

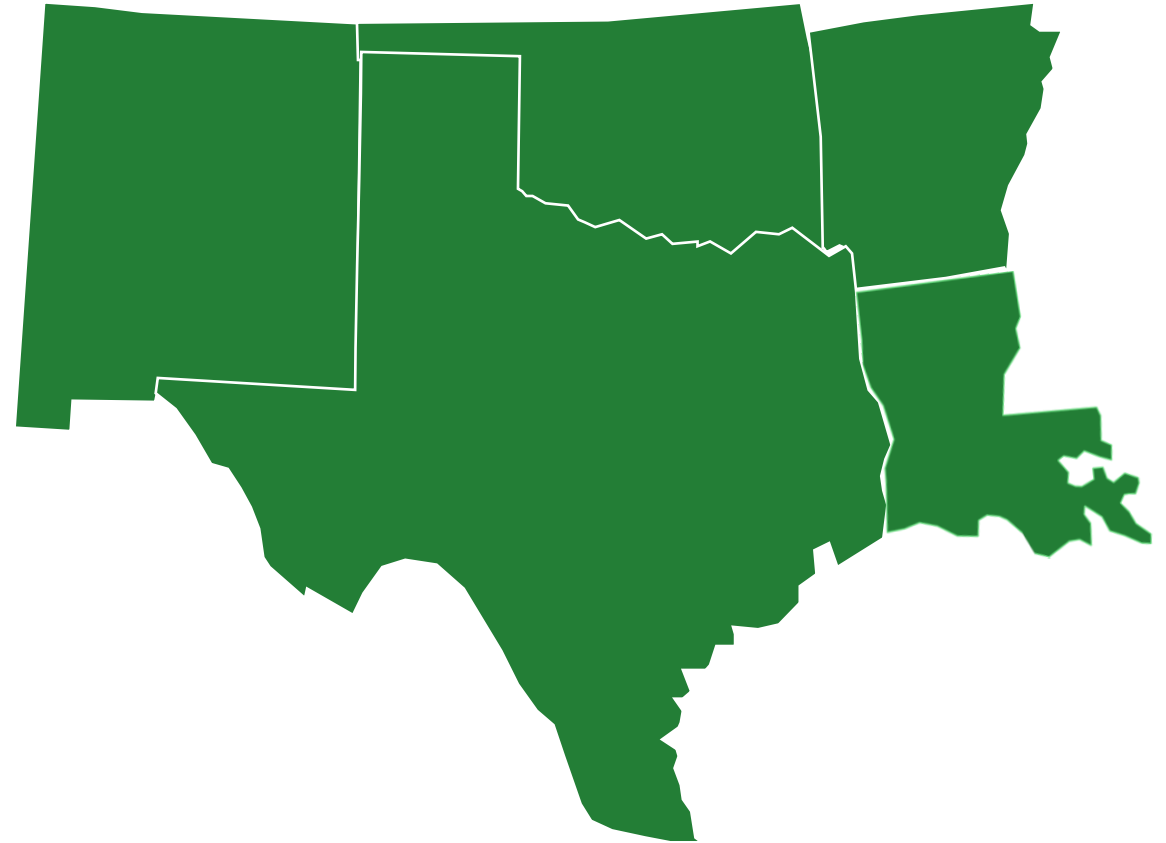
# English Proficiency and the Pandemic: How Texas English Learner Students Fared During the COVID-19 Pandemic



# How does REL Southwest do this work?

REL Southwest works with state education agencies, districts, and other stakeholders to develop and apply research evidence to **meaningfully improve student outcomes**.

REL Southwest supports **five** collaborative research partnerships to address the regional needs, priorities, and interests of five states: **Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas**.



# Meet the authors



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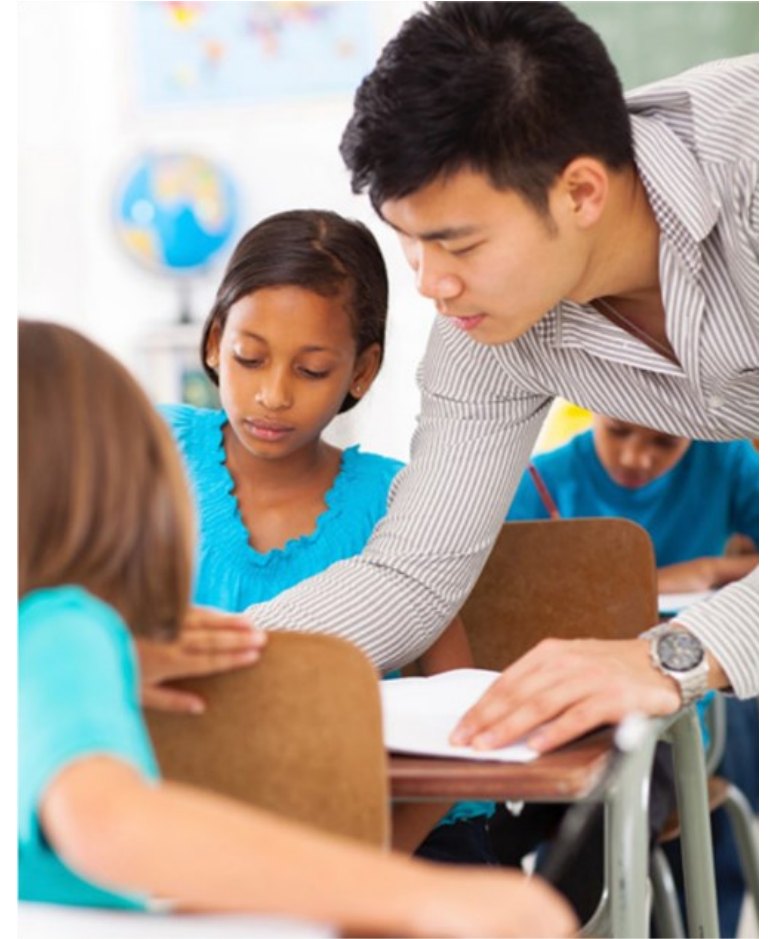


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# Purpose of the study

- Emergent bilingual students comprise 10 percent of public school students in the U.S. and 20 percent of students in Texas.
- English language development relies on opportunities to use English in both oral and written modes.
- The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education, particularly for *emergent bilingual students*, who may have had fewer opportunities to cultivate conversational and academic English.
- In partnership with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), REL Southwest sought to better understand how emergent bilingual students' English proficiency may have been influenced by pandemic-induced learning disruptions.



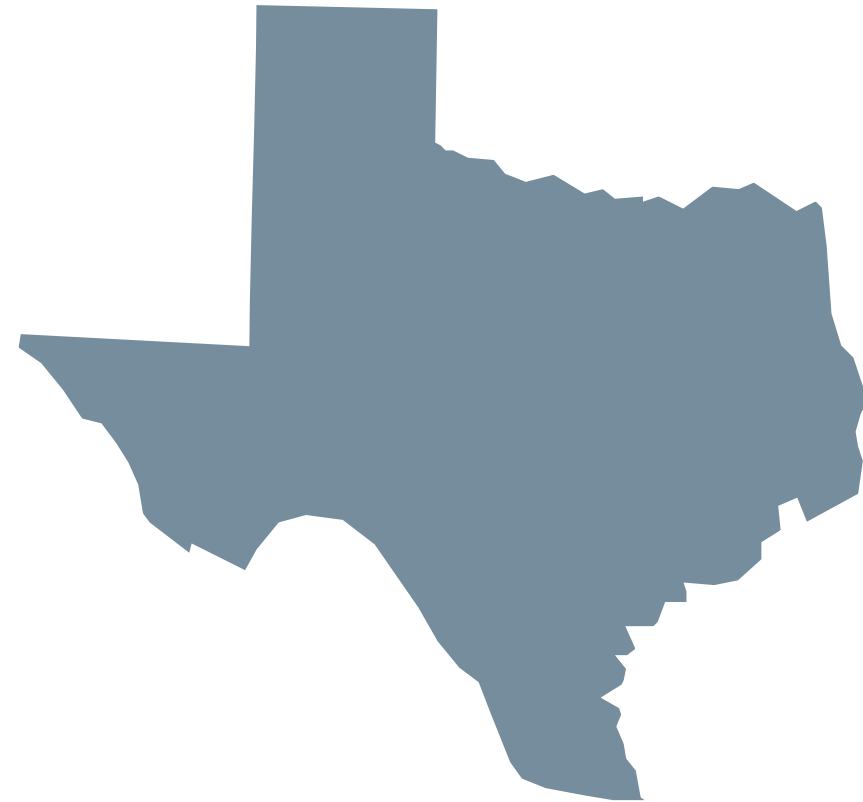
# Assessment and student learning environments during COVID-19

**Before March 2020:** 83% of emergent bilingual students in Texas participated in at least one domain of the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS).

**Mid-March 2020:** Most school buildings closed for the remainder of the school year.

**Fall 2020:** 54% of all Texas students received in-school instruction, and 46% received remote instruction.

**Spring 2021:** 90% of emergent bilingual students in Texas participated in at least one domain of TELPAS.



Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas Education Research Center.



# Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)

- TELPAS is Texas's statewide annual assessment of English proficiency administered to emergent bilingual students each spring.
- Measures four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Scores on four domains and a composite score categorize a student's English proficiency level as beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high.
- The composite score is calculated by averaging the domain scores; if any domain scores are missing, the composite score cannot be calculated.
- Scores are used in instructional support and reclassification decisions.

# Research questions

1. To what extent is the composition of Texas emergent bilingual students who took the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) representative of the enrolled emergent bilingual student population in the years spanning the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (between 2017/18 and 2020/21)?
2. What are the rates of reclassification of Texas emergent bilingual students and the characteristics of reclassified students in the years spanning the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (between 2017/18 and 2020/21)?
3. To what extent do the English proficiency scores of Texas emergent bilingual students in 2020/21 differ from scores of similar students in 2018/19, prior to the pandemic?
4. Is student participation in a particular English learner program model associated with the English proficiency scores of Texas emergent bilingual students in 2020/21?

# Data, Sample, Methods, and Limitations



# Data, sample, and methods

## Data

- Student-level demographic, STAAR, and TELPAS data from the Texas Education Agency
- Publicly available school- and district-level characteristics

## Sample

- Emergent bilingual students in grades 3–12 in 2017/18–2020/21 with at least one TELPAS domain score
- Reclassified emergent bilingual students in 2017/18–2020/21
- 2020/21 emergent bilingual students and matched comparison group of 2018/19 emergent bilingual students

## Methods

- Descriptive analysis of characteristics of tested and enrolled emergent bilingual students and of reclassified emergent bilingual students
- Quasi-experimental analysis to estimate differences in TELPAS performance of emergent bilingual students in 2018/19 and 2020/21
- Regression analysis to understand association between TELPAS performance and program participation

# Limitations

- Results should not be interpreted as causal, and changes in TELPAS performance between the 2018/19 and 2020/21 cohorts could be caused by factors other than the pandemic.
- Missing data from 2019/20 limited the number of students in analyses.
- Findings limited to grades 3–12.
- Results not generalizable to other emergent bilingual students.
- The program model findings are influenced by issues of program model availability and selection.

# Findings

To what extent is the composition of Texas emergent bilingual students who took the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) representative of the enrolled emergent bilingual student population in the years spanning the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (between 2017/18 and 2020/21)?

# Who participated in TELPAS?

The percentage of students taking the assessment after the onset of the pandemic in 2019/20 was smaller than in 2017/18.

Emergent bilingual students who took TELPAS were **similar to** all emergent bilingual students in Texas from 2017/18 to 2020/21 in terms of:

- Student characteristics.
- Prior-year student achievement.
- District characteristics.
- Emergent bilingual program model participation.

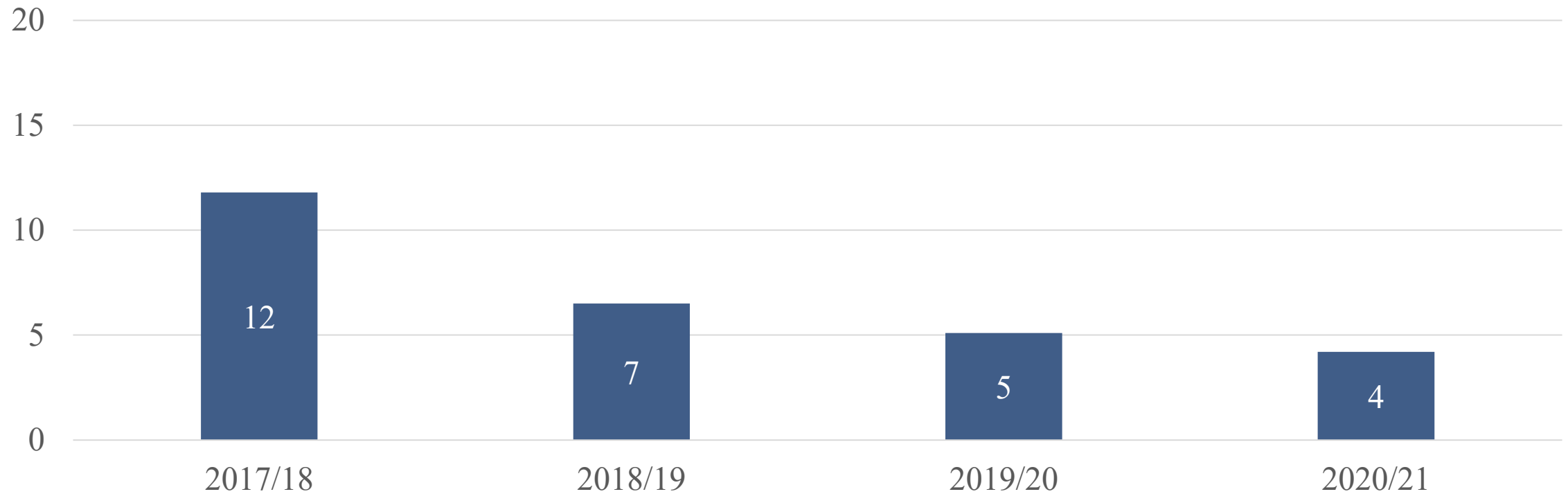


What are the rates of reclassification of Texas emergent bilingual students and the characteristics of reclassified students in the years spanning the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (between 2017/18 and 2020/21)?



# The proportion of grades 3–12 emergent bilingual students who were reclassified as English proficient declined 8 percentage points from 2017/18 to 2020/21

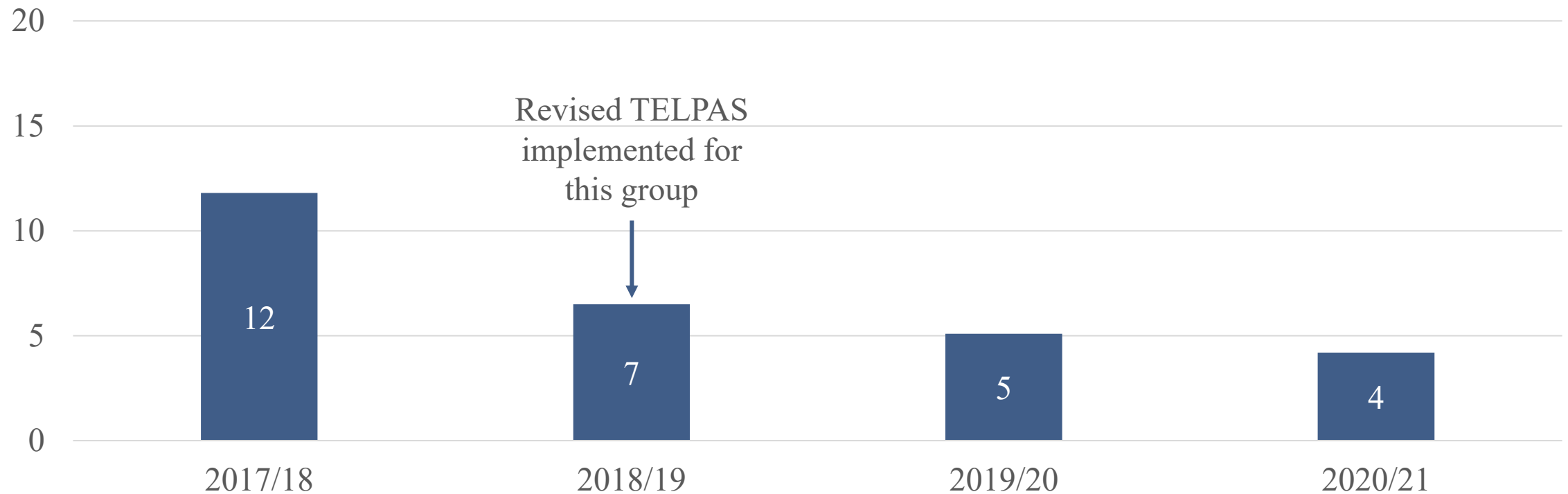
*Percentage of emergent bilingual students reclassified*



Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas Education Research Center

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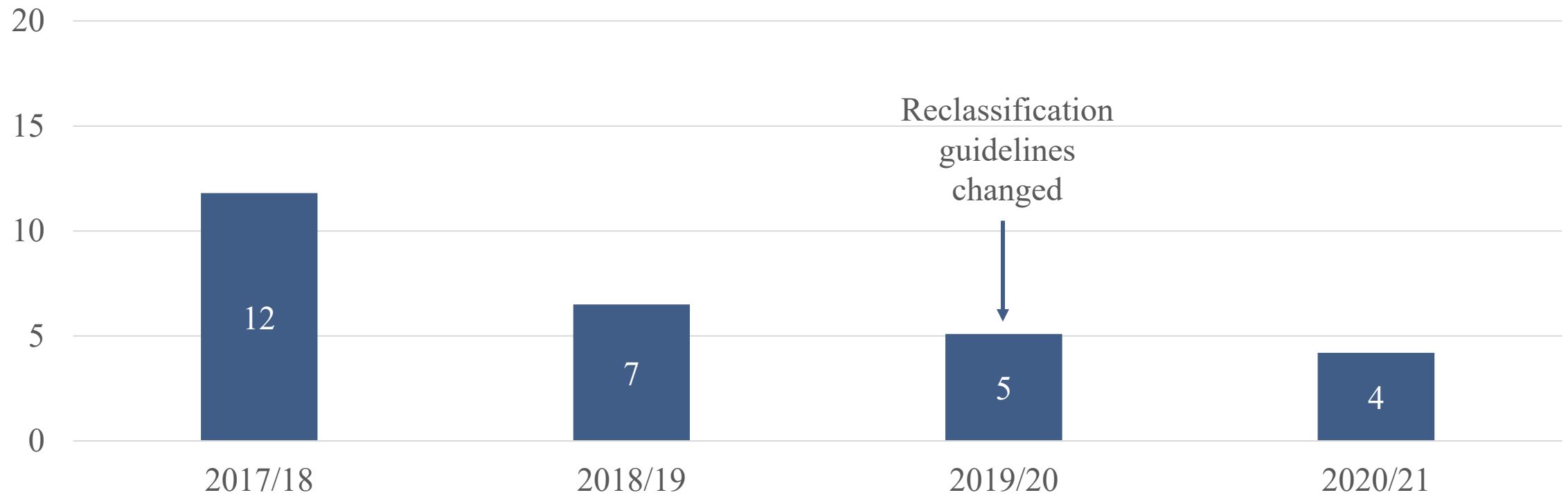
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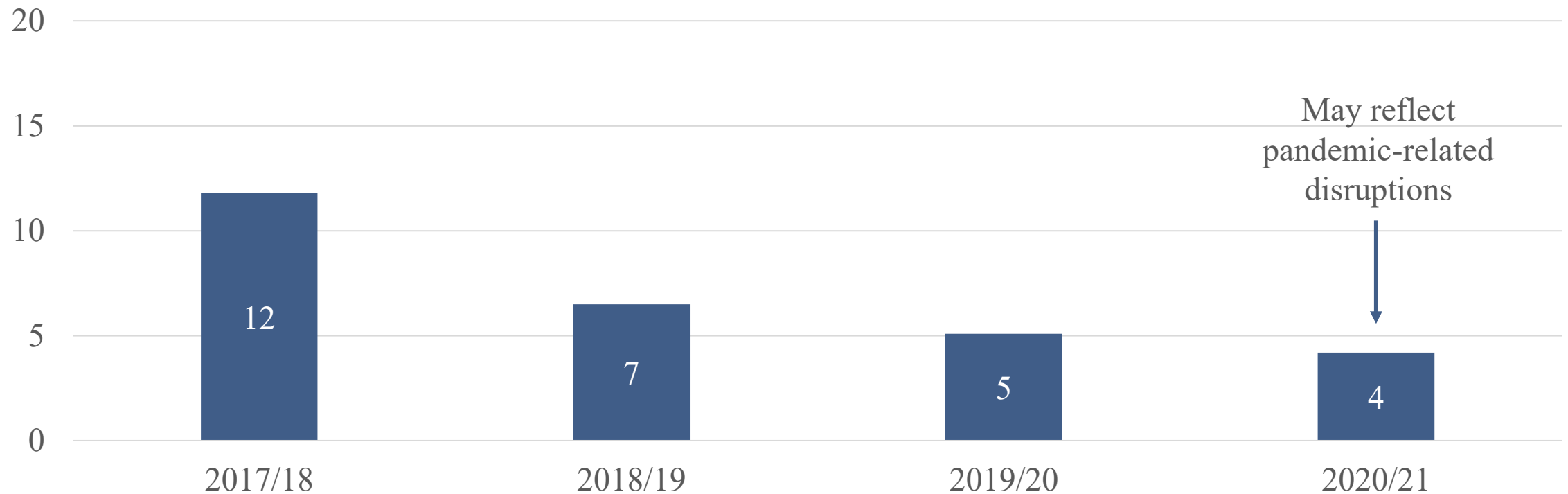
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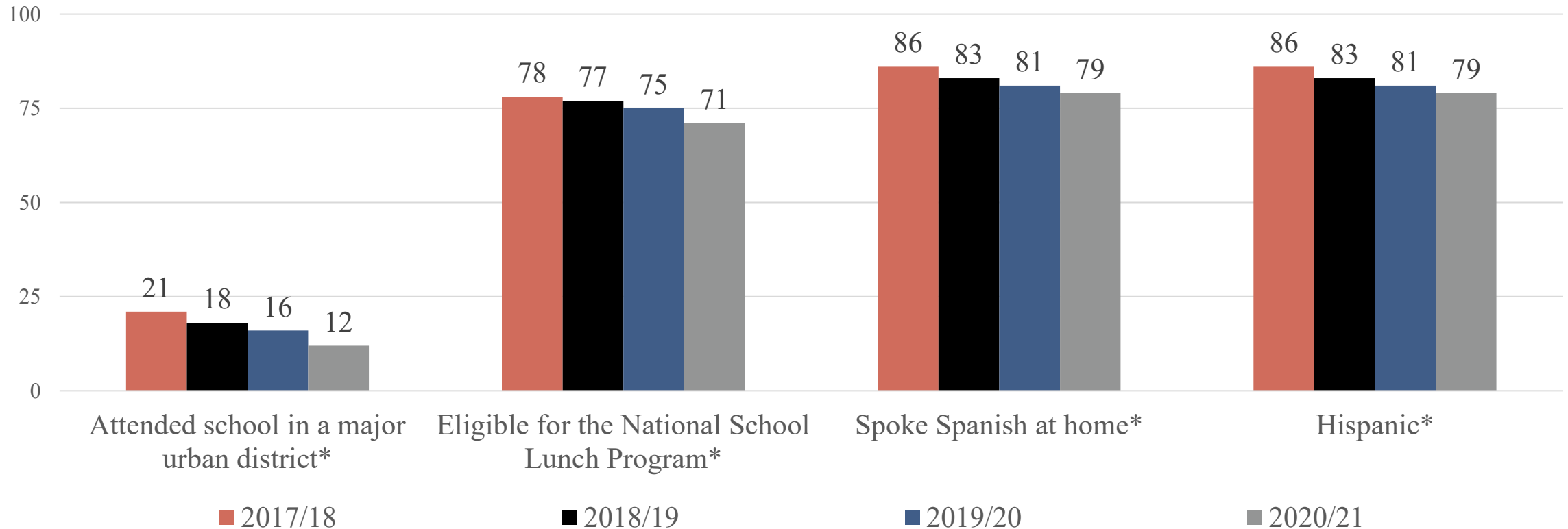
*Percentage of emergent bilingual students reclassified*



Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas Education Research Center

Among reclassified students, the percentage of students who were from a major urban district, eligible for the National School Lunch program, spoke primarily Spanish at home, and were Hispanic decreased, 2017/18 to 2020/21

Percentage of reclassified students

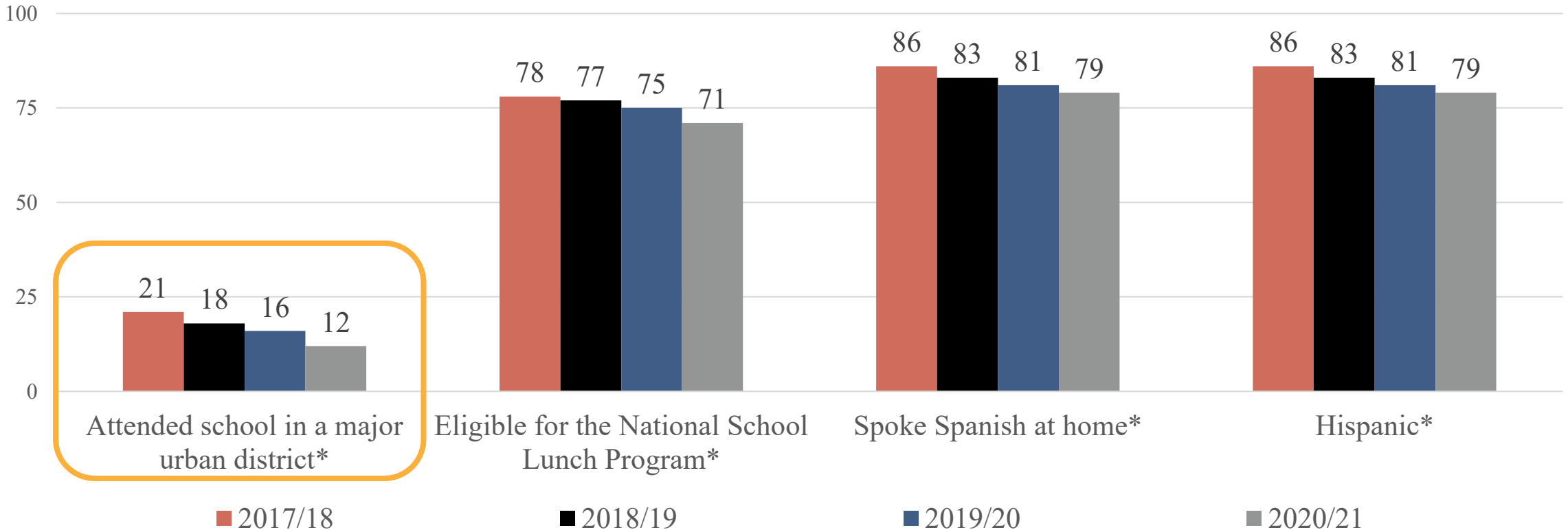


\* denotes a difference of 5 percentage points or greater between 2017/18 and 2020/21, which was considered a meaningful difference.

Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas Education Research Center.

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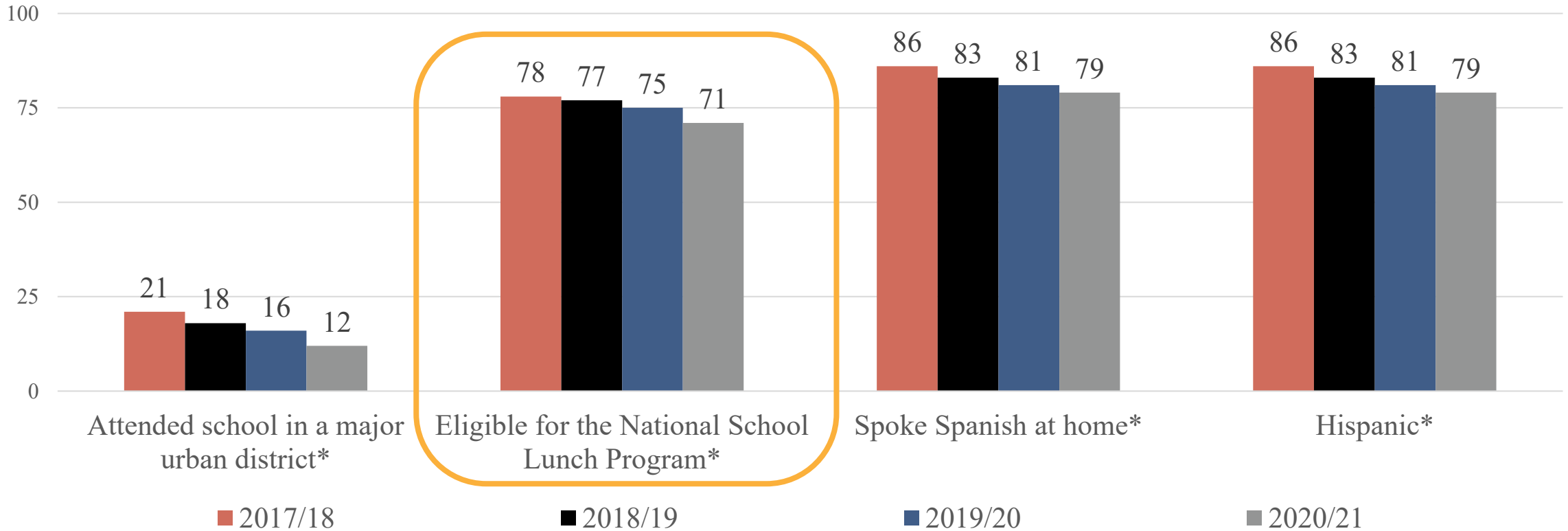
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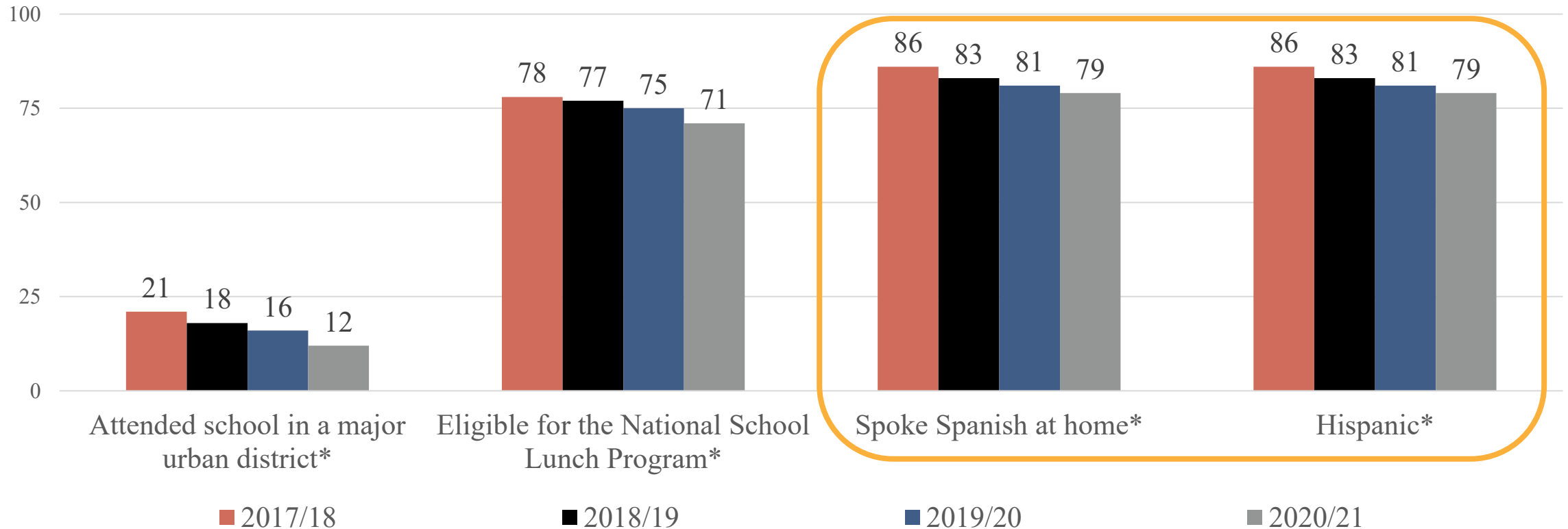


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How can these findings inform **your** work?

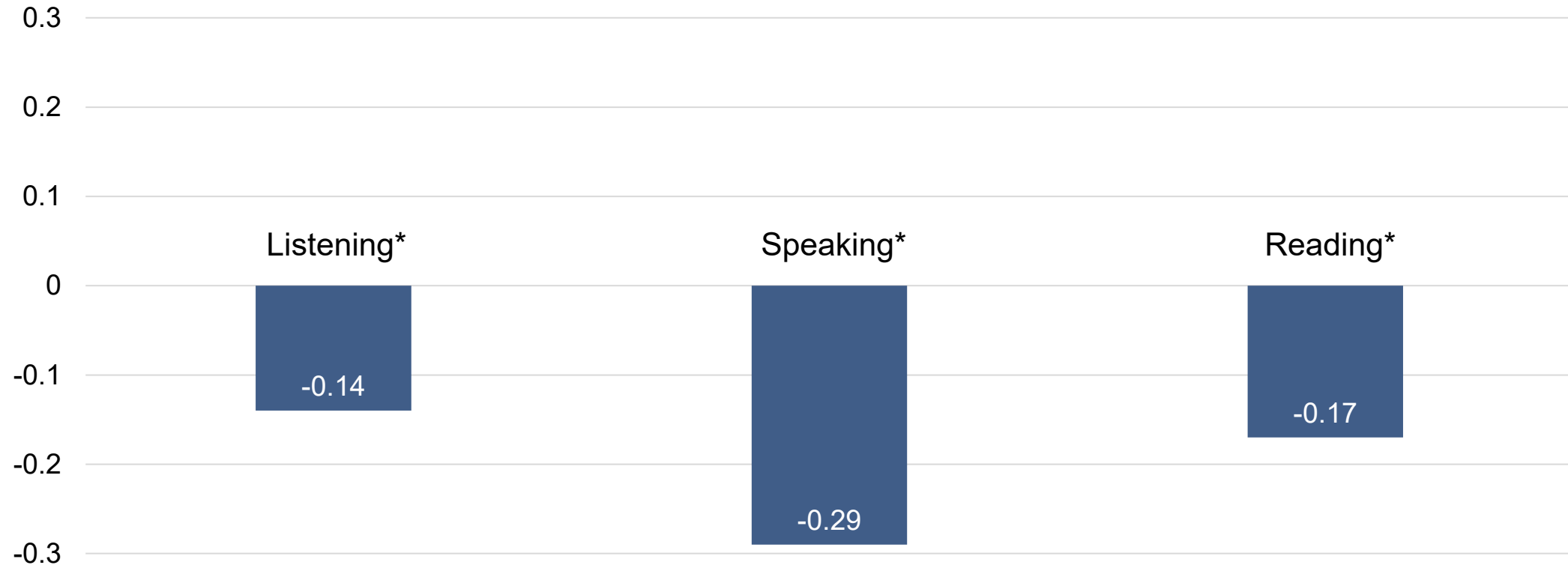
How can these findings inform **teachers'** and **school leaders'** work?



To what extent do the English proficiency scores of Texas emergent bilingual students in 2020/21 differ from scores of similar students in 2018/19, prior to the pandemic?

# Grades 3–5: Listening, speaking, and reading scores were lower in 2020/21 than those of similar students in 2018/19

*Differences between 2020/21 and 2018/19 TELPAS scores (standard deviation units)*

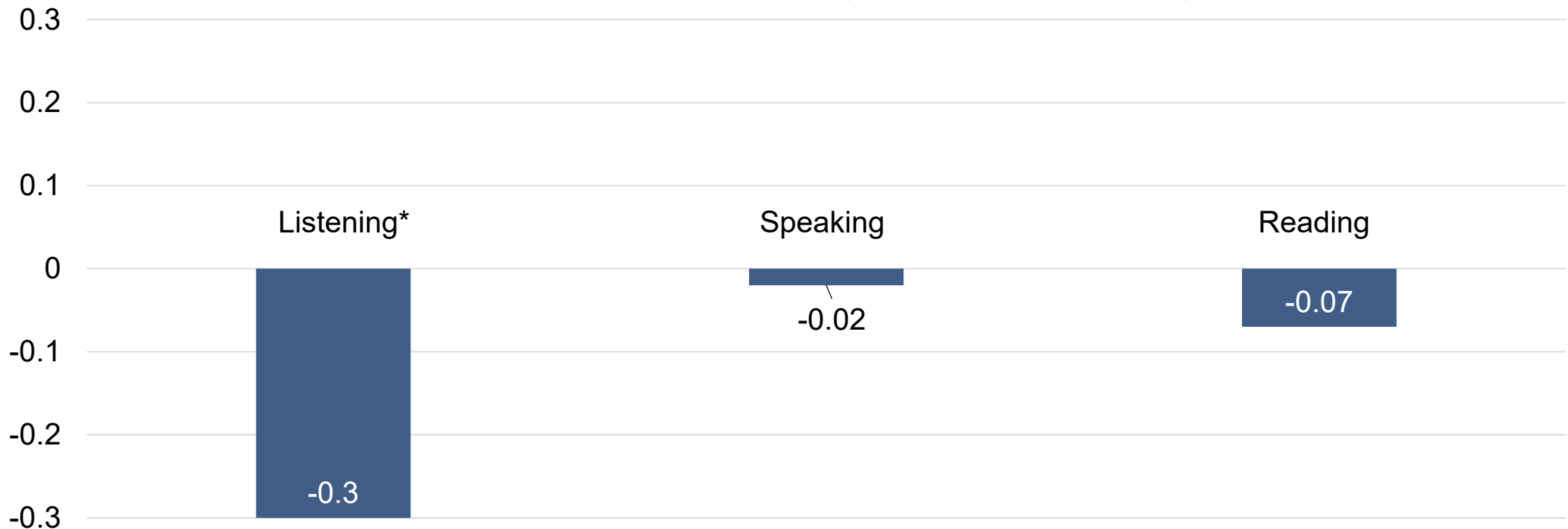


\* Denotes a difference of greater than or equal to 0.1 standard deviation, which was considered a meaningful difference.

Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas Education Research Center

# Grades 6–8: Listening scores were lower in 2020/21 than those of similar students in 2018/19

*Differences between 2020/21 and 2018/19 TELPAS scores (standard deviation units)*



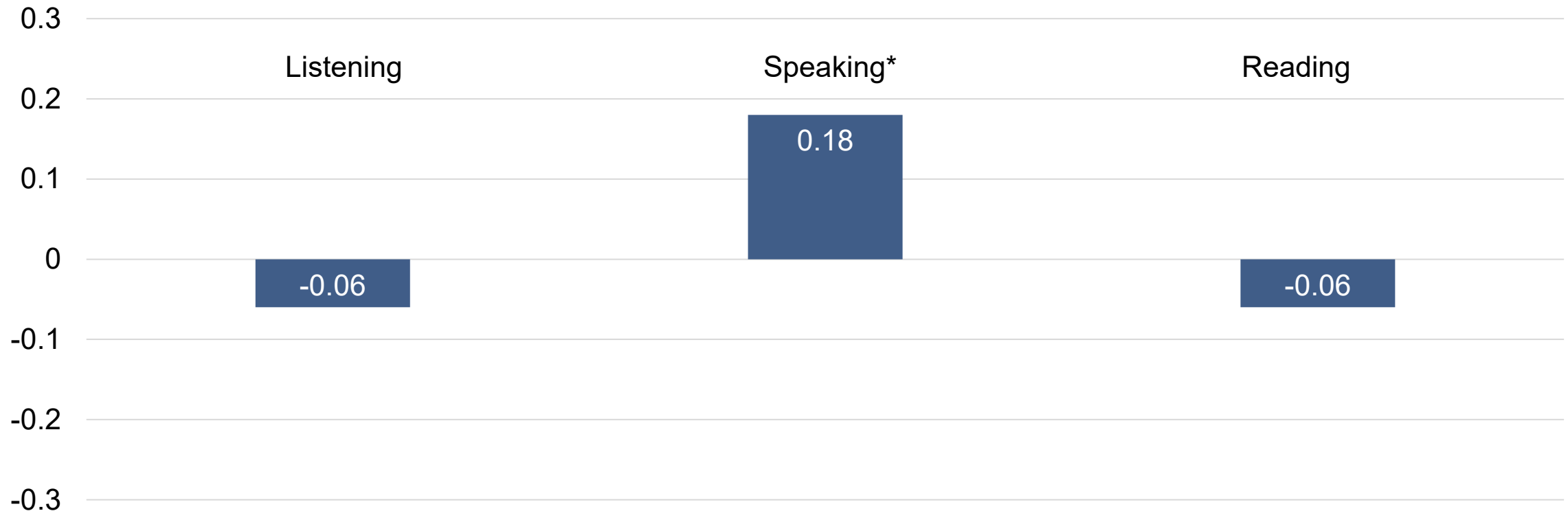
\* Denotes a difference of greater than or equal to 0.1 standard deviation, which was considered a meaningful difference.

Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas Education Research Center



# Grades 9–12: Speaking scores were higher in 2020/21 than those of similar students in 2018/19

*Differences between 2020/21 and 2018/19 TELPAS scores (standard deviation units)*



\* Denotes a difference of greater than or equal to 0.1 standard deviation, which was considered a meaningful difference.

Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Texas Education Agency and the University of Texas Education Research Center

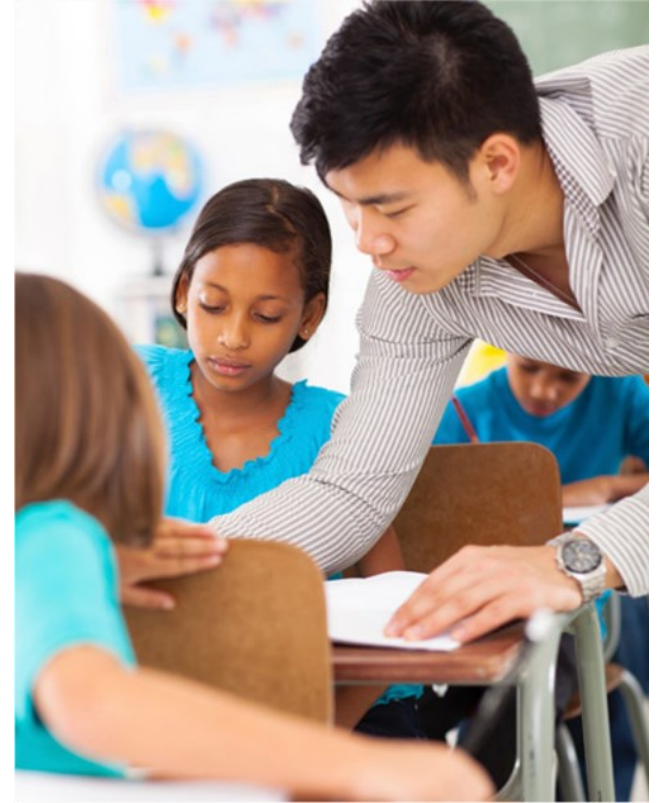
How can these findings inform **your** work?

How can these findings inform **teachers'** and **school leaders'** work?



Is student participation in a particular English learner program model associated with the English proficiency scores of Texas emergent bilingual students in 2020/21?

Students showed **no meaningful differences across program models** in scores on the listening, speaking, and reading domains compared with students in one-way dual-language immersion programs in 2020/21



# Implications

# Implications

- Focus recovery efforts on **elementary** schools to help improve proficiency.
- Identify and support the use of strategies to cultivate elementary school emergent bilingual students' **speaking** proficiency.
- Study the effect of emergent bilingual **program models** on language proficiency.
- Continue to study the relationship between **reclassification**, changing proficiency levels during the pandemic, TELPAS changes, and reclassification criteria.

Do these implications  
resonate with you?

Do you see other  
implications for your  
work?



# Questions?



# REL websites

Please visit REL Southwest at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/default.aspx> and the REL program at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/> for more information:

- Current and archived events, research, and training resources
- Infographics and videos
- Blog

The screenshot shows the homepage of the REL Southwest website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the IES REL logo, the text 'Regional Educational Laboratory Program', a 'MENU' button, and a search bar. Below the navigation bar is a large orange banner with a map of the Southwest United States (New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas) highlighted in orange. To the right of the map, the text reads: 'REL Southwest: Putting Research into Action' and 'The Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest translates research to practice in partnership with policymakers and practitioners in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.' Below the banner, there is a section titled 'Our Work Partnerships Publications Events' with a 'Stay Up-to-Date:' section containing icons for RSS, Twitter, YouTube, and Email. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'WHAT'S NEW AT REL SOUTHWEST' and lists four recent events with dates and titles: 'MAY 5 Implementing Bilingual Seals to Strengthen Bilingual Education and Support Cultural Awareness', 'MAR 18 Rethinking Data for Improvement, Accountability, and Support Under COVID-19', 'FEB 22 New Report Examines Alternative Career Readiness Measures for Graduates in Small and Rural Texas Districts', and 'FEB 17 Supporting Your Middle or High Schooler's Writing Skills at Home'. The right column is titled 'WORKS IN PROGRESS' and includes a 'Learn more' link and a photograph of a small green plant growing in soil. Below this is the 'ASK A REL' section, which includes a 'Learn more' link and a photograph of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard in a library setting.

# Connect with us



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## Visit our website

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/index.asp>

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*Thank you!*