

MICHIGAN'S GREAT START READINESS PROGRAM (GSRP) SUPPORTS DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

✓ *While all children gain, children who enter GSRP with limited English proficiency gain the most in English early literacy skills.*

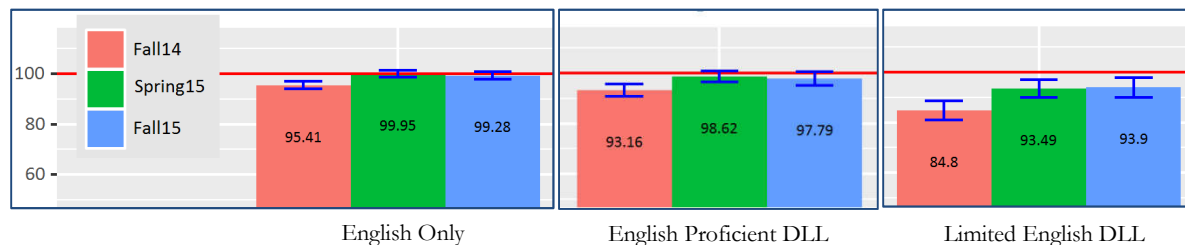


Figure 1: GSRP Reduces Letter-Word Gaps for Limited English Dual Language Learners¹

Children who enter GSRP with limited or no understanding of English gained significantly more than their English proficient classmates in English early literacy skills, as measured by Letter-Word identification (Woodcock-Johnson III, subtest 1). The initial achievement gap in letter-word identification between English-only children and children who are limited English DLLs was reduced by 37% during the GSRP year.² In addition, children experienced no summer loss in Letter-Word identification, thus ready to learn in kindergarten.

Children were also assessed in receptive vocabulary knowledge using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-IV). **Both English proficient and English limited DLLs gained significantly more than English-only children** (5.8 and 5.5, respectively, vs. 3.7 in standard scores) during the program year. While the gain realized by Limited English DLL children was not sufficient for them to reach the age-expected vocabulary norm for English, all DLL children continued to gain in their Spanish receptive vocabulary skills throughout the year. This suggests that English PPVT scores are just half of the story. While letter and sound knowledge are similar in the two languages, vocabulary knowledge is most likely acquired in different contexts. Consequently, the words DLL children learn at home and at school may be different and may not completely overlap. Nevertheless, transfer in vocabulary knowledge across languages is happening during the GSRP year, helping children build vocabulary in both languages, as our second finding suggests. When assessing DLL children, therefore, it is important that children's language skills are assessed in both languages, and scores are examined holistically.

✓ *GSRP supports dual language learners in strengthening both home and English language acquisition*

Crossed lagged model analysis was performed to explore the relationship between Spanish-English dual language learners' two languages. It was found that Spanish early literacy skills at program entry (WJ-III and PPVT-IV) affect later English development, and vice versa. In other words, for children who enter GSRP with minimal English, a strong Spanish language foundation supports their acquisition of English, and their English development also continues to support Spanish language development. These lagged effects, which were significant, were observed only during the school year, and not during the summer months.

¹333 children were assessed at GSRP program entry (Fall, 2014), program exit (Spring, 2015), and kindergarten entry (Fall, 2015). The scores shown are standard scores, i.e., 100 is the mean of the national norm.

² Percent of reduction is based on comparable longitudinal scores and not the standard scores.