LEP students are likely specious. The cohort analyses show that more than half of LEP students are not progressing in school with their peers on time. Many students are held in their grade or disappear. Furthermore, cohort graduation analyses reveal LEP students are graduating at rates drastically lower than the graduation rate estimates for other demographic groups. Notably, economically disadvantaged students and other racial/ethnic groups are included in the EP comparison group—including English proficient Latinos. Thus, it is apparent that identifying district-level achievement trends by English proficiency status is necessary and important.

Statistical Analysis of ELL Youth in Texas

Data

This analysis relied on testing data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for grade 9 in 2004, and grades 9, 10, and 11 in 2005. We selected these grades and years because only 3 years of data from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) were available when this study was begun. To conduct such a study, we needed 2 consecutive years of TAKS data. This left us two choices: (a) start with grade 9 students in 2003 and follow them to 2004 or (b) start with grade 9 students in 2004 and follow them to 2005. The first option would not allow us to identify students who were retained in the ninth grade, while the second option would allow us to identify such students. Because research on student dropout factors identifies retention in ninth grade as a strong predictor of dropping out, we decided to use the 2004 ninth grade students.

Methodology

For this paper, the disappearance rate was based on data gathered by tracking answer documents submitted by school districts for individual students from the 2004 and 2005 TAKS examinations. All students enrolled in Texas public schools must have an answer document submitted, regardless of whether the student actually took any of the TAKS assessments. We identified all students who had an answer document submitted for the ninth grade TAKS assessment in 2004. We then merged those data with data on students who had an answer document submitted for 2005, regardless of the grade level of the individual. If a student in the 2004 file did not appear in the 2005 file, that individual was designated as having disappeared from the Texas public school system.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that the data do not provide any reason why

a student disappeared from the Texas public school system. A student who disappeared could have chosen to drop out of school. Alternatively, a student could have moved out of state, enrolled in a private school, transferred to a home school setting, or even died. In this way, the disappearance rate likely overstates any approximation of a dropout rate. Another limitation is that only students enrolled after October 2003 must have an answer document submitted for the spring 2004 TAKS. Thus, the disappearance of students leaving Texas public schools between the start of school to October 2004 would not have been captured. This limitation would result in the disappearance rate's underestimating the dropout rate.

Findings

Student Characteristics

Almost 8% of Texas students were ELLs. The disappearance rate for such students was more than twice that for non-ELL students; this difference of more than 13 percentage points is statistically significant.

Table 3
Number of Students Tested and Students Disappearing by Participation in an English as a Second Language Program

	Not ELL	ELL	Difference	Total
Number of Students	338,748	29,190		367,938
Disappearance Rate	12.1%	25.4%	13.3*	

Note. *Statistically significant differences are at the P < .001 level, two-tailed test.

The purpose of this paper is to focus on ELL students; thus, the analyses focus exclusively on ELL students. As shown in Table 4, the disappearance rate for male students was about 4 percentage points greater than for female students; the difference is statistically significant.

Contrary to expectations, students who were not economically disadvantaged and students who were not labeled as at-risk had greater disappearance rates than economically disadvantaged and at-risk students, respectively. The difference was especially large between at-risk and not-at-risk students. These two results may be explained by the length of residency in the United States. Students who are very recent immigrants are probably less likely to enroll in the federal free/reduced-price lunch program. Further, because at-risk status is based primarily on previous test scores, recent immigrants may not be designated as at-risk because there are no previous test scores for them.

Students receiving special education services had a disappearance rate 7 percentage points higher than students not in special education. Given that special education students are more likely to be over age and out of the mainstream of the regular education population, this finding is not surprising.

As supported by a large body of research, students retained in the ninth grade had a far greater disappearance rate than students who were not retained. (In this analysis, a student was determined to be retained in a grade—enrolled in the ninth grade in 2 consecutive years—if the answer document submitted for the student identified them as taking a ninth grade TAKS examination in both 2004 and 2005.) The difference between students retained and students not retained was quite large—almost 16 percentage points. In fact, out of all the subpopulations included in Table 4, students retained in the ninth grade had the greatest disappearance rate.

Students who passed both the reading and mathematics TAKS tests in 9th grade were far less likely to disappear than students who did not pass both tests. The difference of almost 17 percentage points was the second largest in the analysis. Because students must pass TAKS tests in four different subjects in the 11th grade, one would surmise that students not passing both the reading and the mathematics tests in the 9th grade may get discouraged or attempt to obtain a GED. Interestingly, however, 10% of students passing both tests still disappeared.

Finally, students with a valid score for both the reading and mathematics TAKS tests in grade 9 were far less likely to disappear than students with at least one invalid score. Indeed, the difference of almost 21 percentage points between the two groups was the greatest difference in this part of the analysis. A student with invalid scores typically has one of four reasons for this. First, the student may be exempted from taking the test because he is designated as being LEP. Second, the student may be exempted from taking the test because he is designated as being a special education student. Third, the student may have been absent on the day of testing. Finally, the student may have had the score invalidated by the district if the student became sick during testing or the student attempted to cheat on the test.

Because LEP students must eventually pass the English versions of the TAKS tests in four subject areas, it is not surprising that students exempted for any of these reasons would be more likely to disappear than other students. Students absent during testing may have already chosen to drop out or may be apprehensive about their chances of passing the tests. Again, one would surmise such students are far more likely to disappear. Similarly, one can imagine students who become sick during testing or who attempted to cheat on the test are less likely to pass the tests, and are thus more likely to disappear.

Table 4
Number of Students and Student Disappearance Rates by Selected Student Characteristics

Student Population		Student Characteristic Yes	No	Difference in Rate
Male	*n*	17,080	12,895	
	Rate	27.5%	23.3%	4.2*
Econ. Disadvantaged	*n*	23,830	6,145	
	Rate	24.3%	31.2%	-6.9*
At Risk	*n*	27,590	2,338	
	Rate	24.8%	36.2%	-11.4*
Gifted	*n*	71	29,862	
	Rate	21.1%	25.7%	-4.6
Migrant	*n*	2,345	27,567	
	Rate	25.3%	25.7%	-0.4
Special Ed	*n*	4,576	25,358	
	Rate	31.9%	24.6%	7.3*
Retained in Grade 9	*n*	5,781	24,194	
	Rate	38.3%	22.7%	15.6*
Passed Both TAKS	*n*	1,923	28,052	
	Rate	10.0%	26.8%	-16.8*
Valid TAKS Scores	*n*	14,445	15,530	
	Rate	15.1%	35.6%	-20.5*

Note. *Statistically significant differences are at the $P < .001$ level, two-tailed test.

School Demographics

As shown in Table 5, slightly more than 80% of ELL students were enrolled in schools with 25% or fewer African American students. ELL students enrolled in these schools had the lowest disappearance rate, while ELL students in schools with more than 50% African American students had the greatest disappearance rates. More specifically, the disappearance rate for ELL students enrolled in schools with 25% or fewer African American students was significantly (6 percentage points) lower than the disappearance rate for ELL students enrolled in schools with between 50% and 75% African American students and schools with more than 75% African American students.

As shown in Table 6, nearly 50% of ELL students were enrolled in schools with populations of 75% or more Hispanic students. Students enrolled in such schools had the greatest disappearance rate, while students in schools with 25% or less Hispanic students had the lowest disappearance rate. More specifically, the disappearance rate for ELL students enrolled in schools with 25% or less Hispanic students was 3.6 percentage points lower than the disappearance rate for students enrolled in schools with more than 75% Hispanic students. The disappearance rate for ELL students in schools with 25% or less Hispanic

students was statistically significantly lower than the disappearance rates for the schools with other percentages of Hispanic students.

Table 5
Percentage of Students Tested and Students Disappearing by Percentage of African American Students Enrolled in the School

Quartiles of African American students	*n*	Percentage of total *n*	Percentage Disappearing	Statistical Significance
1 00.0–25.0%	24,072	80.89%	24.8%	2,3
2 25.1–50.0%	4,680	15.73%	27.6%	1
3 50.1–75.0%	732	2.46%	30.1%	1
4 75.1–100%	275	0.92%	30.9%	1
Total	29,759	100.0%	25.4%	

Note. Statistically significant differences are at the $p \leq .05$ level, two-tailed test.

Table 6
Percentage of Students Tested and Students Disappearing by Percentage of Hispanic Students Enrolled in the School

Quartiles of Hispanic Students	*n*	Percentage of total *n*	Percentage Disappearing	Statistical Significance
1 00.0–25.0%	4,286	14.4%	22.6%	2,3,4
2 25.1–50.0%	6,711	22.6%	25.2%	1
3 50.1–75.0%	4,384	14.7%	26.2%	1
4 75.1–100%	14,378	48.3%	26.2%	1
Total	29,759	100.0%	25.4%	

Note. Statistically significant differences are at the $p \leq .05$ level, two-tailed test.

As shown in Table 7, 68% of ELL students were enrolled in schools with 25% or less White students. ELL students enrolled in these schools had the greatest disappearance rate, while students in schools with populations of more than 75% White students had the lowest disappearance rate. More specifically, the disappearance rate for ELL students enrolled in schools with 25% or less White students was about 7 percentage points greater than the disappearance rate for ELL students enrolled in schools with more than 75% White students. The differences in the ELL student disappearance rates between schools with 25% or less White students and the other groups of schools were statistically significant.

As shown in Table 8, 35% of ELL students were enrolled in schools with more than 75% economically disadvantaged students. ELL students enrolled

Table 7
Percentage of Students Tested and Students Disappearing by Percentage of White Students Enrolled in the School

Quartiles of White students	*n*	Percentage of total *n*	Percentage Disappearing	Statistical Significance
1 00.0–25.0%	20,256	68.1%	26.9%	2,3,4
2 25.1–50.0%	5,030	16.9%	22.7%	1
3 50.1–75.0%	3,486	11.7%	22.3%	1
4 75.1–100%	987	3.3%	20.7%	1
Total	29,759	100.0%	25.4%	

Note. Statistically significant differences are at the $p \leq .05$ level, two-tailed test.

Table 8
Percentage of Students Tested and Students Disappearing by Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students Enrolled in the School

Quartiles of economically disadvantaged students	*n*	Percentage of total *n*	Percentage Disappearing	Statistical Significance
1 00.0-25.0%	2,792	9.4%	22.0%	3,4
2 25.1-50.0%	7,236	24.3%	23.9%	3,4
3 50.1-75.0%	9,276	31.2%	26.2%	1,2
4 75.1-100%	10,455	35.1%	26.8%	1,2
Total	29,759	100.0%	25.4%	

Note. Statistically significant differences are at the $p \leq .05$ level, two-tailed test.

in schools with 25% or less economically disadvantaged students had the lowest disappearance rate, while students in schools with more than 75% economically disadvantaged students had the greatest disappearance rate. The disappearance rates for ELL students in schools with less than 50% economically disadvantaged students were statistically significantly less than the disappearance rates for ELL students in schools with other percentages of economically disadvantaged students.

As shown in Table 9, nearly 65% of ELL students were enrolled in schools in three Education Service Center regions: Edinburg (Region 1), Houston (Region 4), and Richardson (Region 10). El Paso (Region 19) had a statistically significantly lower disappearance rate than the rates for Austin (Region 13), Houston (Region 4), and Edinburg (Region 1). While other differences were not statistically significant, the rural West Texas regions (14, 15, and 16) had lower disappearance rates for ELL students than the other regions. This holds true for all students as well.

Table 9
Percentage of Students Tested and Students Disappearing by Education Service Center Region

Education Region Service Center	*n*	Percentage of total *n*	Percentage Disappearing	Statistical Significance
1-Edinburg	7,098	23.9%	26.9%	19
2-Corpus Christi	295	1.0%	25.4%	
3-Victoria	140	0.5%	21.4%	
4-Houston	6,406	21.5%	26.4%	19
5-Beaumont	111	0.4%	27.9%	
6-Huntsville	437	1.5%	25.9%	
7-Kilgore	570	1.9%	24.0%	
8-Mt. Pleasant	179	0.6%	25.7%	
9-Wichita Falls	42	0.1%	21.4%	
10-Richardson	5,906	19.8%	24.8%	
11-Fort Worth	2,661	8.9%	24.2%	
12-Waco	324	1.1%	25.9%	
13-Austin	1,413	4.7%	28.9%	19
14-Abilene	65	0.2%	16.9%	
15-San Angelo	208	0.7%	18.8%	
16-Amarillo	351	1.2%	19.9%	
17-Lubbock	136	0.5%	24.3%	
18-Midland	401	1.3%	23.9%	
19-El Paso	1,533	5.2%	21.7%	1, 4, 13
20-San Antonio	1,485	5.0%	23.6%	
Total	29,761	100.0%	25.4%	

Note. The number in the statistically significant column indicates the Region Education Service Center that is statistically significantly different than the Region Education Service Center for that row. Statistically significant differences are at the $p \leq .05$ level, two-tailed test.

Logistic Regression Results

As noted previously, only ELL students were included in the analysis. The dependent variable was "disappeared." If a student disappeared from Texas public schools between the 9th and 10th grades from 2004 through 2005, the student was coded as having disappeared. The variable identified disappeared students with a 1 and those who did not disappear with a 0.

The logistic regression equation employed in this analysis was as follows:

$$\textit{Disappear (0/1)} = b_0\textit{(constant)} + b_1\textit{(student demographics)} + b_2\textit{(special program participation)} + b_3\textit{(grade retention)} + b_4\textit{(school characteristics)} + b_5\textit{(region service center)} + b_6\textit{(valid score)} + \textit{error}$$

Student demographics included gender and economically disadvantaged status. Special program participation included whether the student received special education services, and grade retention identified if the student was retained in the ninth grade in 2005.

The school characteristics included the following variables: affluent schools (the percentage of economically disadvantaged students was less than 25%); predominantly Hispanic schools (the percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in the schools was greater than 75%); schools with fewer than 500 students enrolled; schools with more than 3,000 students enrolled; schools with teacher turnover greater than 25%; schools with more than 30% of teachers not properly qualified to teach courses assigned to teach; schools located in urban districts (districts located in urban areas and with enrollments of greater than 50,000 students); schools located in rural districts (districts located away from urban districts with enrollments of less than 5,000 students); schools located in suburban, White districts (districts within metropolitan statistical areas whose student populations were greater than 50% White), and nonalternative (schools that received a regular state accountability rating of low-performing, acceptable, recognized, or exemplary).

The region service center characteristics included 19 of the 20 regional Education Service Centers to create a district-fixed effects model. The omitted region was Houston (Region 4), and thus that district served as the reference region. Finally, the valid score characteristics included a variable indicating whether or not a student had valid scores for both the reading and mathematics ninth grade TAKS examinations in the spring of 2004.

The results in Table 10 include the statistical significance for the independent variables (p-values) as well as the odds ratios. As shown in the table, most of the results were consistent across the first four models, but the inclusion of the variable indicating whether a student had valid TAKS scores in both reading and mathematics alters the effect a student's race/ethnicity has on the odds of dropping out.

Model 1.

The first model included only the individual student characteristics. Female students and economically disadvantaged students were both approximately 20% less likely to disappear than other students. However, these results did not control for any other factors.

Model 2.

In model 2, we controlled for individual student characteristics as well as program participation and grade retention. In this model, economically disadvantaged students were about 23% less likely to disappear, while female students were about 14% less likely to disappear. Special education students were about 50% more likely to disappear, while students retained in the ninth grade were more than twice as likely to disappear.

Table 10

Logistic Regression Results

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
Variable	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Students Demographics										
Econ Disadv	-.244***	0.784	-.256***	0.774	-.304***	0.738	-.311***	0.733	-.268***	0.765
Female	-.223***	0.800	-.164***	0.849	-.158***	0.854	-.159***	0.853	-.157***	0.855
Program Participation & Grade Retention										
Special Education			.392***	1.481	.395***	1.485	.401***	1.494	-.069^	0.934
Retained in grade 9			.753***	2.123	.723***	2.061	.722***	2.059	.804***	2.234
School Characteristics										
Affluent school					-.119*	0.888	-.117*	0.889	-.133*	0.875
Pred Hispanic school					-.065*	0.937	-.041	0.960	-.061	0.941
Enroll: < 500					-.006	0.994	.012	1.012	-.002	0.998
Enroll: > 3000					-.007	0.993	-.032	0.968	-.030	0.971
High Turnover					.082^	1.086	.067	1.069	.056	1.058
High Unqualified					.080*	1.083	.046	1.047	-.004	0.996
Urban					.126***	1.135	.139***	1.149	.101*	1.106
Rural					.000	1.000	.018	1.019	-.009	0.991
Suburban White					-.133^	0.876	-.154*	0.857	-.261***	0.770
Non-alternative school					-.912***	0.402	-.953***	0.385	-.820***	0.440
Region Education Service Center										
1-Harlingen							-.094^	0.910	-.074	0.929
2-Corpus Christi							-.051	0.951	.093	1.097
3-Victoria							-.367^	0.693	-.191	0.826
5-Beaumont							.234	1.263	.403^	1.497
6-Huntsville							.108	1.114	.019	1.019
7-Kilgore							-.115	0.892	-.167	0.846
8-Mt. Pleasant							.065	1.067	-.084	0.920
9-Wichita Falls							-.151	0.860	-.236	0.790
10-Dallas							-.151***	0.860	-.249***	0.779
11-Ft. Worth							-.232***	0.793	-.268***	0.765
12-Waco							.035	1.036	-.068	0.934
13-Austin							.149*	1.160	.119	1.127
14-Abilene							-.371	0.690	-.624^	0.536
15-San Angelo							-.538**	0.584	-.541**	0.582
16-Amarillo							-.222	0.801	-.142	0.868
17-Lubbock							-.009	0.991	.054	1.055
18-Midland							-.377**	0.686	-.382**	0.683
19-El Paso							-.195**	0.823	-.114	0.892
20-San Antonio							-.214**	0.807	-.178*	0.837
Valid TAKS Scores in Reading & Math										
Both Scores Valid									-1.213***	0.297
Constant	-.818***	0.441	-1.067***	0.344	-.189^	0.828	-.050	0.952	.423***	1.527

Note. Significance levels: ^ ≤.10, * ≤.05, **≤.01 ***≤.001.

Model 3.

In model 3, we controlled for individual student characteristics, special education participation, grade 9 retention, as well as some school and district characteristics. In this model, economically disadvantaged students were about 26% less likely to disappear, while female students were about 15% less likely to disappear. Again, special education students were about 50% more likely to disappear, while students retained in grade 9 were more than twice as likely to disappear than nonretained students. ELL students in affluent schools—those with more than 75% not economically disadvantaged students—were about 10% less likely to disappear than students in other schools. ELL students in predominantly Hispanic schools—schools with greater than 75% Hispanic students—were about 6% less likely to disappear than students in other schools.

There was no statistically significant effect on disappearance rates for ELL students in schools with either fewer than 500 students or more than 3,000 students. ELL students in schools with high levels of teacher turnover—greater than 25% per year—were about 8% more likely to disappear than ELL students in other schools. However, the result was statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level only. ELL students in schools where more than 30% of the teachers were not fully certified to teach the courses to which they were assigned (high unqualified) were also about 8% more likely to disappear than ELL students in other schools.

With respect to district location, ELL students in urban districts were about 14% more likely to disappear than ELL students in other types of districts. ELL students in White suburban districts were about 12% less likely to disappear than students in other districts. However, the White suburban variable was statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level only. ELL students in nonalternative schools were about 60% less likely than ELL students in alternative schools to disappear.

Model 4.

In model 4 we added a control variable for 19 of the 20 regional Education Service Centers to create a district fixed-effects model. In this model, economically disadvantaged students were about 27% less likely to disappear and female students were about 15% less likely to disappear. Again, special education students were about 50% more likely to disappear, and students retained in grade 9 were slightly more than twice as likely to disappear than nonretained students.

ELL students in affluent schools—those with more than 75% not economically disadvantaged students—were about 10% less likely to disappear than students in other schools. Under the district fixed-effects model, there was no difference between the disappearance rate for ELL students in predominantly Hispanic schools and for ELL students in other schools. Again, there was no statistically significant effect on disappearance rates for ELL students in schools with either less than 500 students or more than 3,000 students. There were also no longer any statistically significant differences in the ELL disappearance rate between schools with high levels of teacher turnover or with high percentages of underqualified teachers.

With respect to district location, ELL students in urban districts were about 15% more likely to disappear than ELL students in other types of districts. ELL students in White suburban districts were about 14% less likely to disappear than students in other districts. ELL students in nonalternative schools were about 61% less likely than ELL students in alternative schools to disappear. Of particular interest to those in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, ELL students in both the Richardson and Fort Worth Education Service Center regions were less likely to disappear than ELL students in the Houston region. Those in the Richardson region were about 14% less likely to disappear, while those in the Fort Worth region were about 21% less likely to disappear.

Model 5.

After including a variable indicating whether students had valid test scores on both the reading and mathematics sections of the TAKS examination, some of the variables were no longer statistically significant. In the final model, economically disadvantaged students were about 24% less likely to disappear, and female students were about 15% less likely to disappear. The difference between ELL students in special education and ELL students not in special education was no longer statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, although it was statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level. In the final model, rather than being more likely to disappear, ELL students in special education were approximately 7% less likely to disappear. ELL students retained in grade 9 were about 2.2 times more likely to disappear than nonretained students.

Again, ELL students in affluent schools were about 12% less likely to disappear than ELL students in other schools. With respect to district location, ELL students in urban districts were about 11% more likely to disappear than ELL students in other types of districts; ELL students in White suburban districts were about 23% less likely to disappear than ELL students in other districts. ELL students in nonalternative schools were about 56% less likely

than ELL students in alternative schools to disappear. ELL students in both the Richardson and Fort Worth Education Service Center regions were about 23% less likely to disappear than ELL students in the Houston region. Finally, ELL students with valid scores for both the reading and mathematics TAKS test in grade 9 were about 70% less likely to disappear than students with no valid scores or only one valid score.

Summary of Evidence from Analyses of State-Level Data

In summary, while 8% of Texas students are ELL, their disappearance rate was more than twice that for non-ELL students (25.4% versus 12.1%, respectively). ELL youth are significantly less likely to disappear if any of the following characteristics are true: they are female; they are economically disadvantaged: attend an affluent school; attend a school in a White suburban district; attend a nonalternative (i.e., regular) high school; or have a valid score on both the reading and mathematics TAKS tests in grade 9. Conversely, ELL students are significantly more likely to disappear if they were retained in the ninth grade or if they attended a school located in an urban district. As noted previously, the effect of being economically disadvantaged conflicts with all other research—including research using all students in Texas. We believe the findings in this area are due to the data on economically disadvantaged status being conflated with length of residency in the United States.

Despite the limitations of state-level data, this analysis effectively demonstrates that disaggregating data for this growing subgroup is important. Trends have surfaced, showing the educational experiences of ELL youth are distinct from those of non-ELL youth, and thus warranting a targeted focus on their needs. For instance, because nearly 65% of all ELL students were enrolled in schools in three Education Service Center regions in the state (Edinburg, Houston, and Richardson), resources could be targeted in these areas.

Conclusion

This analysis renders how the Texas accountability system has failed to adequately take the needs of ELL students into account and directly hold schools accountable for their achievement (Valenzuela, 2004). In order for Texas to be truly accountable, we recommend a number of changes that track back to the linchpin of the accountability system itself—namely, the TAKS test. The properties of the exam, together with how it is used, help account for how ELL students get caught in the crosshairs of education policy. Notably, a system designed with ELL students in mind would not only consider their predicament

in a substantive manner, but would additionally prove beneficial for all Texas youth.

With respect to the language-dependent nature of the exit TAKS, policymakers should consider legislation that accomplishes the following: (1) uses Spanish-language norms assessments to more accurately measure ELL student success; (2) validates Spanish–English bilingualism and promotes it through dual language programs; and (3) utilizes multiple measures (including grades, portfolios, class rank, and alternative forms of assessment in addition to test scores) whenever making high-stakes decisions like retention, promotion, and graduation (Valenzuela, 2004). For discussion purposes, students taking the recommended curriculum with a B or greater average would be candidates for the application of a multiple measures system. At the exit level, lawmakers should also consider an advanced high school diploma for students achieving high levels of bilingualism and biliteracy. These recommendations necessarily require a reorienting of policy, such that it focuses less on what ELL youth cannot do and more on what they can.

Other results reveal the salience of the TAKS test itself with respect to the chances that ELL youth will disappear from school. In other words, the chance that ELL youth will succeed in school through graduation is compromised by policies working at cross-purposes. That is, if an ELL student does not obtain a valid score for both the reading and mathematics TAKS test in grade 9, chances are that he is being exempted from testing because he is designated as being LEP. While this process may help such students compensate for what would otherwise be a poor test performance, given their lack of English language fluency and the language-dependent nature of the exam, a collateral effect of exempting students is depriving them of test exposure and, thus, experience on an examination that will soon become a graduation requirement. Yet, because it still does not make sense for students to take an incomprehensible test, an alternative evaluation system must be pursued as suggested herein (see Valenzuela, 2002).

Future research should track cohorts of ELL students to gauge their long-term academic achievement. Furthermore, current state-level data do not provide sufficient information on Hispanic subgroups in order to identify potential effective interventions for different groups (i.e., immigrant versus nonimmigrant status, generational status, length of residence in the United States, continuous vs. interrupted schooling experiences before migration). Information regarding the academic proficiencies of LEP children based on various personal and parental educational attainment levels from Mexico or Latin America is sorely lacking. We recommend that Texas establish partnerships with the Mexican

government in order to create an international database of students so both countries can educate this highly diverse and mobile community.

The decreased likelihood of ELL youth dropping out in affluent, suburban contexts underscores the salience of resources. To improve accountability, TEA must therefore take additional standards into account. That is, schools should be held accountable for helping ELL youth meet performance standards by providing quality educational facilities, programs, and well-trained teachers. In short, Texas needs accountability on inputs in addition to outputs so policymakers, practitioners, and the public may better understand the state of education and ensure every student has equal access to the same kinds of resources, thereby fostering a more meritocratic system.

REFERENCES

Baker, C. (1993). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism.* Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Ost, J., Passel, J. S., & Herwantoro, S. (2005). The new demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left behind Act. Urban Inst., Washington, DC.; Urban Institute (NJ1), 2005 (ED490924).

Carnevale, A. P. (1999). *Education equals success: Empowering Hispanic youth and adults.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service for Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

Carnoy, M., Loeb, S., & Smith, T. (2001). *Do higher state test scores in Texas make for better high school outcomes?* CPRE Research Report No. RR-047. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Crawford, J. (2004). *No Child Left Behind: Misguided approach to school accountability for English language learners.* National Association for Bilingual Education. Retrieved September 15, 2006, from http://www.nabe.org/documents/policy_legislation/NABE_on_NCLB.pdf

Cummins, J. (1981). Age on arrival and immigrant second language learning in Canada: A reassessment. *Applied Linguistics, 11*(2), 132–149.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). From "separate but equal" to "No Child Left Behind": The collision of new standards and old inequalities. In D. Meier, A. Kohn, L. Darling-Hammond, T. R. Sizer, & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Fry, R. (2005a). *The high schools Hispanics attend: Size and other key characteristics.* Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.

Fry, R. (2005b). *The higher drop-out rate of foreign-born teens: The role of schooling abroad.* Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.

Fuller, E. J. (2005). *High school teachers in Texas: Demographics, quality, and turnover.* Texas Lyceum.

Fuller, E. J., & Brewer, C. (2005, November). The distribution of teachers and opportunity to learn. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Nashville, TN.

Gee, J. P. (1996). Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses (2nd ed.). Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.

Hakuta, K. (2001, April 13). The education of language-minority students. Testimony to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Washington, DC.

Hakuta, K., & Beatty, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Testing English-language learners in U.S. schools: Report and workshop summary.* National Research Council. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Hampton, E. (2004). Standardized or sterilized? Divergent perspectives on the effects of high-stakes testing in West Texas. In A. Valenzuela (Ed.), Leaving Children Behind: How Texas-Style Accountability Fails Latino Youth, (pp. 179-200). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Haney, W. (2000, August 19). The myth of the Texas miracle in education. *Education Policy Analysis Archives 8*(41). Retrieved September 13, 2000, from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n41

Lee, V. E., & Burkam, D. T. (2003). Dropping out of high school: The role of school organization and structure. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*(2), 353–393.

McDonnell, L. M., & Hill, P. T. (1993). *Newcomers in American schools: Meeting the educational needs of immigrant youth.* Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

McNeil, L. (2000a). *Contradictions of school reform: Educational costs of standardized testing.* New York: Routledge.

McNeil, L. (2000b). Sameness, bureaucracy, and the myth of educational equity: The TAAS system of testing in Texas public school. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 22*(4), 508–523.

McNeil, L., & Valenzuela, A. (2001). The harmful impact of the TAAS system of testing in Texas: Beneath the accountability rhetoric. In G. Orfield & M. Kornhaber (Eds.), *Raising standards or raising barriers? Inequality and high-stakes testing in public education* (pp. 127–150). New York: Century Foundation Press.

Murdock, S. (2006, June). *Texas: A changing landscape.* Presentation at the University of Texas at San Antonio Superintendents Conference. San Antonio, TX.

National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). Dropout rates in the United States: 1995. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

National Education Association. (2005). Rankings & estimates: Rankings of the states 2004 and estimates of school statistics 2005. Retrieved September 10, 2006, from http://www.nea.org/edstats/images/05rankings-update.pdf

Noble, A. J., & Smith, M. L. (1994). Old and new beliefs about measurement-driven reform: "Build it and they will come." *Educational Policy, 8*, 111–136.

Olsen, L. (2006). Ensuring academic success for English learners. *University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute Newsletter, 15*(4), 1–8.

Orfield, G., Losen, D. J., Wald, J., & Swanson, C. (2004). Losing our future: How minority youth are being left behind by the graduation rate crisis. Harvard University: The Civil Rights Project. Retrieved September 6, 2006, from http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/dropouts/dropouts04.php#reports

Ruiz de Velasco, J. (2004). Performance-based school reforms and the federal role in helping schools that serve language minority students. In A. Valenzuela (Ed.), *Leaving Children Behind: How Texas-Style Accountability Fails Latino Youth*, (pp. 33-55). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Ruiz de Velasco, J., & Fix, M. (2001). Overlooked and underserved: Immigrant students in U.S. secondary schools. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press. Retrieved September 15, 2006, from http://www.urban.org/pdfs/overlooked.pdf

Rumberger, R. W. & Thomas, S. L. (2000). The distribution of dropout and turnover rates among urban and suburban high schools. *Sociology of Education, 73*(1), 39–68.

Schneider, B., Martinez, S., & Owens, A. (2006). Barriers to educational opportunities for Hispanics in the United States. In M. Tienda & F. Mitchell (Eds.), *Hispanics and the future of America* (chap. 6). Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.

Sloan, K. (in press). High-stakes accountability, minority youth, & ethnography: Assessing the multiple effects. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly.*

Texas Education Agency (TEA). (n.d.). High School Graduation Requirements: TAKS or TAAS as a graduation requirement. Retrieved September 15, 2006, from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/grad/grad_reqs.pdf

Texas Education Agency (TEA). (2004). Academic Excellence Indicator System: 2003–2004 state performance report. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency.

Texas Education Agency (TEA). (2003). Secondary school completion and dropouts in Texas public schools, 2001-2002. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency. Retrieved July 1, 2006, from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/0102drpt.pdf

Texas Education Agency (TEA). (2000). Study of possible expansion of the assessment system for limited English proficient students. A report to the 77th Texas legislature from the Texas Education Agency. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency.

Texas Education Agency (TEA). (1998a). Report on Texas public school dropouts, 1996-1997. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency. Retrieved July 1, 2006, from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/9697drpt.pdf

Texas Education Agency (TEA). (1998b). Academic achievement of elementary students with limited English proficiency in Texas public schools. Policy Research Report No. 10. (Document no. GE8 600 03). Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency.

Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. (1997, December). School effectiveness for language minority students. (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education Resource Collection Series, No. 9). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Tienda, M., & Mitchell, F. (Eds.). (2006). *Multiple origins, uncertain destinies: Hispanics and the American future.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2001). *The Hispanic population reports: Census 2000 brief.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2004). *Current Population Survey (CPS), 2004 annual social and economic supplement.*

U.S. Census Bureau. (2006). *U.S. population estimates by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin*: July 1, 2005. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration.

U.S. General Accounting Office. (1994). *Limited English proficiency: A growing and costly educational challenge facing many school districts* (No. HEHS-94-38). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.

Valenzuela, A. (2002). *High-stakes testing and U.S.-Mexican youth in Texas: The case for multiple compensatory criteria in assessment. Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy, 14,* 97–116.

Valenzuela, A. (2004). *Leaving children behind: How "Texas-style" accountability fails Latino youth.* New York: State University of New York Press, 2004.

Vernez, G., & Abrahamse, A. (1996). *How immigrants fare in U.S. education.* Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.