

English Language Learners

2022 ADEQUACY STUDY

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2022 Adequacy Report



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Introduction

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires school districts to provide an equal educational opportunity to language minority students. Federal law provides that, "[n]o state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by ... the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs."¹

Arkansas provides districts with categorical funds to assist districts and open-enrollment public charter school systems in meeting these requirements for English language learner (ELL) students. In 2021, districts received \$352 per ELL student. ELL students are identified as those not proficient in the English language based upon a state-approved English proficiency assessment instrument.² These funds must be spent on eligible activities as identified in current rules and are a supplement to the funding for national school lunch students.

English language instruction for ELL students typically comes through English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Program requirements largely come from the federal level. In evaluating what a school district must provide to language minority students, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that an equal educational opportunity for these students does not mean simply providing the same instruction and materials other students receive.³ Instead, school districts must "take steps to help ELL students overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in the districts' educational programs."⁴ Further, the Supreme Court emphasized that "[w]here inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin-minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students."⁵

Additionally, the Civil Rights Act requires school districts to:

- Identify and assess all potential ELL students in a timely, valid and reliable manner;
- Provide an educationally sound and effective language assistance program;
- Provide staff who are sufficiently prepared to support districts' selected program;
- Avoid unnecessary segregation of ELL students;
- Monitor and assess ELL students to ensure their progress toward English-language proficiency; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of districts' selected language assistance program.⁶

This report examines literature regarding ELL students nationally, how ELL programming works in Arkansas, and state data on Arkansas ELL students including student achievement. Details about ELL accountability measures will be included in the Accountability Adequacy Report.

¹ 20 USC § 1703(f)

² A.C.A § 6-20-2305

³ *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563, 94 S. Ct. 786 (1974).

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Programs for English Language Learners. Retrieved from http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/Curriculum%20and%20Instruction/Frameworks/ELP%202015/OCR_ELL_Guide.pdf

⁵ *Nichols*, 414 U.S. at 568 (quoting the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare clarifying guidelines, 35 Fed. Reg. 11595 (1970)).

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), September 23, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiiienglishlearners92016.pdf> (citing 42 U.S.C. § 2000d).

Literature Review

Most schools in the United States use variations of one or all of the following to provide instruction for students learning English as a second language.⁷

- **Pull-out/push-in tutoring:** ELL students attend core academic classes in English while also being provided separate instructional support in the language by an ELL specialist during the class or in a separate session outside of the class. This is most often used for ELL students with at least some proficiency in the language.
- **Sheltered English instruction:** This is a stand-alone classroom, typically for ELL students with low English proficiency. The teacher may focus much of the day on direct language instruction as well as academic content. Students are often grouped by their English proficiency so that lessons can be tailored for different levels. Most of these programs are designed to be short (as little as a single year).
- **Bilingual instruction:** Students receive ongoing language and subject matter instruction in both their native language and English. These programs may serve ELL students only in a multiyear “developmental” or short-term “transitional” program. This is different from dual-language immersion programs that include both native and non-native speakers. This type of program often begins with most of the content taught in the target, or non-English language. Gradually, the time spent teaching in both languages is evenly split, with the goal of having all students exit the program proficient in both languages. This is most commonly used with programs that have a high percentage of ELL students in a single native language.

According to EdWeek, an independent news organization, “there is relatively little rigorous research on the general effectiveness for each method, and evidence is particularly scarce on the most effective methods for specific ELL populations.”⁸ Research does show that “students who become fully fluent in multiple languages generally perform better academically than either fluent monolingual students or students who are not fully proficient in more than one language. However, researchers are still not sure how much of an advantage there is or what accounts for it.”⁹

The Institute of Education Sciences identified evidence that the following teaching practices are effective in teaching academic content to ELL students:¹⁰

- Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively, over several days and a variety of activities.
- Integrate instruction in spoken and written English into content-area teaching, such as using science laboratory reports to teach writing in English.
- Provide ongoing, structured chances to develop writing skills.
- Provide small-group interventions for students struggling with specific problems in literacy or language development.

Using the same methodology to determine the top performing states on the National Assessment for Educational Progress, the top 10 states were identified for the performance of ELL

⁷ Sparks, Sarah D. (May 2016). “Teaching English-Language Learners: What Does the Research Tell Us?” <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/teaching-english-language-learners-what-does-the-research-tell-us/2016/05>

⁸ “Teaching English-Language Learners: What Does the Research Tell Us?”

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

students, shown in the next table alongside information about their respective instruction programs¹¹, and the percentage of ELL students in that state.

State	ELL Program Approach	Certification Requirements for ELL Instructors	Pct. of ELL students
Indiana	Bilingual-Bicultural Program (Bilingual Education).	No endorsement or certificate requirements, but there are standards for ESOL teachers in grades P-12.	5.4%
South Carolina	Governed by the department of education's EL guidebook or federal law rather than state policy.	No endorsement or certificate requirements, but there are pre-service training requirements for bilingual program teachers.	6.1%
Kansas	Bilingual education (Bilingual Education).	Respective endorsement in bilingual instruction, ESL instruction, or Structured English Immersion instruction is required.	10.3%
Texas	Bilingual education, instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL), or other transitional language instruction approved by the state department of education. ¹²	ESL and ESOL endorsement is available, but not required.	18.0%
Arkansas	Governed by the department of education's EL guidebook or federal law rather than state policy.	The commission on teacher credentialing issues authorizations for teachers providing services to ELL students. ¹³	8.3%
Michigan	Bilingual Instruction.	No endorsement or certification requirements. ¹⁴	6.6%
Wisconsin	Bilingual-Bicultural Education Program.	ESOL or Bilingual Education certification is required. ¹⁵	6.2%
Ohio	Governed by the department of education's EL guidebook or federal law rather than state policy.	EL or Bilingual Education certification is required.	3.2%
Massachusetts	Sheltered English Immersion or an alternative instructional program that meets the requirements of federal and state law. ¹⁶	Not specified in statute or regulation.	10.0%
Florida	ESOL instruction in English and or in home language instruction in the basic subject areas.	ESOL endorsement or certification is available, but it is unclear if it is required.	10.1%

¹¹ Education Commission of the States (ECS). Retrieved from: <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/50-state-comparison-english-learner-policies-02>

¹² This state approval is provided in post-elementary grades through grade 8. Instruction in English as a Second Language in grades 9 through 12.

¹³ This includes authorizations for teachers providing specially designed content instruction delivered in English, content instruction delivered primarily in the primary language, and instruction for English language development.

¹⁴ A culturally and linguistically diverse bilingual education specialist endorsement is available for grades K-12.

¹⁵ If a local or regional board of education is not able to hire a sufficient number of certified bilingual education teachers, the board of education may apply to the Commissioner of Education for permission to use an ESOL-certified teacher instead.

¹⁶ This includes transitional bilingual education and dual language education.

English Language Learner Students

STUDENT COUNT

In 2021, Arkansas public schools enrolled 39,155 ELL students, or 8% of the total student population. ELL students made up 8% of the total student population in districts and 7% in open-enrollment public charter schools. Approximately 18% of ELL students were also in special education.

2021	Total Student Population (All Students)	Number of ELL Students	Percentage of Total Student Population
Districts	449,486	37,489	8.3%
Charters	23,082	1,666	7.2%
Total	472,568	39,155	8.3%

Data Source: 2021 State Aid Notice and Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Oct. 1 Enrollment

The following table shows the number of ELL students from 2017 to 2021 in relation to the total student population for districts and charters. Since 2017, the number of ELL students decreased by nearly seven percentage points and the number of all students decreased by nearly one percentage point. The number of ELL students in districts decreased by nearly 10 percentage points whereas the number in charter schools increased by 246 percentage points

	Statewide		Districts		Charters	
	Total ELL Students	Total Student Enrollment	Total ELL Students	Total Student Enrollment	Total ELL Students	Total Student Enrollment
2017	41,932	476,772	41,451	462,881	481	13,891
2018	39,599	478,789	38,802	463,199	797	15,590
2019	38,564	477,841	37,423	459,733	1,141	18,108
2020	39,301	478,994	37,881	459,042	1,420	19,952
2021	39,155	472,568	37,459	449,486	1,666	23,082
Total Percentage Increase or Decrease	-6.6%	-0.9%	-9.6%	-2.9%	246%	66.2%

The following table shows the top four districts with the most ELL students and the highest percentages of ELL students.

School District	Number of ELL Students	Percentage of Each District's Total Student Population	Percentage of State ELL Student Population
Districts with the Most ELL Students			
Springdale School District	7,607	35%	19%
Rogers School District	5,064	33%	13%
Fort Smith School District	3,001	22%	8%
Little Rock School District	2,839	14%	7%
Districts with Largest Percentage of ELL Students			
Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock	344	66%	1%
DeQueen School District	878	38%	2%
Green Forest School District	480	35%	1%
Springdale School District	7,607	35%	19%

The following table shows the number of districts and charters by the number of ELL students they enrolled.

Number of ELL Students	Number of Districts	Number of Charters	Total
1,001 or more	4	0	4
501 – 1,000	13	1	14
101 – 500	29	3	32
1 - 100	165	14	179
0	24	5	29
Total	235	23	258

Data Source: Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN)

PRIMARY LANGUAGES

In 2021, English language learners collectively spoke a total of 110 languages as their primary language. The home language of 83% of these students was Spanish. The following table shows the top five language spoken by ELL students in Arkansas in 2021.

Top 5 Languages Spoken in 2021		
Language	Student Count	Percentage of English Language Learners
Spanish	31,944	82.7%
Marshallese	3,137	8.1%
Vietnamese	430	1.1%
Arabic	353	0.9%
Laotian	224	0.6%

Data Source: APSCN

Funding and Spending

ELL funding is provided to districts based on the number of students identified as not proficient in the English language as determined by a state-approved English proficiency assessment instrument, the ELPA21. Districts received \$352 per ELL student in 2021 for the purpose of educating these students.¹⁷

2021 / 2022/2023 Per ELL Student Amount	2021 Total Amount
\$352 / \$359 / \$366	\$13,782,560

* Odden, Allan, & Picus, Lawrence O. (2019). *School finance: A policy perspective*, 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill

In 2021, schools in Arkansas spent about \$22 million on ELL students, almost \$9 million more than they received in ELL funding (including transfers into the ELL fund).

	2021 Per ELL Student Amt.
Categorical Funding	\$352
Categorical Expenditures	\$400
Total ELL Expenditures	\$570

When looking at all money spent to provide ELL services, districts relied on multiple sources of funds in addition to the state categorical funds. The other main sources of ELL funding came from foundation and federal funds. Federal funds primarily consisted of Title III, federal funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. The other main source of federal funds came from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funding.

¹⁷ A.C.A. § 6-20-2305

The majority of English Language Learner spending goes towards English as a Second Language programs followed by instructional support services. Districts spent about \$100 more per ELL student than charter schools did. Spending restrictions are found in DESE rules.¹⁸ Restrictions include salaries for ELL-skilled instructional services, relevant trainings for teachers and other providers, program development, instructional materials and services, and assessment and evaluation activities. Nearly 97% of these categorical funds were spent on salaries and benefits.

Of 2021 salaries and benefits expenditures, 77% were spent on certified salaries and the remaining 23% were spent on classified salaries. Of the certified salaries, 82% went to teachers grades 1-12, and of the classified salaries, 70% went to instructional aides.

Program Overview

ENTERING THE PROGRAM

Under federal law, school districts are required to identify and assess students who may be limited English proficient.¹⁹ To identify ELLs, school districts first administer a home language usage survey when a new student registers with the district at any grade. The survey²⁰ that the state requires districts to use asks questions such as:

- What language(s) are spoken in your home?
- What language did your child learn first?
- What language does your child speak most often at home?
- What language does your family speak most often at home?
- What language do adults speak most often with each other at home?

Once the home language usage surveys have been submitted, a district's English for Speakers of Other Languages coordinator will review the responses to identify students who speak a language other than English at home. An additional home language usage survey verification form may be needed to provide additional clarification. Students who are identified as a language minority student then take a placement test, known as a proficiency screener, to determine if they are not fully fluent in English. Language proficiency assessments measure listening, speaking, reading, and writing proficiency. Arkansas uses the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) as the language proficiency screener. The ELPA21 summative assessment is different from the ELPA21 screener used to determine initial ELL placement.

Placement in the ELL program is made at the district level. Placement decisions are made by the site-based Language Proficiency and Assessment Committee that consists of a minimum of three educators from three categories:²¹

- Building administrator
- English for Speakers of Other Languages Designee
- Certified educator familiar with the student's data and performance in the classroom.

¹⁸ DESE Education Rules Governing Student Special Needs Funding (July 2020). Retrieved from:

https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201102120657_dese_268_StudentSpecialNeedsFunding2020RV.pdf

¹⁹ U.S. Dept. of Justice and U.S. Dept. of Education. (2015). "Ensuring English Learner Students Can Participate Meaningfully and Equally in Educational Programs." Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-el-students-201501.pdf>

²⁰ Retrieved from: https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201221104621_Arkansas_HLUS_3.20_final_English1.pdf

²¹ DESE. "English Learner Entrance and Exit Procedures." (July 2020). Retrieved from:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C7O8axIjvHVtBtHI32RriA26UUkIDqCW/view>

The committee meets within the first 30 days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year or within two weeks of enrollment to “review assessment results and other available data and determine an initial placement along with any recommended classroom and assessment accommodations...LEAs are expected to offer appropriate English Language Development services and meaningful access to content area instruction to English Learners.”²² The committee uses evidence from the home language usage survey(s), ELPA21 screener, professional judgement rubric, and other factors (e.g. previous placement in ELL program at another school) to make the determination.

“Parents/guardians must be notified of their child’s identification as an English Learner or Former English Learner within the first 30 days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year or within two weeks of enrollment thereafter.”²³ Notification must be provided in a language that the parent/guardian can understand. Parents/guardians are also informed of how to waive these services. English Learner services can be waived at any time and parents/guardians can request their child return to services at any time. “English Learners whose parents/guardians have waived services must continue to participate in the annual English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) summative assessment until the student meets the exit criteria.”²⁴

The number of students entering the ELL program each year decreased from 6,102 in 2017 to 5,282 in 2021. The number of students for whom ELL services were waived increased from 281 in 2017 to 467 in 2021.

	2017	2021
Number of Entering ELL Students	6,102	5,282
Number of Students For Whom Waived ELL Services	281	467

Data Source: APSCN.

Note: The Arkansas School for the Blind, School for the Deaf, and Division of Youth Services are not included.

PROGRAM TYPES

Neither state nor federal law specifies particular English as a Second Language curriculum or programs districts must use, but federal law does require districts to follow three principles when designing programs:

1. The educational approach selected must be “based on a sound educational theory.”
2. Districts must provide adequate staffing and resources to support the selected program.
3. The district must periodically evaluate and revise its program.²⁵

Districts often use a combination of instructional methods to serve their ELL population at varying levels of English proficiency. There are two groups of programs: English language development programs and core content program models. These are described in the table(s) shown on the next page.

The primary source of English language development instruction is embedded in core classes (49%). In this type of instruction, ELL students receive their language development instruction during a mainstream content class by teachers embedding subject matter instruction into language development instruction. The second most common method was pull-out (24%). This involves ELL students spending part of the day in a mainstream classroom and pulled out for a portion to receive language development instruction.

²² DESE. “English Learner Entrance and Exit Procedures.” (July 2020).

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Programs for English Language Learners, https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201221103738_OCR_ELL_Guide.pdf

Primary Type of English Language Development (ELD) Program		
Instruction Type	Program Description	Percentage of English Learner Instruction
ELD Push-In	ELL teachers or ELL instructional assistants assist the classroom teacher in providing ELD to ELL students in the classroom. This includes helping ELL students with comprehension, participation, and completion of classroom assignments. Instructional assistants need to be under direct supervision of a certified teacher.	7.9%
ELD Pull-Out	ELL students spend part of the day in a mainstream classroom, and are “pulled out” for a portion of the day to receive ELD instruction. Instruction is provided by ELL teachers or ELL instructional assistants working under the direct supervision of a certified teacher. The program targets specific English skills that are preventing students from fully participating in the mainstream classroom. ELL students of similar proficiency and/or similar grade level are grouped for instruction. This approach is more common in elementary school settings.	24.0%
ELD Class Period	ELL students receive their ELD instruction during a regular class period and also receive course credit for the class. This approach is more common in middle schools and high schools.	17.3%
ELD Embedded in Core	ELL students receive their ELD instruction during a mainstream content class by teachers embedding instruction in English language development.	48.5%
Newcomer Program	Separate, relatively self-contained educational interventions designed to meet the academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrants. Typically, students attend these programs on a short-term basis (usually no more than two years) before they enter more traditional programs (e.g., ELD and/or sheltered instruction courses or programs). ELL students receive their ELD in this program.	0.8%
Declined ELD Services	Students whose parents declined the ELD program services.	1.5%
Total Number of Students		38,651

Sources: DESE²⁶ and APSCN.

²⁶ ADE. (2020). “Language Instruction Education (LIEP) Codes. Retrieved from: [https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/Language_Instruction_Education_Program_data_codes_for_2019-20_edited_182427_\(1\)_140916.pdf](https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/Language_Instruction_Education_Program_data_codes_for_2019-20_edited_182427_(1)_140916.pdf)

The following table shows the type of instruction methods for ELL students to access core content. The most common method for providing core instruction to ELL students is to provide integrated support in content classes (86%). Teachers provide appropriate linguistic accommodations/ supports so that the ELL student may access the content.

English Language Development (ELD)– Core Content Access		
Instruction Type	Description	Percentage of English Learner Instruction
Sheltered Instruction	Teacher provides instruction that simultaneously introduces both language and content, using specialized techniques to accommodate ELL students’ linguistic needs. Instruction focuses on the teaching of academic content rather than the English language itself, even though the acquisition of English may be one of the instructional goals. Classes using a sheltered instruction approach can be designed exclusively for ELL students or for a mixture of ELL students and non-ELL students.	12.0%
Content Classes with Integrated Support	Teachers provide appropriate linguistic accommodations/ supports so that ELL students may access the content.	86.1%
Newcomer Program	Separate, relatively self-contained instructional program designed to meet the academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrants. Typically, students attend these programs on a short-term basis (usually no more than two years) before they enter more traditional programs (e.g., English language development and/or sheltered instruction courses or programs). ELL students receive their core content instruction in this program. These programs enroll ELL students exclusively.	0.5%
Declined Access to Core Content Services	Students whose parents/guardians have declined the access to core content program services.	1.4%
Total Number of Students		38,634

Note: ELD Pull-out was included in this category but the number of students using this was less than 10 so it was excluded due to privacy concerns.
 Source: Sources: DESE²⁷ and APSCN.

None of the programs Arkansas schools used in 2021 and prior years are dual language or bilingual programs—those offered both in English and in another language. Act 663 of 2021 allows a public school district or open-enrollment public charter school to adopt a bilingual program or a dual-immersion program approved by DESE. This change goes into effect for the 2022 school year.

²⁷ ADE. (2020). “Language Instruction Education (LIEP) Codes.

STAFFING

DESE rules do not require specialized licensure for teachers teaching ESL. However, DESE does offer an ESL endorsement that can be added to the standard teaching license. The endorsement requires 12 hours of coursework and passage of the ESL Praxis. As of April 2022, 4,992 individuals have an ESL endorsement and of those, 3,577 are currently employed teachers. However, it is not clear how many of those are actually working in ESL. APSCN data shows 231 FTE ESL staff were employed in 2021. However, that number is likely lower than the actual number of people teaching ESL because of an inconsistency in how districts code ESL salaries (e.g. classified ESL staff vs. certified ESL teachers).

EXITING THE PROGRAM

The Language Proficiency and Assessment Committee will annually review the progress of each identified English Learner’s progress in acquiring English. The review includes a committee analysis of ELPA 21 summative assessment scores and other available student performance data. To exit a student from English Learner status, the committee must verify three pieces of evidence that support this decision. This includes:

- Scoring at the proficient level on the ELPA21; and
- Demonstrating academic content proficiency using two pieces of supporting evidence.

Supporting evidence must align to the English language proficiency standards and Arkansas academic standards. It should “demonstrate success in Literacy through English Language Arts (ELA), science, social studies, and/or math as comparable to non-EL/native English speaking peers.”²⁸ Examples of this include but are not limited to:

- Scoring “ready” or “exceeding” on individual components of the ACT Aspire assessment;
- Scoring a 19 on the ACT or scoring within acceptable levels on a variety of other standardized assessment results used at the district level; or
- Writing portfolio with consistent rating as Ready/Exceeding or Proficient/Advanced.²⁹

The exit criteria were changed in 2019 due to a new requirement under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act calling for states to use standardized criteria for students to enter and exit ELL programs.³⁰

	Number of Exiting Students	Percentage of ELL Enrollment
2017	3,796	9.1%
2021	3,210	8.2%

Data Source: APSCN

Note: The Arkansas School for the Blind, School for the Deaf, and Division of Youth Services are not included.

MONITORING EXITED STUDENTS

Once students exit the ELL program, they must continue to be monitored and receive appropriate academic supports as needed for four years.³¹ “Students are eligible to be released from monitoring if they continue to demonstrate English language proficiency and academic growth/success/grade-level proficiency in reading, writing, and other content areas.”³² The language proficiency and assessment committee “will at least annually review Former English Learner performance and progress.”³³

²⁸ DESE. English Learner Entrance and Exit Procedures.

²⁹ ADE. Professional Judgement Rubric/Exit Criteria Guidance. (Spring 2018). Retrieved from: https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/Attachments/LS-18-093--Arkansas_Professional_Judgment_Rubric-Exit_Criteria_Guidance.pdf

³⁰ ESSA § 3113(b)(2)

³¹ ESSA § 3121(a)(5)

³² ADE. Professional Judgement Rubric/Exit Criteria Guidance. (2018).

³³ *Id.*

A district or school can also determine if a student who no longer demonstrates language and grade level proficiency needs to be transitioned back to an English language development program as an English Learner. If the committee “determines a Former English Learner has not been able to perform at a level comparable to English-only peers on at least two pieces of evidence [as described in the Exiting the Program section]...then the student would benefit from returning to English Learner services. The student should be returned to English Learner status [and] the parent/guardian is to be notified of the student’s reclassification and placement as an English Learner.”³⁴

Previous monitoring requirements included only a two year monitoring period. The move to using standardized criteria and the increase in students exiting from ELL services has resulted in districts and charter schools being required to monitor far more students than they have in the past. There is no funding specifically provided to school districts and charters for monitoring exited students.

Number of Former ELL Students Being Monitored	2017	2021
Students in Year 1 Monitoring	3,723	3,968
Students in Year 2 Monitoring	1,641	4,047
Students in Year 3 Monitoring	N/A	4,487
Students in Year 4 Monitoring	N/A	3,316
Total Students in ELL Monitoring	5,364	15,818

Student Achievement

Arkansas uses a variety of methods of measuring and monitoring ELL students’ success. This report provides information on three main types.

- 1. Progress toward English language proficiency – student growth:** Indicator of students’ progress in English language development by measuring an individual student’s performance on ELPA21, compared with student’s previous performance on ELPA21.
- 2. Student achievement on academic content:** Indicators of ELL students’ performance on academic content:
 - **Student achievement:** measures the percentage of students scoring ready or exceeding on the ACT Aspire (math and English language arts).
 - **National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP):** measures what students know and can do in reading, math, and other subjects. A sample of students across the country are assessed, allowing for comparisons of performance by state. NAEP scores are not used in Arkansas’s school accountability indicators.
- 3. Graduation rate:** Indicator of the ELL students’ high school completion; measures the percentage of ELL students who graduate high school within four years.

³⁴ ADE. (2018). Professional Judgement Rubric/Exit Criteria Guidance.

PROGRESS TOWARD ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

Schools are annually required to assess their ELL students to determine whether they have progressed to English language proficiency or need continued services.³⁵ The ELPA21 summative assessment is used to do this. It was developed by a consortium of states, including Arkansas. It assesses English language proficiency across four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The ELPA21 assigns each student a proficiency level based on his or her proficiency scores in each domain. While the ELPA21 does not assess prior academic knowledge, it does assess students’ proficiency in the grade-appropriate language of each academic subject. Because of that, the ELPA21 proficiency standards are aligned with Arkansas’s Academic Standards for English language arts, mathematics, and science.

Policy Definitions for the Proficiency Determination		Percentage of ELL Students
Emerging	Students are Emerging when they have not yet attained a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of Levels 1 and 2 in all four domains. Students scoring Emerging on the ELPA21 are eligible for ongoing program support.	10%
Progressing	Students are Progressing when, with support, they approach a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile with one or more domain scores above Level 2 that does not meet the requirements to be Proficient. Students scoring Progressing on ELPA21 are eligible for ongoing program support.	75%
Proficient	Students are Proficient when they attain a level of English language skill necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of Level 4 or higher in all domains. Once Proficient on ELPA21, students can be considered for reclassification/exiting.	15%
Total ELL Students Tested		38,254

Data Sources: DESE³⁶

For the English-language proficiency component of the School Index, **ADE calculates an individual growth score for each ELL student, using the student’s prior performance on the ELDA/ELPA21.** The student’s actual score is compared against the student’s expected score (based on prior assessment performance) to determine whether the student met, exceeded, or failed to meet his or her expected performance. DESE combines the English-learner progress indicator with each school’s academic growth indicator (as measured by math and English language arts scores of all students on the ACT Aspire) to create a single growth indicator in the total School Index calculation. The school-level growth score will be calculated with the English learner proficiency progress indicator weighted relative to each school’s ELL population.

For 2021, the statewide average ELP growth score among ELL students was 83.38, where a score of 80 is right on track with a student’s expected score based on his or her previous test scores. A score higher than 80 indicates a higher level of ELP growth than would be expected for that student, and a score less than 80 indicates a score lower than would be expected for that student.

³⁵ U.S. Dept. of Justice and U.S. Dept. of Education. (2015). “Dear Colleague Letter dated January 7, 2015.” Retrieved from: https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201221103913_colleague-el-201501.pdf

³⁶ DESE. “ELPA21.” <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/learning-services/assessment-test-scores/2021>

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONTENT ASSESSMENTS

In addition to assessing ELL students’ progress toward English language proficiency, ELL students’ success in mastering academic content is also monitored. At the state level, that is measured using the ACT Aspire; and at the national level, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) can be used.

ACT Aspire

The ACT Aspire is the assessment used for Arkansas students statewide in grades 3 to 10. It is a criterion-referenced test, meaning that students are scored based on how they answered the questions on the test only. Scores are not determined by ranking one student’s performance against all others, as is the case with norm-referenced exams. The ACT Aspire has been the statewide test for Arkansas public school students since 2016, but it will expire after the 2023 school year. (DESE is working with a testing company to design a new exam that will be aligned with the state’s curriculum and the learning standards for those subjects.)

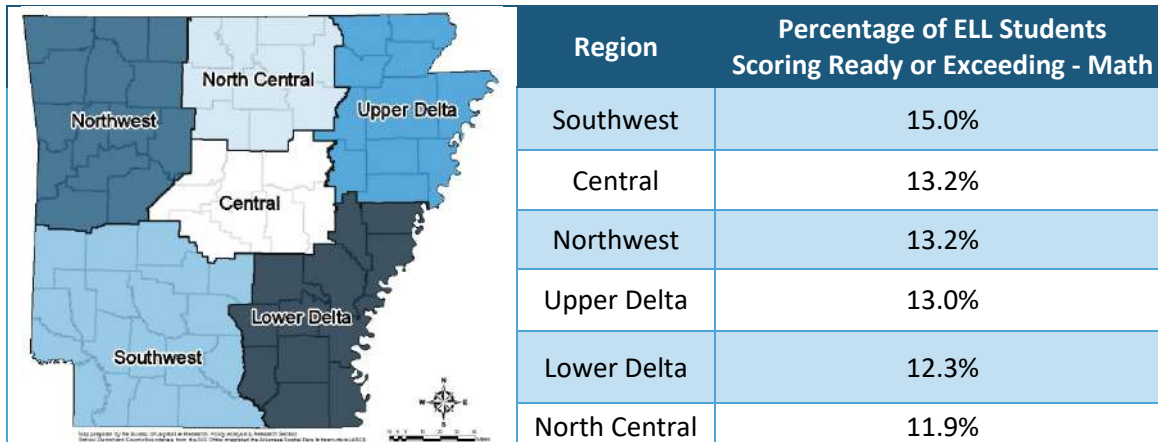
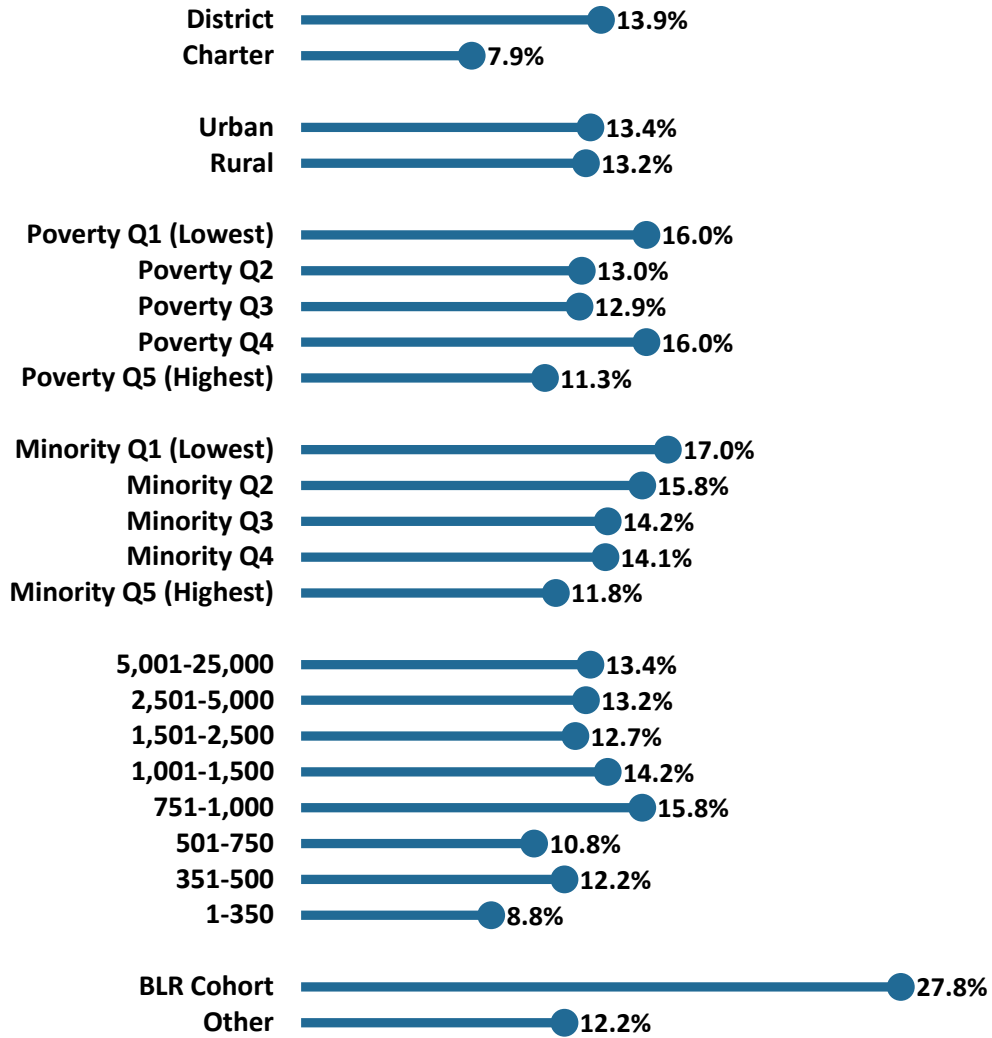
The four score levels for the ACT Aspire are In Need of Support, Close, Ready, and Exceeding. The goal is for students to score ready and above. The following table compares the percentage of ELL students scoring Ready or above with non-ELL students on the math and English language arts (ELA) exams for the last five years. A change in cut scores on the ELA portion of the ACT Aspire resulted in lower scores for the 2018 school year, and no tests were administered in the 2020 school year due to COVID-19.

The ACT Aspire tests students’ content knowledge acquisition only and is not a test of English-language proficiency. In Arkansas, the assessment is administered only in English, but ELL students are allowed accommodations as needed. As the following table shows, the percentages of ELL students scoring “ready” or “exceeding” were lower than those for non-ELL students in math (13%, compared with 38%) and English language arts (8%, compared with 40%).

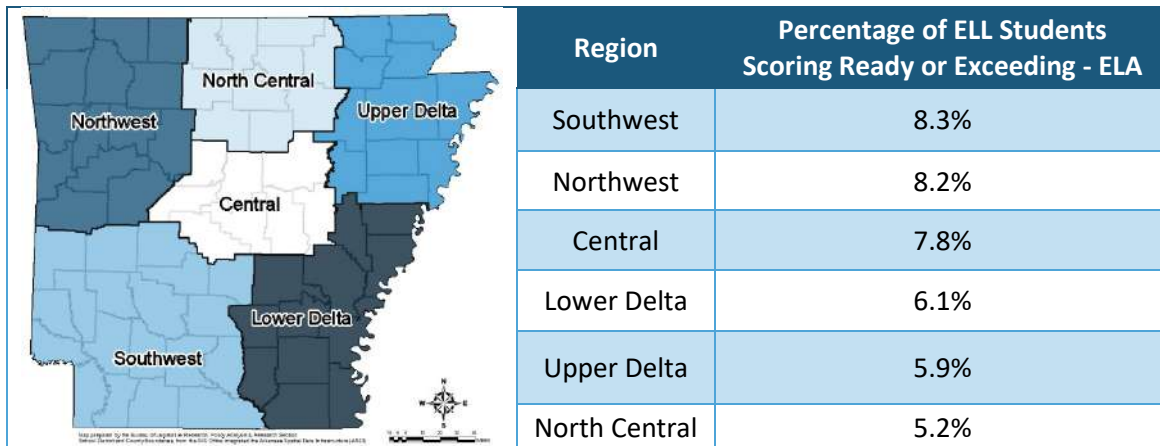
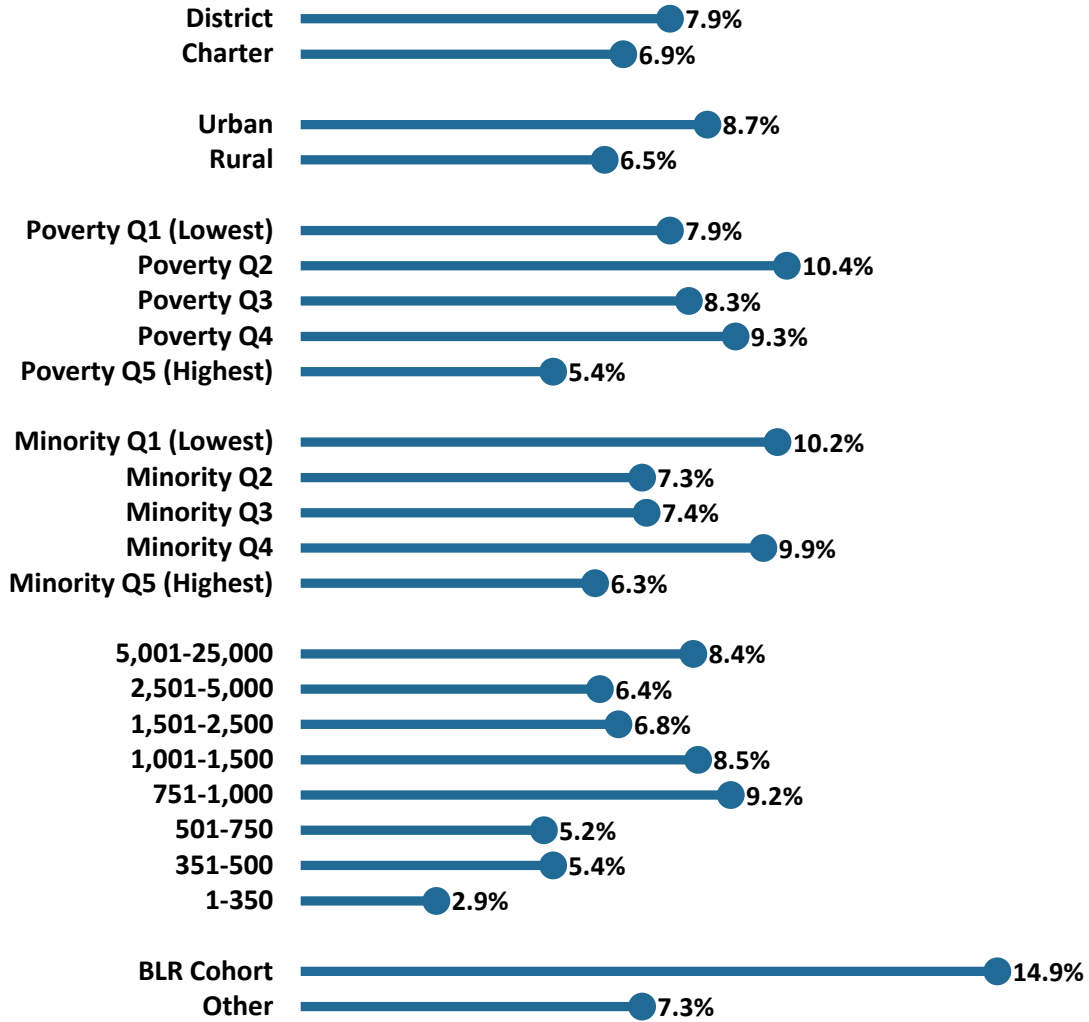
	Percentage of Students Ready or Exceeding		Total Number of Students Tested	
	ELL	Non-ELL	ELL	Non-ELL
Math				
2017	29.5%	48.5%	23,184	264,899
2018	27.7%	48.6%	23,304	267,756
2019	22.6%	49.6%	21,567	270,197
2020	No Testing Due to COVID-19			
2021	13.3%	38.2%	21,102	264,505
English Language Arts				
	ELL	Non-ELL	ELL	Non-ELL
2017	30.3%	54.4%	22,277	264,754
2018	18.1%	46.1%	23,277	267,541
2019	13.8%	47.1%	21,547	270,012
2020	No Testing Due to COVID-19			
2021	7.8%	39.3%	21,069	263,766

The following graphs and tables show the percentage of ELL students scoring ready or exceeding in math and ELA in 2021 broken out by multiple categories: urban vs. rural; free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) student and minority concentrations; district size; BLR Cohort schools, and geographic regions. Details about how BLR identified Cohort Schools can be found in the Methodology Adequacy Report.

Percentage of ELL Students Scoring Ready or Exceeding - Math



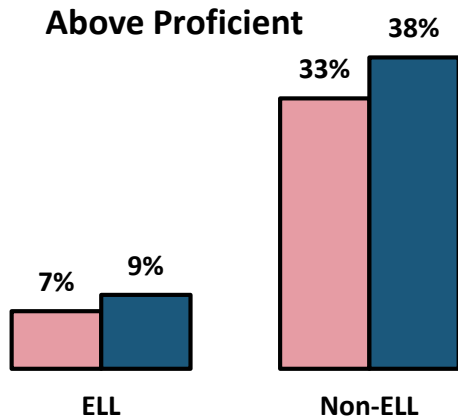
Percentage of ELL Students Scoring Ready or Exceeding - ELA



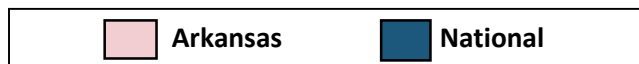
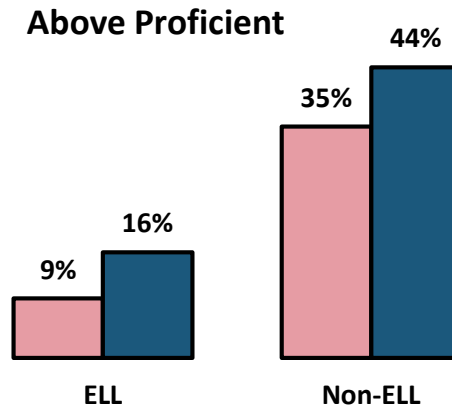
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

NAEP scores are also important to consider when looking at the progress of Arkansas’s ELL students. The NAEP test is given to a sample of students in every state, so it allows for comparison across states on a common assessment. The following tables provide information on percentage of ELL students scoring ready or exceeding compared to non-ELL students on the NAEP in 2019 (the most recent scores available) for Arkansas compared to the national average. Scores by BLR’s comparison groups are shown in Appendix A. The graphs below show that a smaller percentage of Arkansas ELL students scored at or above proficient in 4th grade reading and math as compared with the national average. However, that changes with 8th grade reading and math. In 8th grade reading, the percentage of ELL students in Arkansas scoring at or above proficient exceeded the national average (4% compared to 3%) and was the same for 8th grade math (5%).

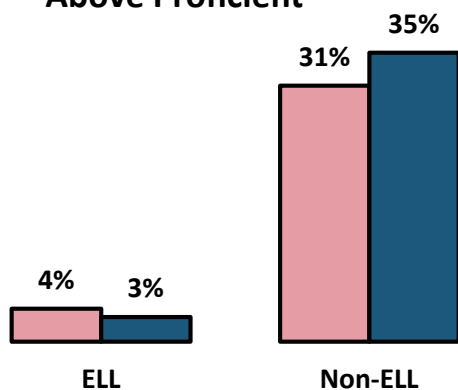
4th Grade Reading - Pct. At or Above Proficient



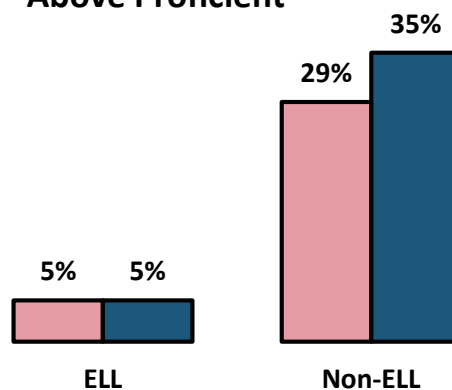
4th Grade Math - Pct. At or Above Proficient



8th Grade Reading - Pct. At or Above Proficient



8th Grade Math - Pct. At or Above Proficient



GRADUATION RATE

The following table shows the 2019 graduation rates of ELL students compared to all students in the top NAEP, top Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and contiguous states. The tables show that Arkansas's ELL students outperform other states in terms of high school graduation rates. Arkansas's graduation rate for limited English proficient students was higher than the limited English proficient graduation rate of every other state shown below as well as every other state, excluding West Virginia.

The gap between the graduation rate for limited English proficient students in Arkansas and the graduation rate for all students is relatively narrow—about five percentage points—compared with the gap in other states that go up to about 49 percentage points. Nationally, the gap between the graduation rate of limited English proficient students and the graduation rate of all students is more than 17 percentage points.³⁷

	Graduation Rates		Gap Between Limited English Proficient Students and All Students
	Limited English Proficient Students	All Students	
Top NAEP States			
Massachusetts	65%	88%	23%
New Jersey	75%	91%	15%
New Hampshire	65%	88%	23%
Minnesota	67%	84%	17%
Wyoming	67%	82%	15%
Virginia	56%	88%	32%
Vermont	63%	85%	22%
Indiana	76%	87%	11%
Connecticut	71%	89%	18%
Utah	73%	87%	14%
Top SREB States			
Virginia	56%	88%	32%
Florida	75%	87%	12%
Maryland	54%	87%	33%
North Carolina	71%	87%	15%
Kentucky	74%	91%	17%
Georgia	59%	82%	23%
Tennessee	72%	91%	19%
Texas	78%	90%	12%
Contiguous States			
Missouri	73%	90%	17%
Tennessee	72%	91%	19%
Texas	78%	90%	12%
Oklahoma	69%	85%	16%
Arkansas	83%	88%	5%
Mississippi	66%	85%	19%
Louisiana	41%	81%	39%

³⁷ National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Table 219.46. Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), by selected student characteristics and state: 2010-11 through 2018-19.

Appendix A: Other States' ELL Students' NAEP Scores

The following tables show the range of scores for students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches at the 4th and 8th grade levels on the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress in math and reading. For some states, the data for ELL students' scores do not meet NAEP's reporting standards (likely due to such small numbers of ELL students) and are therefore unavailable.

4TH GRADE READING

NAEP State	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Massachusetts	10%
New Jersey	6%
New Hampshire	20%
Minnesota	6%
Wyoming	13%
Virginia	9%
Vermont	23%
Indiana	19%
Connecticut	7%
Utah	10%

SREB State	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Virginia	9%
Florida	6%
Maryland	11%
No. Carolina	10%
Kentucky	7%
Georgia	11%
Tennessee	4%
Texas	12%

Contiguous	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Missouri	15%
Tennessee	4%
Texas	12%
Oklahoma	9%
Arkansas	7%
Mississippi	19%
Louisiana	7%

4TH GRADE MATH

NAEP State	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Massachusetts	15%
New Jersey	13%
New Hampshire	18%
Minnesota	15%
Wyoming	15%
Virginia	19%
Vermont	17%
Indiana	30%
Connecticut	15%
Utah	15%

SREB State	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Virginia	19%
Florida	17%
Maryland	15%
No. Carolina	17%
Kentucky	11%
Georgia	14%
Tennessee	8%
Texas	29%

Contiguous	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Missouri	21%
Tennessee	8%
Texas	29%
Oklahoma	11%
Arkansas	9%
Mississippi	37%
Louisiana	9%

8TH GRADE READING

NAEP State	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Massachusetts	3%
New Jersey	3%
New Hampshire	-
Minnesota	1%
Wyoming	-
Virginia	1%
Vermont	-
Indiana	19%
Connecticut	4%
Utah	5%

SREB State	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Virginia	1%
Florida	6%
Maryland	1%
No. Carolina	3%
Kentucky	3%
Georgia	3%
Tennessee	2%
Texas	4%

Contiguous	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Missouri	-
Tennessee	2%
Texas	4%
Oklahoma	5%
Arkansas	4%
Mississippi	-
Louisiana	-

8TH GRADE MATH

NAEP State	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Massachusetts	4%
New Jersey	3%
New Hampshire	-
Minnesota	4%
Wyoming	-
Virginia	2%
Vermont	-
Indiana	17%
Connecticut	1%
Utah	8%

SREB State	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Virginia	2%
Florida	3%
Maryland	2%
No. Carolina	4%
Kentucky	4%
Georgia	4%
Tennessee	3%
Texas	8%

Contiguous	Pct. At or Above Proficient
Missouri	-
Tennessee	3%
Texas	8%
Oklahoma	6%
Arkansas	5%
Mississippi	-
Louisiana	-