Transfer-Level English and Math Throughput for Students with Disabilities

Updated Analysis of AB 705 Impact in the California Community Colleges

FEBRUARY 2025

Introduction

As part of our ongoing assessment of AB 705, The RP Group's Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) regularly assesses the how this landmark legislation effects students access to and success in transfer-level English and math across the California Community Colleges (see sidebar). Not only do we look at overall impact, but we also explore the enrollment and performance of specific populations to better understand whether this developmental education reform is equally benefitting different student groups.

Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) Overview

The RP Group launched MMAP in 2014 to support the advancement of developmental education reform in the California Community Colleges. MMAP now supports the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office with the implementation of AB 705 and AB 1705, which seek to improve equitable placement into and completion of gateway transfer-level English and math courses.

Learn more about this work at www.rpgroup.org/mmap.

Our latest research on AB 705 implementation continues to find outcomes trending positive for special populations, including students impacted by the foster care system, veterans, and those participating in Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) and Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS) (MMAP, 2025).[1] This brief offers a deeper dive into the timely success of students with disabilities in transfer-level English and math, analyzing both primary disability type and gender to allow for a thorough investigation of the policy's impact on these different groups. It builds on prior analysis conducted in the period immediately following AB 705 implementation,[2] providing updated data through the 2023-2024 academic year.

Overall, results showed continued gains in transfer-level English and math for across students of every disability type, although some improvements were more significant for some disability groups over others.

[1] Find more information on the California Community Colleges' Extended Opportunities Programs and Services and Extended Opportunities Programs and Services.

[2] Find prior research in *Throughput in Transfer-Level English and Math for Students with Disabilities* (MMAP, 2022).

Methodology

The RP Group specifically analyzed "throughput" rates for student cohorts starting at any of the 116 California Community Colleges in a fall term, fall 2015 through fall 2023. We define this metric as the proportion of the entire cohort of students who enroll in any level of English or math in the fall term and successfully complete a transfer-level course in that same subject within one year (see sidebar). We disaggregated the data based on whether students received DSPS services at any point in the timeframe as follows: non-DSPS students, DSPS students, and DSPS students broken out by primary disability as defined by the Chancellor's Office Management Information System (COMIS).[3,4]

Key Terms

Transfer-level English and math: transfer-level course that satisfies a course requirement for transfer.

Course success: completion of a course in one term, with a grade of A, B, C, or P.

Throughput: proportion of students who enroll in either an English or math course at any level in the fall term, and successfully complete a transfer-level English or math course within one year (including fall, winter, spring, summer terms).

For context, some cohort sizes changed significantly during the period studied. The non-DSPS cohort size remained relatively unchanged from 2015-2016 in English (-1%) but decreased in math by -22%. Overall, DSPS cohorts shrunk in English and math by -15% and -37%, respectively. Changes in cohort sizes by primary disability varied, with Autism and ADHD experiencing the biggest increases in English (+95% and +51%, respectively) and math (+39% and +17%, respectively). Cohorts for students with intellectual, physical, and other disabilities experienced the most notable declines in size, ranging from -76% to -59% in English and -82% and -72% in math.

Findings

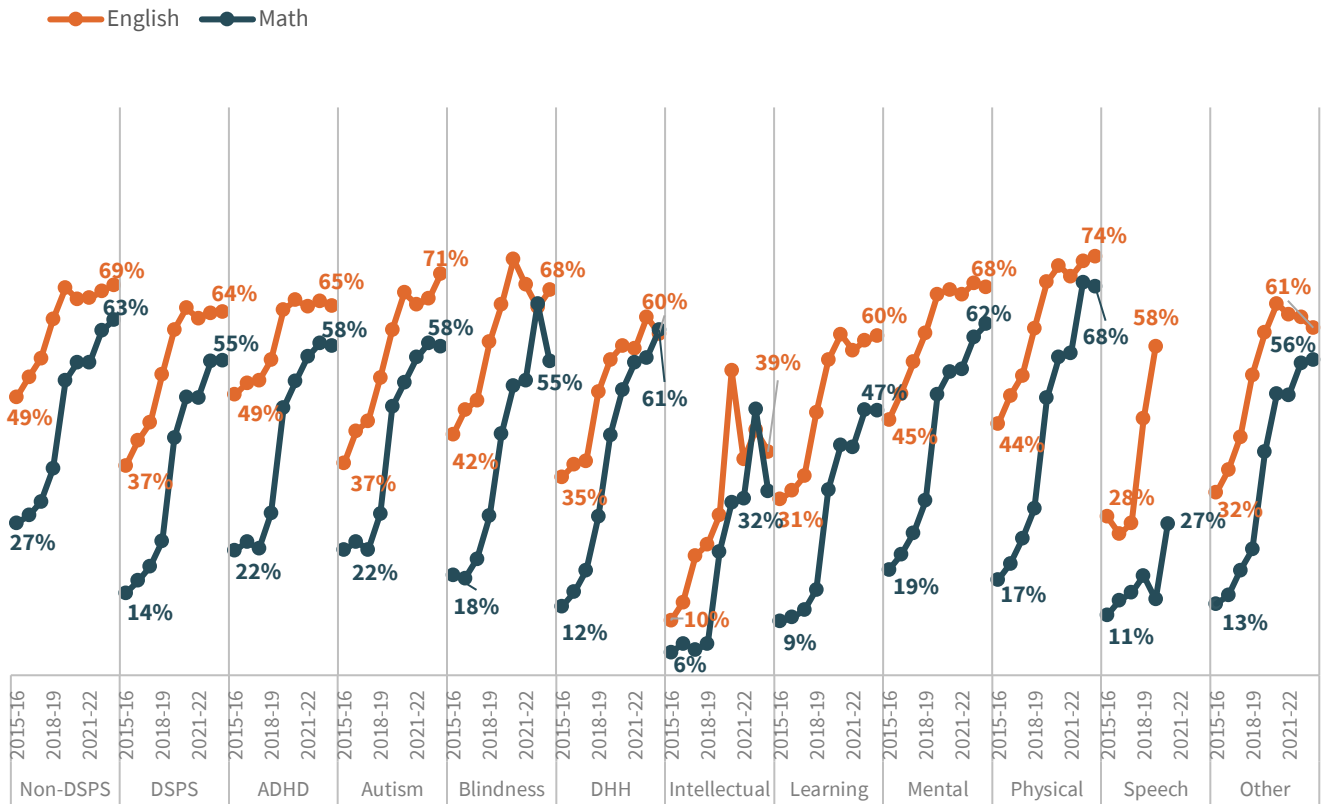
Throughput has increased substantially for students of all disability types.

Compared to their non-DSPS peers, DSPS students exhibited a larger percentage point increase in both English and math throughput. DSPS students' English throughput climbed to 64% from 37% (+27% points), compared to non-DSPS students whose rates rose to 69% from 49% (+20% points). DSPS students' math throughput jumped to 55% from 14% (+41% points) compared to non-DSPS students whose rates increased to 63% from 27% (+36% points). Notably, when examining the results across disability types, throughput increased for every group from 2015-2016 to 2023-2024 in both English and math (Figure 1).

[3] The following nomenclature is used in this report: ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; Autism = Autism Spectrum; Blindness = Blind and Low Vision; DHH = Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Intellectual = Intellectual Disability; Learning = Learning Disability; Mental = Mental Health Disability; Physical = Physical Disability; Other = Other Health Conditions and Disabilities. Speech/Language Impaired is omitted because data collection for this disability stopped in 2019-20.

[4] For definitions of the disability categories listed above, refer to Title 5 Sections 56032 to 56044.

Figure 1. Transfer-Level English and Math Throughput by Disability Type (2015-2016 through 2023-2024)

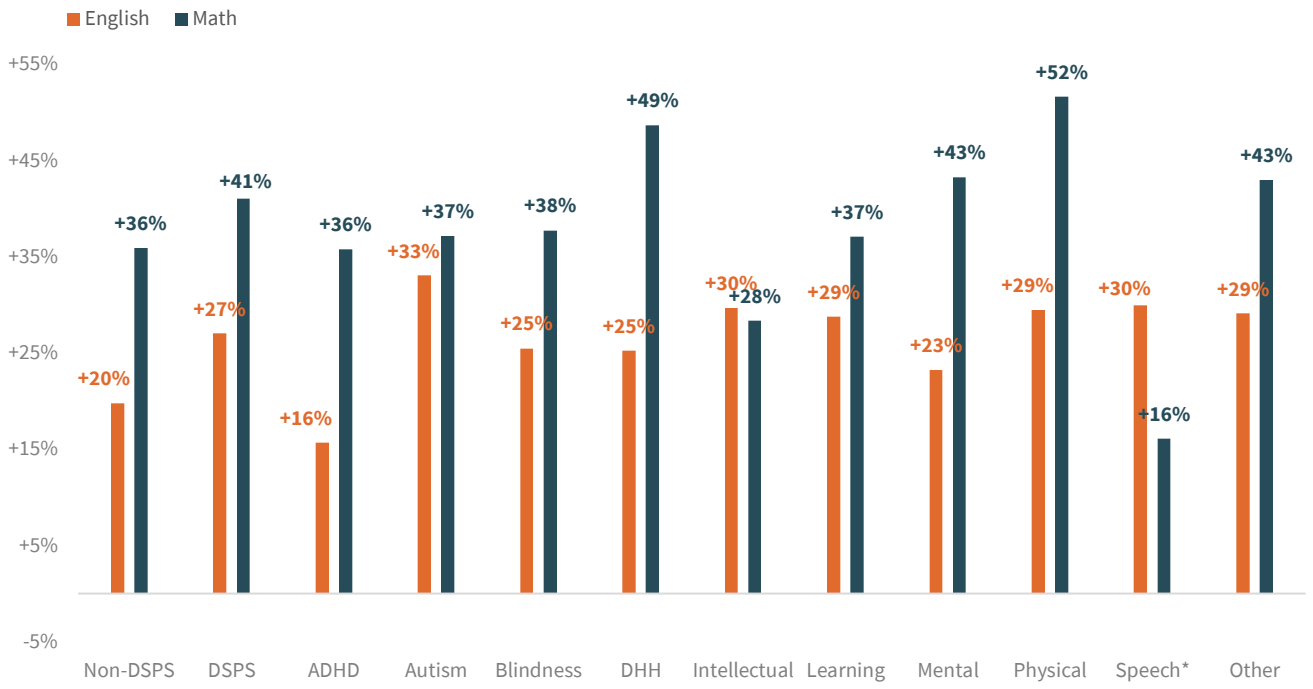


Yet, increases were not equivalent across disability groups.

The nine-year percentage point change by primary disability revealed uneven improvement in throughput across groups (Figure 2). In terms of English throughput, students whose primary disability was Autism experienced the most significant increases, jumping from 38% to 71%–an increase of +33% points. Students who had an intellectual, learning, physical, or other disability also experienced significant increases, ranging from +29% to +30% points. Students with ADHD experienced a moderate change (+16% points).

Trends in math throughput show even bigger gains in percentage point increases than English across all groups, except for students with an intellectual disability (Figure 2). Percentage point increases differed among groups, with students whose primary disability was physical experiencing the biggest increase, rocketing from 17% to 68%–an increase of 52% points. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing and those with mental or other disabilities also experienced significant improvements, ranging from 49% to 43% points. The smallest increase in math throughput was observed among students with intellectual disability (28% points), which is consistent with past years trends.

Figure 2. Nine-Year Percentage Point Change in Transfer-Level English and Math Throughput by Disability Type (2015-2016 through 2023-2024)



Note: Nine-year percentage point change calculated by taking the difference of 2023-2-24 and 2015-2016 rates, except for *speech disability which did not have data from 2020-2021 for English and 2021-2022 for math. In this case, the latest year with data is used.

Conclusion

Overall, this evidence supports that AB 705 has resulted in improved English and math throughput for students of all disability types. Although students with different disabilities benefited, improvements in rates were more marked for some groups over others. These data indicate that students with disabilities are succeeding under the parameters of the law and thus should be placed similarly to non-DSPS students with appropriate assistance and adequate accommodations. Colleges need to ensure that students with disabilities are accessing transfer-level coursework at rates that are proportional to all non-DSPS students. By disaggregating these data, colleges will have an additional lens on students' completion of transfer-level English and mathematics courses and can use this information to guide their decisions on where to focus resources and support to ensure the success of students with disabilities.

Appendix

Table 1a. Transfer-Level English and Math Throughput by Primary Disability Type (2015-2016 through 2023-2024)

Subject	Subgroup	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	9-Yr % Pt. Change
English	Non-DSPS	49%	52%	56%	63%	68%	66%	66%	68%	69%	+20%
	DSPS	37%	41%	44%	53%	61%	65%	63%	64%	64%	+27%
	ADHD	49%	51%	52%	56%	64%	66%	65%	66%	65%	+16%
	Autism	38%	43%	44%	52%	61%	67%	65%	66%	71%	+33%
	Blindness	42%	47%	48%	59%	65%	73%	69%	65%	68%	+25%
	DHH	35%	37%	38%	50%	56%	58%	57%	63%	60%	+25%
	Intellectual	10%	13%	21%	23%	28%	54%	38%	43%	39%	+30%
	Learning	31%	32%	35%	46%	55%	60%	57%	59%	60%	+29%
	Mental	45%	50%	55%	60%	67%	68%	67%	69%	68%	+23%
	Physical	44%	49%	53%	61%	69%	72%	70%	73%	74%	+29%
	Speech	28%	25%	27%	45%	58%					+30%
	Other	32%	36%	42%	53%	60%	65%	63%	63%	61%	+29%
Math	Non-DSPS	27%	28%	31%	36%	52%	55%	55%	61%	63%	+36%
	DSPS	14%	17%	19%	24%	42%	49%	49%	55%	55%	+41%
	ADHD	22%	23%	22%	28%	47%	52%	56%	58%	58%	+36%
	Autism	21%	22%	22%	27%	45%	51%	47%	59%	58%	+37%
	Blindness	18%	17%	20%	28%	43%	51%	52%	65%	55%	+38%
	DHH	12%	15%	18%	28%	42%	50%	55%	56%	61%	+49%
	Intellectual	4%	6%	4%	5%	22%	30%	31%	47%	32%	+28%
	Learning	9%	10%	11%	15%	33%	41%	40%	47%	47%	+37%
	Mental	19%	21%	25%	31%	49%	53%	54%	60%	62%	+43%
	Physical	17%	20%	24%	29%	49%	56%	57%	69%	68%	+52%
	Speech	11%	13%	15%	18%	13%	27%				+16%
	Other	13%	14%	18%	22%	39%	50%	49%	55%	56%	+43%

Note: ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; DHH = Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Table 2a. Cohort Sizes by Primary Disability Type (2015-2016 through 2023-2024)

Subject	Subgroup	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	9-Yr % Change
English	Non-DSPS	156,972	159,148	162,977	165,452	165,876	148,152	135,804	145,445	155,574	-1%
	DSPS	13,567	13,799	14,420	14,498	14,157	10,440	10,279	11,355	11,524	-15%
	ADHD	1,264	1,925	1,941	1,863	1,946	1,675	1,690	1,822	1,910	+51%
	Autism	738	983	1,162	1,352	1,270	1,135	1,210	1,339	1,441	+95%
	Blindness	267	270	250	283	259	187	173	142	146	-45%
	DHH	407	369	379	369	398	255	261	230	256	-37%
	Intellectual	301	265	266	230	213	125	129	146	122	-59%
	Learning	3,655	4,454	4,969	4,885	4,631	2,997	2,956	3,390	3,619	-1%
	Mental	3,387	3,389	3,223	3,219	3,207	2,529	2,366	2,532	2,253	-33%
	Physical	1,053	914	781	700	608	405	335	361	354	-66%
	Speech	254	169	71	31	19					-93%
	Other	7,218	4,427	3,033	2,665	2,440	1,756	1,629	1,809	1,740	-76%
Math	Non-DSPS	154,403	155,149	157,590	152,811	138,842	128,674	111,430	111,271	120,016	-22%
	DSPS	13,090	13,532	13,387	12,938	10,714	8,455	7,981	7,970	8,197	-37%
	ADHD	1,254	1,857	1,873	1,779	1,596	1,396	1,320	1,440	1,465	+17%
	Autism	700	986	1,137	1,187	1,000	883	972	997	970	+39%
	Blindness	262	252	215	225	181	155	131	136	132	-50%
	DHH	404	404	336	319	265	231	167	152	181	-55%
	Intellectual	276	253	224	182	115	79	74	79	68	-75%
	Learning	3,389	4,367	4,506	4,288	3,253	2,251	2,187	2,062	2,284	-33%
	Mental	3,276	3,295	3,074	2,957	2,583	2,206	1,965	1,975	1,835	-44%
	Physical	1,005	897	745	655	492	384	307	266	282	-72%
	Speech	256	182	62	40	15	15				-94%
	Other	7,053	4,457	2,803	2,390	1,957	1,432	1,285	1,224	1,240	-82%

Note: ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; *DHH* = Deaf and Hard of Hearing