

Communication Approaches to Educating Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students: Bilingual-Bicultural and Listening and Spoken Language

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The Problem

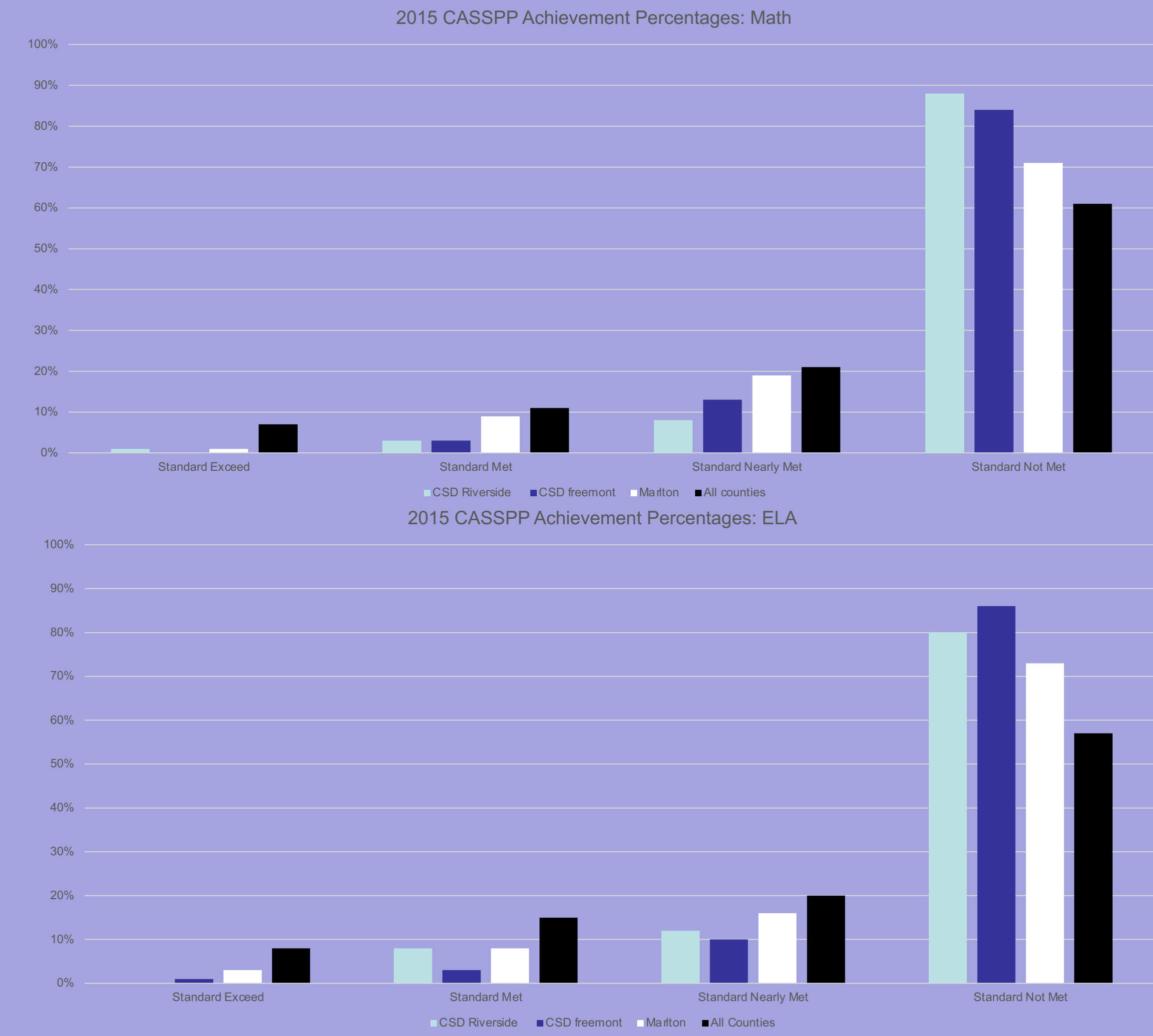
- Deaf and hard of hearing student's standardized test scores are often compared to their typically hearing peers. But what happens when we compare the test scores of Deaf students that use the bilingual-bicultural method to communicate, to their deaf and hard of hearing peers that do not attend one of the three schools for the deaf in California?
- There are many different communication approaches for families of deaf and hard of hearing students to choose from but no clear answer on why one method is better than another
- American Sign Language literacy programs such as the Fairview Learning program does not exceed a third-grade reading level; yet it is one of the most popular literacy programs used in California for bilingual-bicultural students.
- Research of early Deaf education found that students in bilingual-bicultural programs do not exceed a third-grade reading level. Curriculum for Deaf learners, such as the Fairview learning program, does not exceed a third-grade standard for literacy. This myth has since been debunked, and yet we are still supporting and using this curriculum because it is still the best that there currently is. This is a great disservice to Deaf learners that are expected to achieve greater academic competence as they progress through higher grades in education.
- Are there gaps in the standardized test scores of deaf and hard of hearing students in California regarding their school placement and communication approach?

Results

- In general, the majority of deaf and hard of hearing students in California schools are not meeting required state standards in the academic areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics.
- When comparing the Math results of all deaf and hard of hearing students in California to the students enrolled at three schools that place a strong emphasis on the bilingual-bicultural approach to communication (ASL and English), the students enrolled at the three schools for the Deaf had less students meeting standards by percentage than their deaf and hard of hearing peers.
- The same is true for the English Language Arts academic achievement standards.
- Marlton had the smallest gaps in achievements when compared to the rest of the deaf and hard of hearing students in California. Further research should be conducted as to why.

Purpose of the Study

- The purpose of this study is to compare data between three schools in California that educate their students using the bilingual-bicultural approach, to the rest of the deaf and hard of hearing students in California.
- Previous research is outdated and places an emphasis on the efficacy of mainstreaming children with hearing loss into general education settings.
- The intent of this study was to find if there are greater weaknesses in schools that use the bilingual-bicultural approach, and if there are, where they exist.
- Previous research has indicated a gap in learning between bilingual-bicultural learners and listening and spoken language learners. This study seeks to find if there is still a gap and where the largest discrepancies are in respect to the data provided by CAASSP test scores.

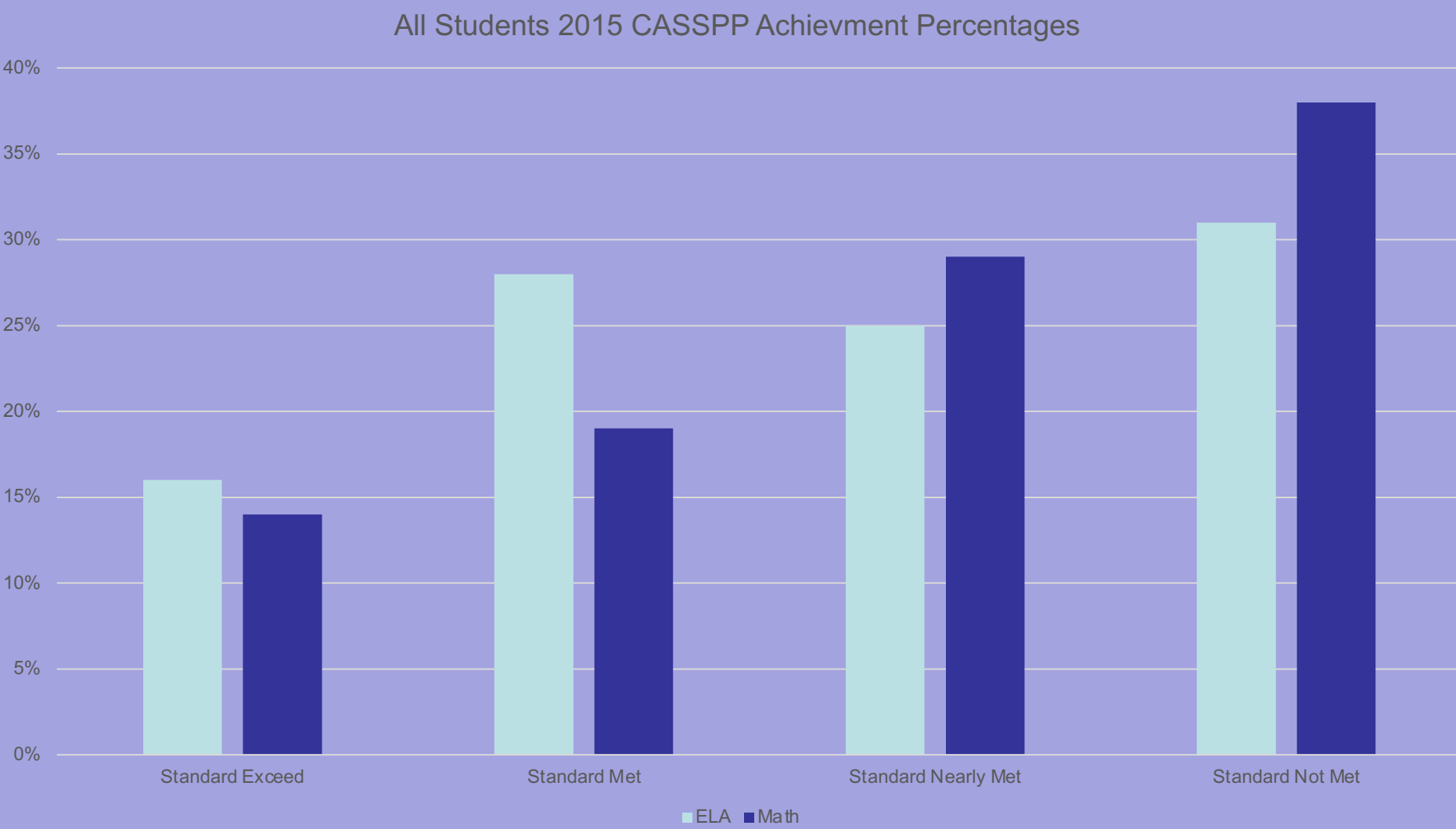


The data that was collected from individual content areas is presented in percentages of students that have either scored above standard, at or near standard, or below standard as determined by the Achievement Level Descriptors provided by the California Department of Education. For the overall achievement scores, the data is reflected as the mean scale scores presented for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics separated by grade level at each school for the Deaf.

Methodology

- This casual-comparative study used preexisting data collected from the California Department of Education to compare state test scores, in the areas of English Language Arts and Math, of students enrolled in three schools for the Deaf in California to the rest of the deaf and hard of hearing students in the state.
- This study seeks to find if there is still a gap and where the largest discrepancies are in respect to the data provided by CAASSP test scores. Mertler (2019) describes the casual-comparative study as "looking for a possible cause "after the fact," since both the precursory conditions and the resulting differences have already occurred; that is, the study is taking place retrospectively" (p.103).
- Causal-comparative studies further explore the reasoning behind existing differences (Mertler, 2019).

Implications



- With respect to educating deaf and hard of hearing students, educators have a long way to go to get them to achieve state standards.
- The results from this study indicate that school placement, and communication options related to placement, may not be the primary reason for the achievement gap with deaf and hard of hearing students in comparison to their typically hearing peers.
- Deaf students need a stronger literacy curriculum in order to boost their achievement scores to match their deaf and hard of hearing peers.
- There could be other reasons as to why the three schools for the Deaf have lower standard achievements and more research needs to be done; focusing on curriculum, language backgrounds, language intervention, and remediation.