

Research Note No. 15 – July 2018

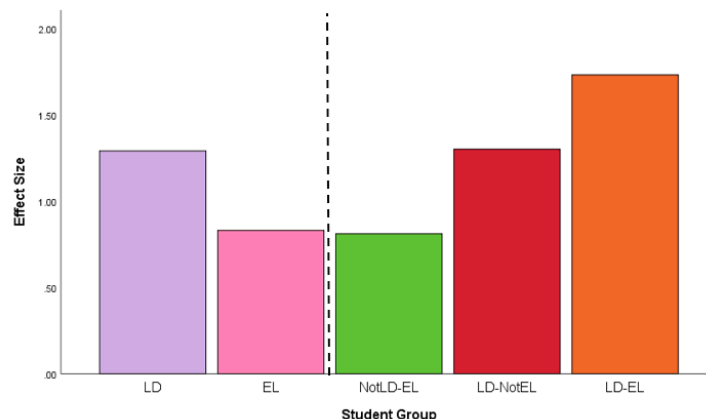
In DYK #14, we used achievement data from NC to show that the size of the mathematics achievement gap between students with learning disabilities (LD) and students without disabilities (SWOD) depended on other student characteristics (e.g., ethnicity). In this DYK, we extend the results in DYK#14 to another state (AZ) and a different content area. Here, we report that students who are *both* LD and English Learners (EL) have a much larger achievement gap than either group considered separately.¹

The good news: Although reading achievement gaps may be larger than previously reported for students who are *both* LD and EL, identifying students *most at risk of reading difficulties is important in targeting resources toward students who are in greatest need.*

The challenge ahead: Identifying combinations of characteristics that put students at greatest risk of low achievement is only a first step. Developing or adapting evidence-based interventions that address unique combinations of student characteristics is an important research priority.

To illustrate the point that other student characteristics beyond a disability influence reading achievement gaps, examine this figure.

Reading Achievement Gaps in Grade 7 for EL and LD Students Considered Separately and in Combination



- To the left of the dashed black line, the figure shows achievement gap effect sizes (ES) for students who are EL or LD. To the right are the ES for students considering their LD *and* EL status in combination (all ES comparisons are to students who are not LD or EL).
- As the figure shows, conclusions drawn from the individual groups on the left do not apply to the more specific groups on the right. Of particular concern is the much larger achievement gap for students who are *both* LD and EL; a result that is commonly overlooked in typical analysis of achievement gaps.

¹ For more information, see: Stevens, J. J. (2018, June). *Academic growth and gaps for specific student subgroups on a state accountability reading test*. Paper presented at the National Conference on Student Assessment, San Diego, CA. Available on our website: www.ncaase.com

Acknowledgement: This research was funded through the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (<http://ies.ed.gov>) through a Cooperative Service Agreement establishing the National Center on Assessment and Accountability for Special Education – NCAASE (PR/Award Number R324C10004). The findings and conclusions expressed do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the U.S. Department of Education.