

English Proficiency and Academic Achievement of Students Exiting ESOL Programs in Georgia

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Objective.

Background: At the request of GaDOE, we conducted analyses to provide insight into the outcomes of the state's established processes for exiting students from ELL language assistance status and related ESOL services.

Primary research question:

1. What is the relationship between students' scores on the English proficiency test (ACCESS) and their subsequent student achievement on the state standardized assessment measure (CRCT) for students in grades 3-8 exiting the ESOL program in Georgia schools?

Secondary research questions:

2. What is the relationship between outcomes for students exiting ESOL automatically (passing the test-score based criterion) or following discretionary decisions?

3. What is the relationship between outcomes for students who exited the ESOL program (or changed their English learner status) and outcomes of similar students who stayed in the program for an additional year?

Our study will help refine the rules guiding exit from ESOL programs and, ultimately, optimize the allocation of resources to programs serving English language learners.

Data.

Dataset: GaDOE longitudinal data system

Target students: All Georgia public school students in grades 3-8 who were receiving language assistance services at any time in the period from 2006/07 to 2010/11.

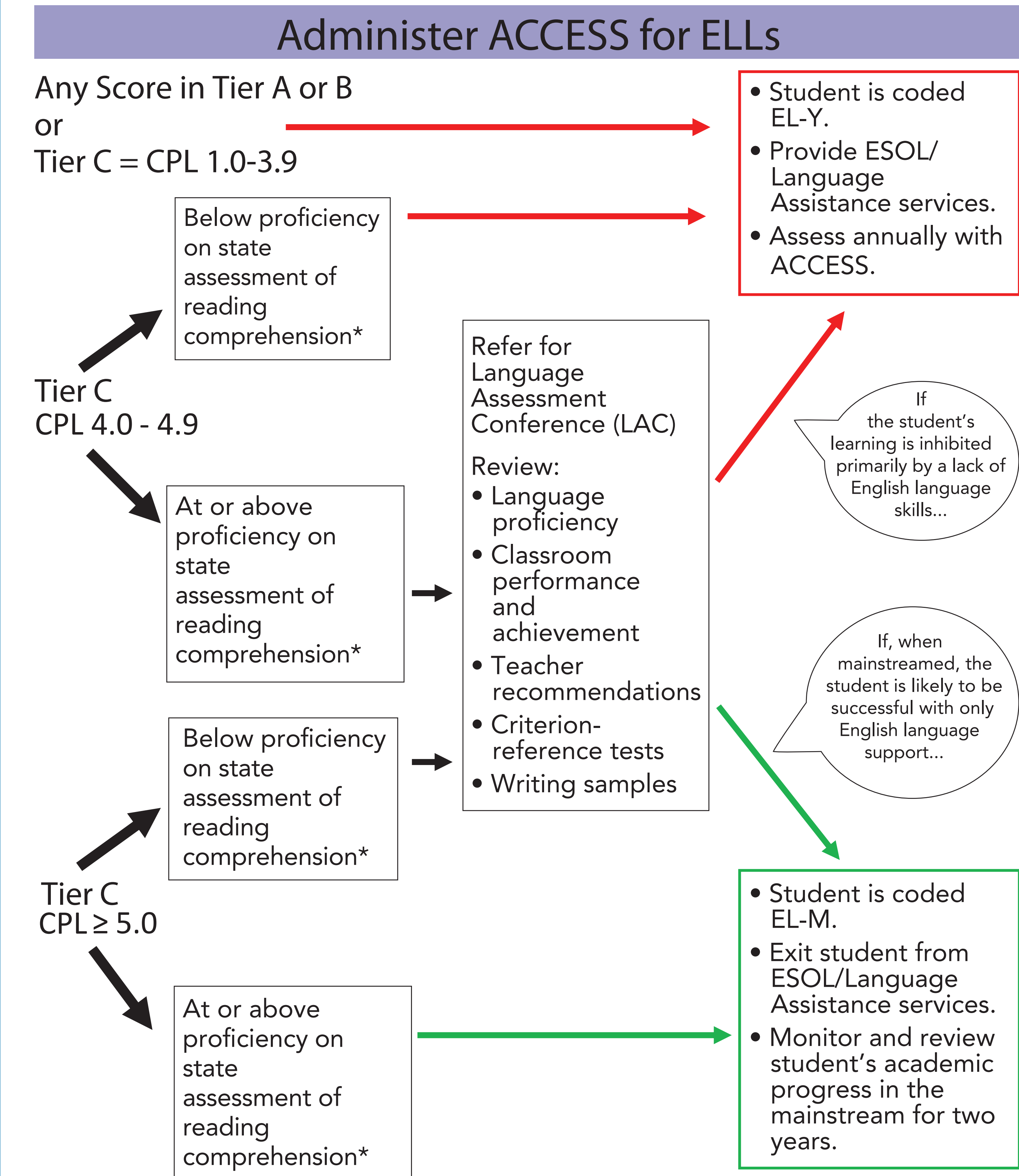
Student level variables:

- Demographic data: Grade level, gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch status
- Measure of English language proficiency: Scores and proficiency levels on the ACCESS assessment
- Outcome measures: Scores and proficiency levels on the reading, math, and ELA subtest from Georgia's CRCT

Total sample: Approximately 26,000 students

Exit Criteria for ELLs.

Grades 1-12 Exit Criteria Language Assistance Services for English Learners



* Grades 3-8: "Proficiency" is a score of 2 (Meets Standards) or higher on the CRCT-Reading Total

Reference

Alston, C., Johnson, C., Lacher, A., & Wlazlinski, M. (2011). *Georgia Department of Education ESOL/Title III Resource Guide, 2011-2012*. Georgia Department of Education.

Glossary.

ACCESS: Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State

CRCT: Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests

ELL: English Language Learner

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

GaDOE: Georgia Department of Education

LAC: Language Assessment Conference

Methods.

We use quasi-experimental comparison group design and multivariate regression analysis to answer our research questions. First, we compare students who exited ESOL via LAC with those who exited automatically. Second, we compare students who exited ESOL to similar students who stayed in the program for an additional year. In both cases, we compare average outcomes (year-by-year from 2006-2011, and overall) for these groups of students on the CRCT in reading, English language arts, and mathematics, adjusting for the differences in the pretest, ACCESS score, and student characteristics.

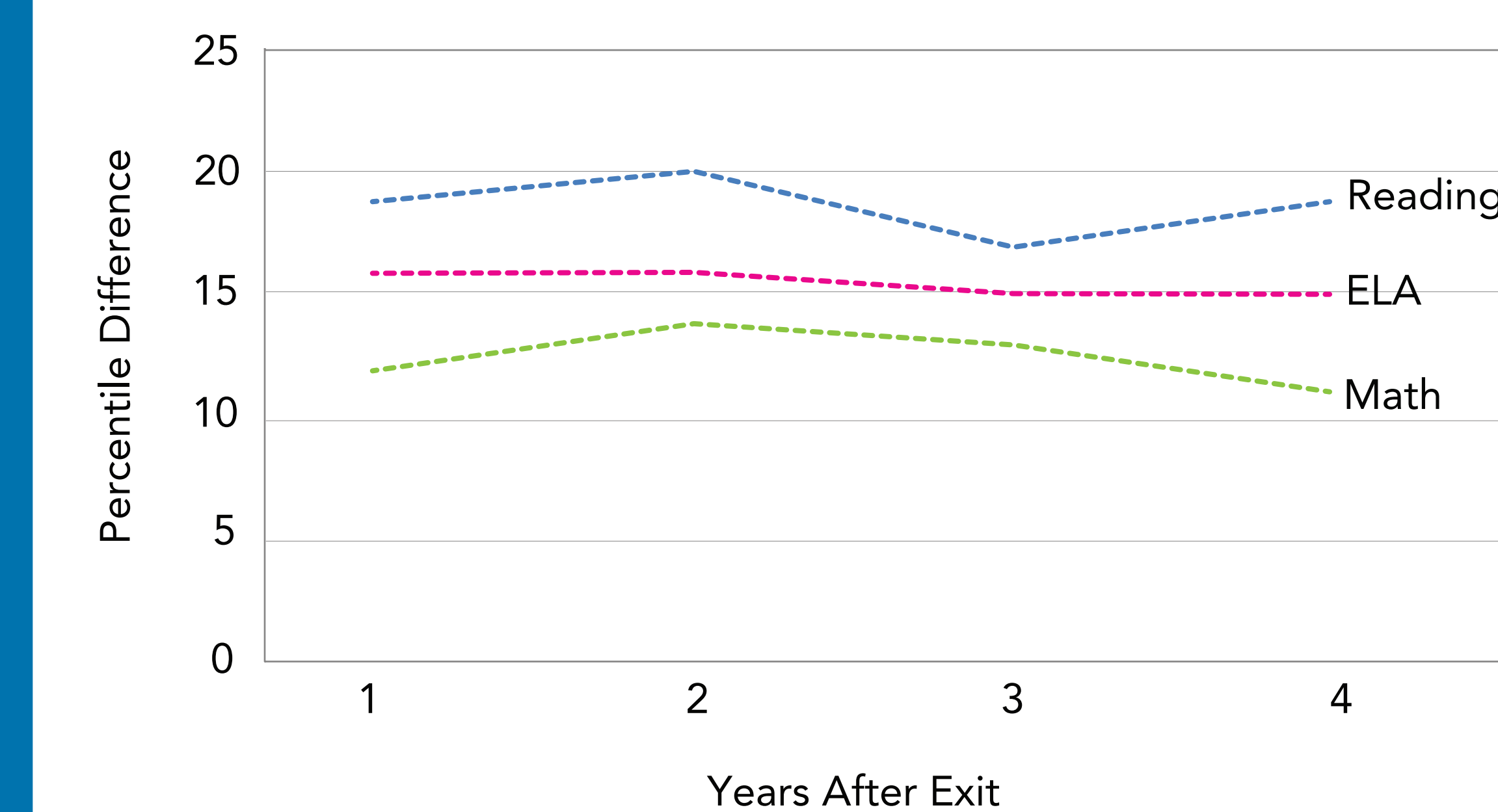
This approach allows us to determine how English comprehension, as opposed to content knowledge, affects future learning and academic outcomes. It also allows for singling out the impact of the ESOL exit pathway and ultimately may help identify the optimal exit procedure by examining whether a critical ACCESS score can be identified under which content area achievement is significantly lower for students who exited ELL status after the LAC.

Results.

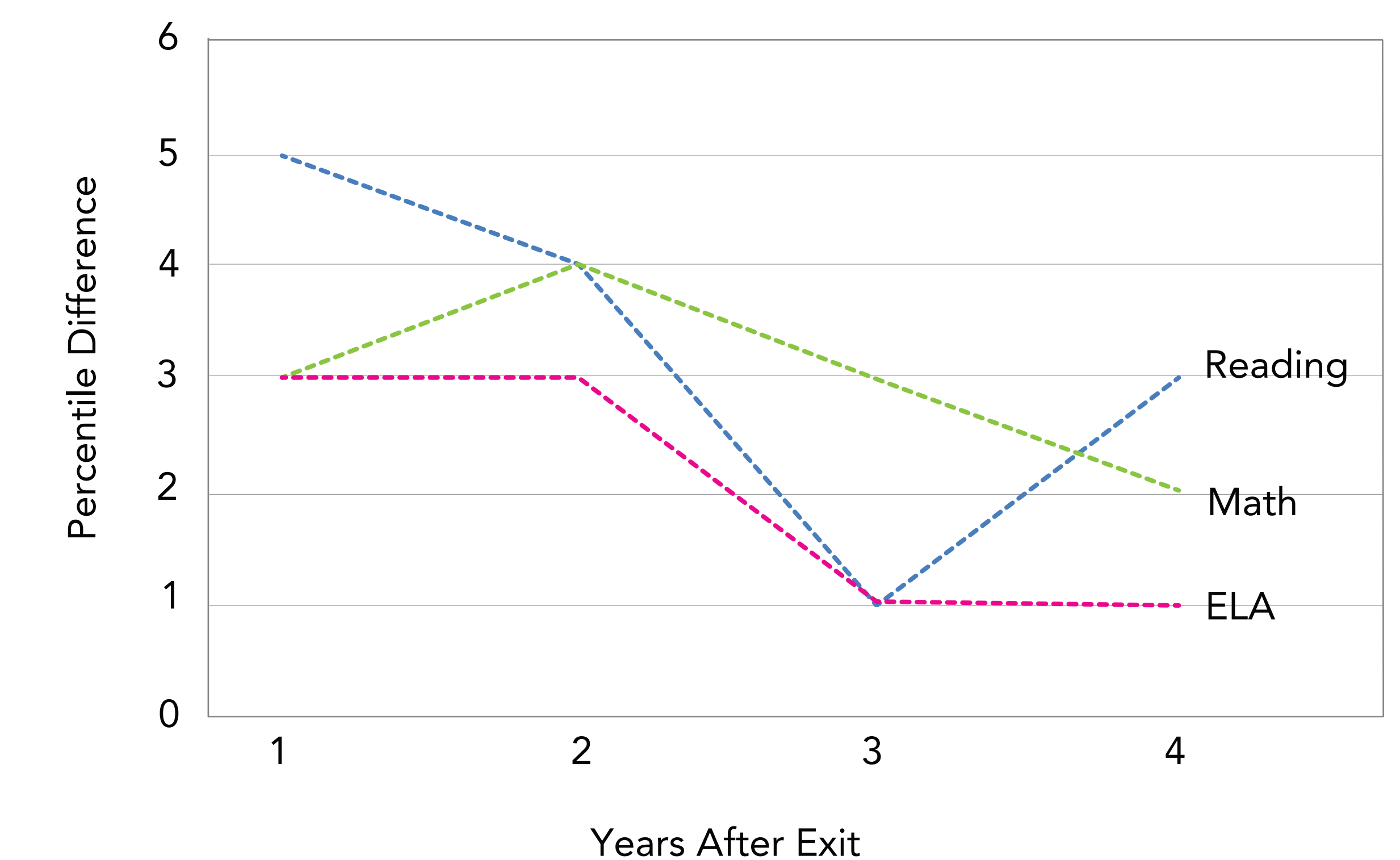
Primary research question # 1: There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between ACCESS scores of students exiting ELL status and their CRCT scores. Moreover we find that the relationship persists over time, with no substantial decline within the time horizon of this study (up to 4th year after exit from ESOL).

Secondary research question #2: Students who exited ELL status automatically perform worse in the future than students who exited via a LAC, other things equal. This relationship persists for at least two years (the decline in the size of the sample over time does not allow obtaining statistically significant results after that).

Relationship between ACCESS and CRCT Scores



Difference between Exit Pathways



Secondary research question #3: One extra year of ESOL results in a higher performance in the subsequent year (two years after the initial LAC), controlling for the difference in all student characteristics, including ACCESS level at the time of the initial LAC.

Return of One Year of ESOL Services

	Percentile Difference
Reading	5
ELA	4
Math	2

The results in the figure should be interpreted as follows: Of two identical students, one exiting ESOL via LAC would perform better on CRCT tests in the next two years by 3-5 percentile points.

One possible explanation of this effect is that, due to the measurement error inherent in any standardized test, some students who are not yet ready to exit ESOL would manage to get a high enough score to be exited via the automatic rule. However their premature exit would be reflected in their future performance.