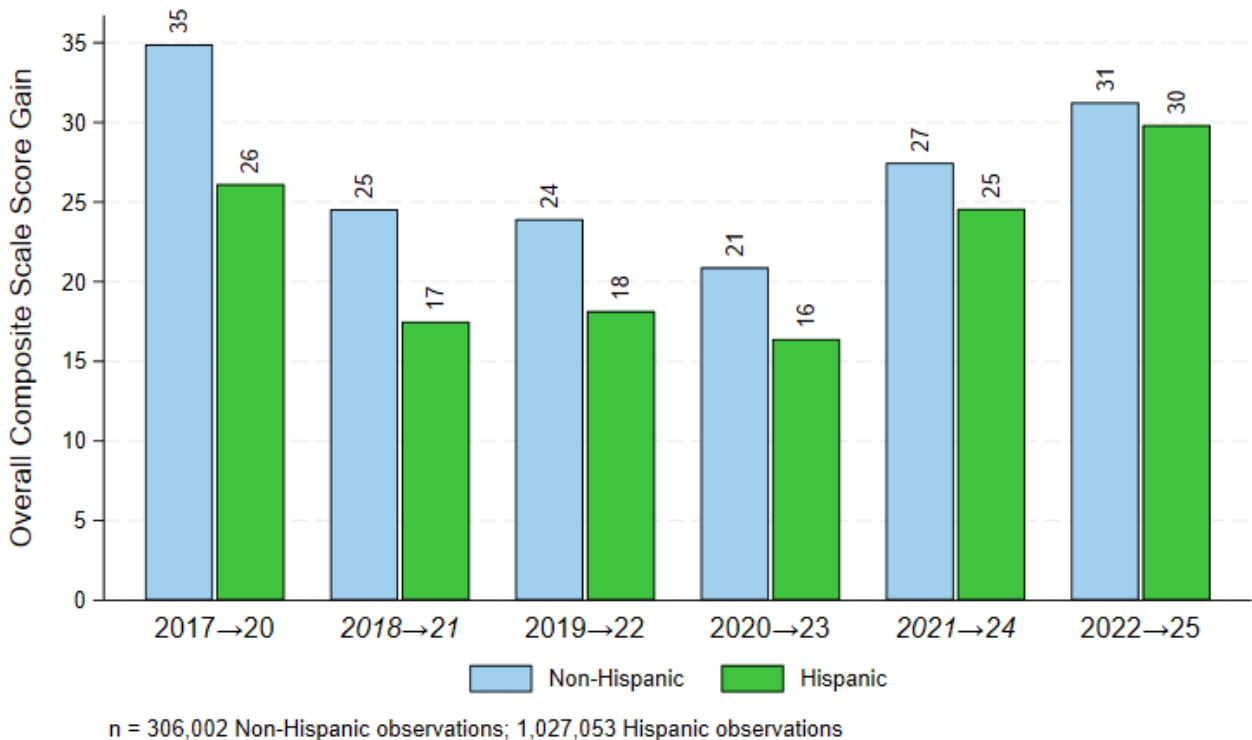


Table 14c: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 6–8). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Subgroup	2017→20	2018→21	2019→22	2020→23	2021→24	2022→25
Non-Hispanic	35	25	23	21	27	31
Hispanic	26	17	18	16	25	30
Difference	8.8	7.1	5.8	4.5	2.9	1.4

Figure 14d presents trends in 3-year growth disaggregated by Hispanic status for students transitioning from middle school (grades 6–9) to high school (grades 9–12). Three-year growth was lowest overall for the middle school to high school transition during the growth cycle ending in 2023 (i.e., the cycle most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic). Average growth in the two cycles since has nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels due to recovery in the 3-year growth of Hispanic students, but non-Hispanic growth still lags behind pre-pandemic averages. Differences by Hispanic status have been trending downward since 2020; as in other grade-level clusters, the 3-year growth disparity for high school students was smaller in 2025 than in any prior growth cycle in the history of ACCESS Online.

Figure 14d: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 9–12). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

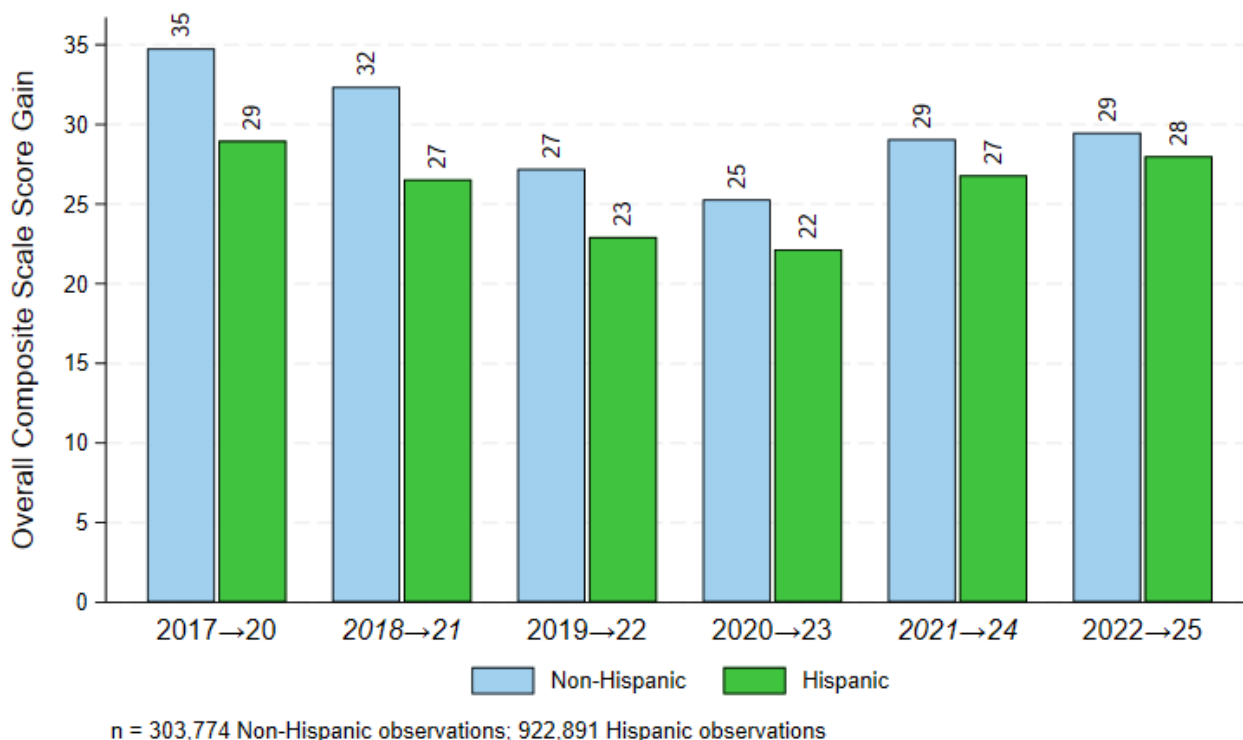


Table 14d: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth by Hispanic Status (Gr. 9–12). ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Subgroup	2017→20	2018→21	2019→22	2020→23	2021→24	2022→25
Non-Hispanic	35	32	27	25	29	29
Hispanic	29	27	23	22	27	28
Difference	5.8	5.8	4.3	3.1	2.3	1.5

Summary of Disparities in Three-Year Overall Composite Growth

Figure 15 graphs average differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic ELs' 3-year overall composite scale score growth, disaggregated by grade-level cluster. The figure shows how trends in annual growth by Hispanic status have been consistent over the last 8 years as disparities have steadily declined for most grade-level clusters since 2020. Trends are different, however, for ELs transitioning from kindergarten to grade 3, indicated by the long-dash line lowest in Figure 15, showing that Hispanic ELs were demonstrating higher 3-year growth relative to non-Hispanic peers, even prior to the pandemic. In 2025, that difference reached a new peak as Hispanic students grew over 13 scale score points more than non-Hispanic students over 3 years. In other grade-level clusters, while non-Hispanic ELs continue to demonstrate greater 3-year growth, the disparity in growth rates is lower than it has ever been in the history of the ACCESS Online assessment.

Figure 15: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth Disparities by Hispanic Status. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

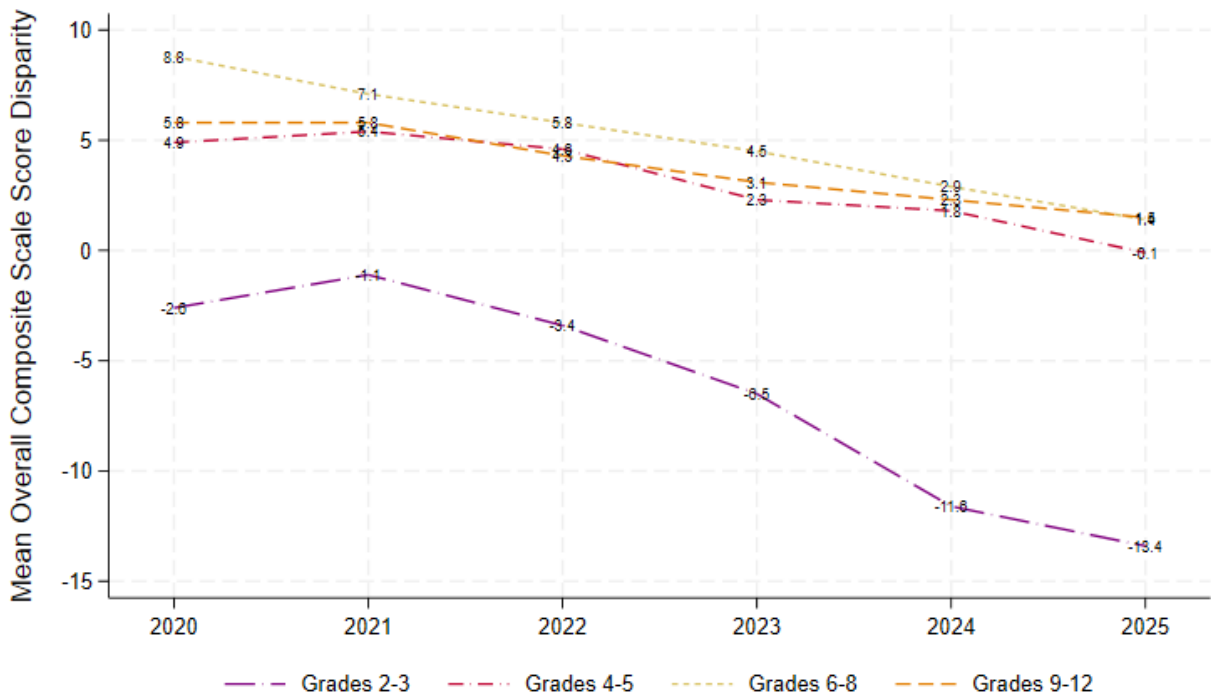


Table 15: 3-Year Overall Composite Growth Disparities by Hispanic Status. ACCESS Online, 2017–2025

Cluster Transition	2017→20	2018→21	2019→22	2020→23	2021→24	2022→25
Kindergarten to Early Elem. (2–3)	-2.6	-1.1	-3.4	-6.5	-11.6	-13.4
Early (2–3) to Late Elem. (4–5)	4.9	5.4	4.6	2.3	1.8	-0.1
Late Elem. (4–5) to Middle (6–8)	8.8	7.1	5.8	4.5	2.9	1.4
Middle (6–8) to High School (9–12)	5.8	5.8	4.3	3.1	2.3	1.5
Average	5.8	7.3	6.0	5.0	3.7	2.0

Conclusion

In this report we examine the outcomes of English learners across the WIDA Consortium based on their scores in the WIDA ACCESS Online standardized assessment across the period spanning academic school years 2017–2018 through 2024–2025. Recognizing the limitations of aggregating test scores from the full population of ELs across a wide variety of contexts, several important findings emerge:

- The **population of English learners** taking WIDA ACCESS Online has increased steadily from 1.4 million students in 2017 to more than 2 million in 2025. Population increases have been relatively larger in higher grades, suggesting that the composition of the EL population may be aging over time.
- Meanwhile, **overall composite proficiency** declined steadily since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This downward trend continued until 2024 for all grade-level clusters. However, in the most recent academic year (2024–2025)—for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic—overall English language proficiency for ELs across the WIDA Consortium was higher than in the previous year, declining only for the youngest ELs. Overall composite proficiency remained substantially lower than it was before the pandemic, however, with the largest relative declines in earlier grade levels.
- Scores reported in **individual language domains** largely corroborate general trends in overall composite proficiency. Scores in 2024 and 2025 showed continued decreases in ELs’ receptive skills, with small declines reported across all grade-level clusters in both Reading and Listening. By contrast, aside from a slight decline in first-grade Speaking, average Speaking and Writing scores were higher in 2025 than in 2024 across all clusters. Although consortium-average Writing scores remained below pre-pandemic levels, 2025 Speaking scores moved closer to pre-pandemic averages in most grade spans. Taken together, these patterns suggest that while the immediate post-pandemic period was associated with broad declines in average proficiency across domains and clusters, the most recent ACCESS Online administrations show modest recovery in students’ average domain performance.
- Examination of **annual growth** reported by ELs also revealed sustained positive trends for the most recent scores: annual gains in 2025 were higher than in 2024 for most domains and clusters, while students’ productive skills (i.e., Speaking and Writing) in particular demonstrated growth exceeding pre-pandemic levels across all clusters. ELs’ growth in Reading exhibited positive trends for younger ELs, while trends in Listening scores suggest that growth in 2025 met or exceeded pre-pandemic averages for most tested ELs.
- Further inquiry into long-term, **3-year growth** (i.e., scale score gains across four school years) showed that long-term growth fell for several cycles after the start of COVID-19 pandemic. The largest declines were reported in the 2019–2022 and 2020–2023 cycles, when students gained substantially fewer composite scale score points over 4 years than ELs in the previous pre-pandemic cycle. Among growth cycles not based on 2021 scores (which were impacted by school closures), 3-year growth was lowest for elementary students in 2019–2022, while middle and high school students posted their lowest growth in 2020–2023. Despite these reported declines, recent results point to signs of modest recovery: in the most recent cycle, 2022–2025, students gained almost as much as their peers before the pandemic. Recovery in long-term growth was relatively stronger among younger ELs: growth from kindergarten to grade 3 was substantially higher in 2022–2025 than in 2017–2020.

Meanwhile, middle school ELs in the most recent cycle exceeded pre-pandemic growth levels, and high school ELs in the two most recent cycles came close to averages reported before the pandemic.

- Consistent with evidence presented in previous COVID-19 reports, examination of ELs' overall proficiency by ethnicity revealed substantial **disparities by Hispanic status**, with lower average scores reported in all grade-level clusters for Hispanic ELs. Further, differences in overall composite scale scores by Hispanic status were larger in 2024 and 2025 for most grade-level clusters.
- Trends in **disparities in annual and long-term growth**, on the other hand, reveal that differences in overall composite scale score gains between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students have decreased, on average, since an overall peak during the pandemic. Further, for the WIDA Consortium's youngest ELs, trends in long-term growth disparities by Hispanic status have reversed, with Hispanic students reporting higher growth compared to their non-Hispanic peers. However, these findings must be interpreted with caution as subgroup growth averages neglect important factors like differential initial proficiency levels, attrition rates (reclassification as well as mobility), and potential differences in state-level identification and reclassification policies.

While the overall trends for testing, proficiency, and growth presented in this report are based on the full population of EL students taking ACCESS Online in WIDA Consortium states, we reiterate that many additional factors at the individual, school, district, state, and federal level can impact English learners' test scores. The aggregated average trends and patterns documented within the WIDA Consortium point to several potential areas for policy innovation. We encourage state and local educational agencies to conduct similar and more nuanced analyses to identify students whose English language proficiency development was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as students who may continue to face higher barriers in developing English language proficiency, and how best to support all students' academic English language development within their local context.

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