

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Using ACCESS Data to Drive Systems-Level Strategies for Multilingual Learner Acceleration





Leticia Jara-Leake

Executive Director,
Multilingual Education

Jacqui Wagner

Director of
Multilingual Education

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Agenda

- Denver Context
- Root Cause Analysis and Naming Actions
- Systems Connections and Implications
  - Support
  - Leadership
  - Monitoring
- Closing

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Denver Context

Denver Context (2025-26 Overview)

193
Total Schools
2025-26 Academic Year

89,210
Total Student Enrollment
2025-26 District Total

65.2%
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible Students

~31%
Multilingual Learners (2025-26)

Multilingual & Language Demographics

27,495
Multilingual Learners (2025-26)

27,642
Spanish-Speaking Students (includes non-ELL)

Top 10 Languages Spoken

1. English
2. Spanish
3. Arabic
4. Amharic
5. French
6. Vietnamese
7. Eastern Farsi
8. Nepali
9. Somali
10. Chuukese

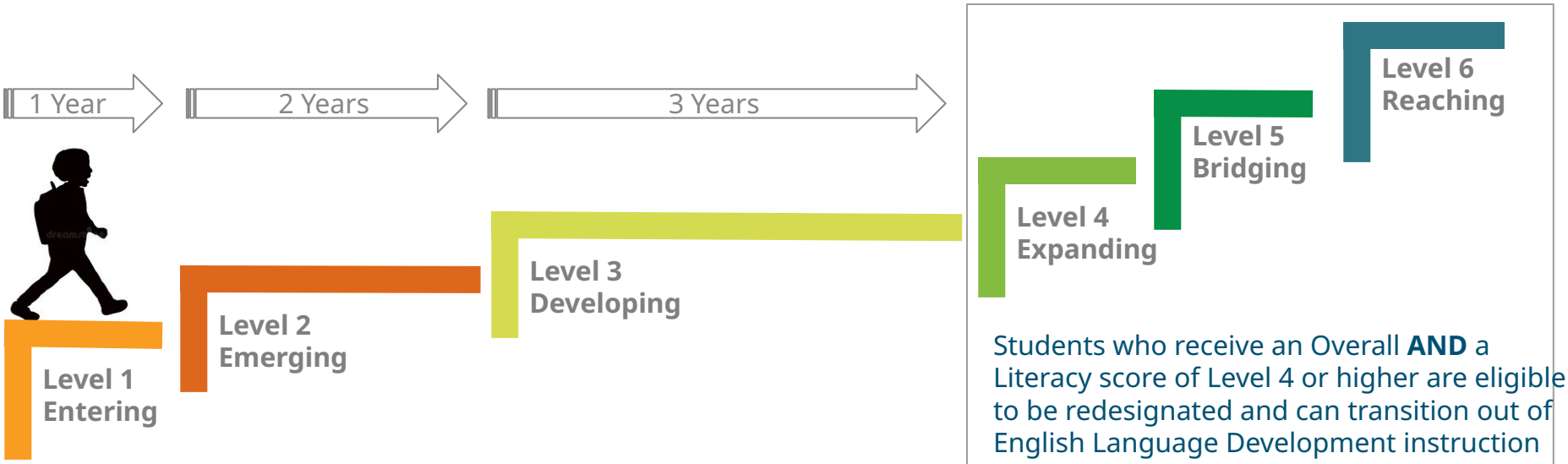
DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WIDA ACCESS is an English Language Proficiency assessment given annually to Kindergarten through 12th graders who have been identified as multilingual learners.

Students are tested in 4 language domains which are combined into an overall ACCESS score.



CDE's Growth Model allows students who enter school at ACCESS Level 1 six years to reach language proficiency (Level 4 or above).



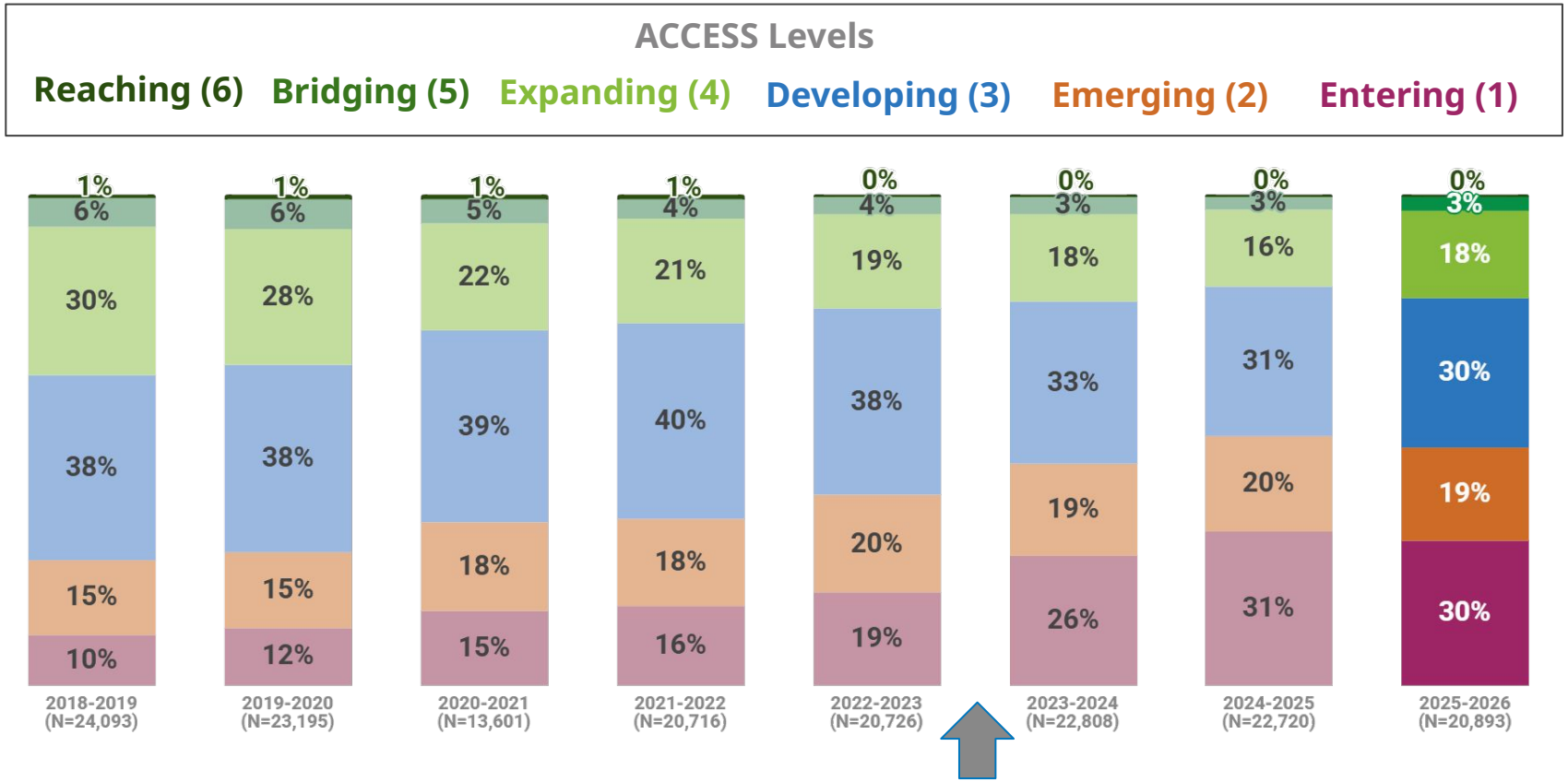
Students who receive an Overall **AND** a Literacy score of Level 4 or higher are eligible to be redesignated and can transition out of English Language Development instruction and programs.

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ACCESS Overall Composite

In 2025-26, 21% of tested students scored at **Level 4** or higher on the ACCESS Overall Composite, an increase of 2% points over 2024-25.

30% of ACCESS tested students scored in the Level 1 Proficiency Level, a decline of 1% point from 2024-25.



DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

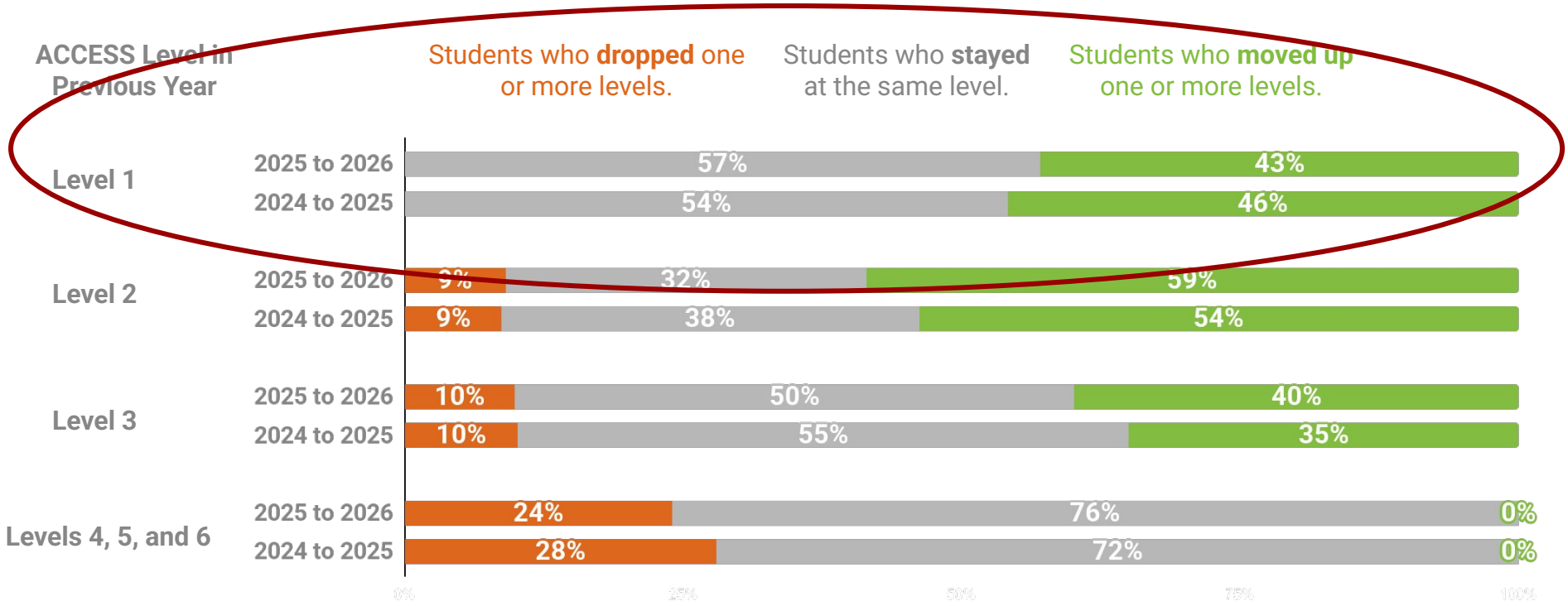
Root Cause Analysis and Naming Actions

ACCESS Cohort Proficiency Level

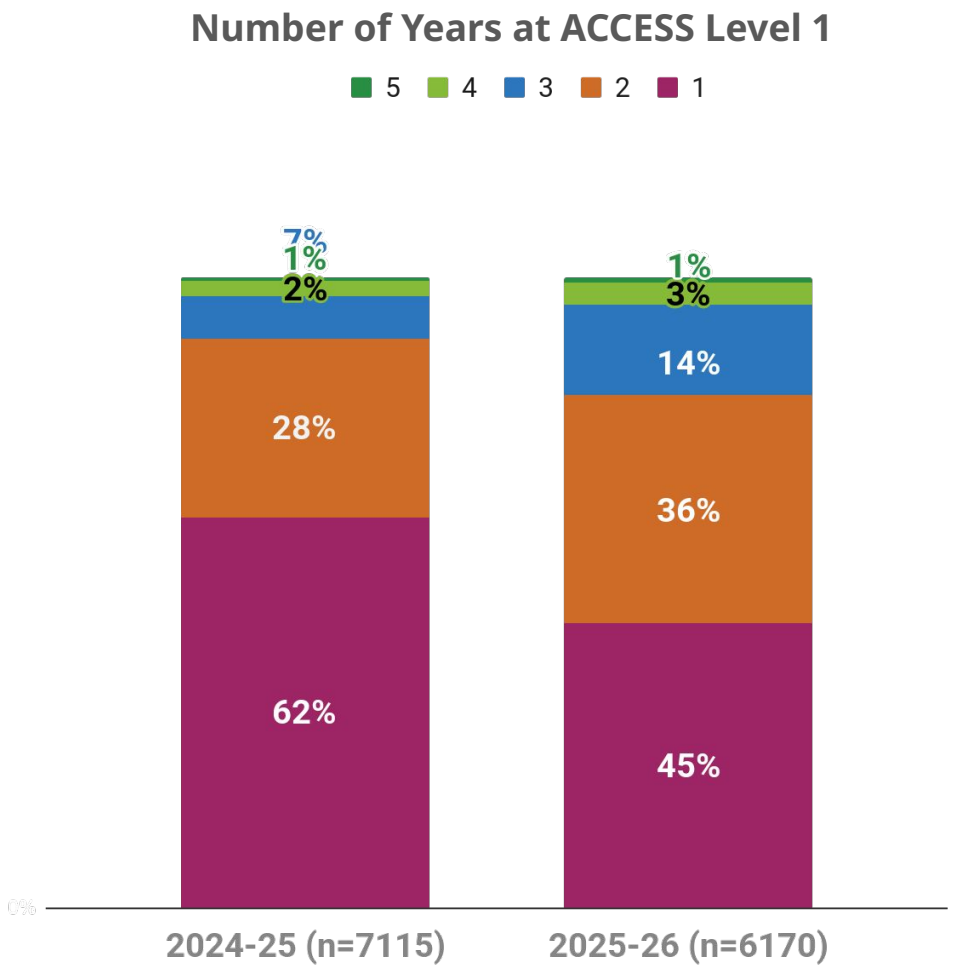
ACCESS On Track not available for 2025-26

Where are we seeing early indications of students being off-track?

Of MLL students scoring ACCESS Level 1, 57% stayed at Level 1 this year, also indicating these students will be Off Track to English Language Proficiency early in their multilingual development.



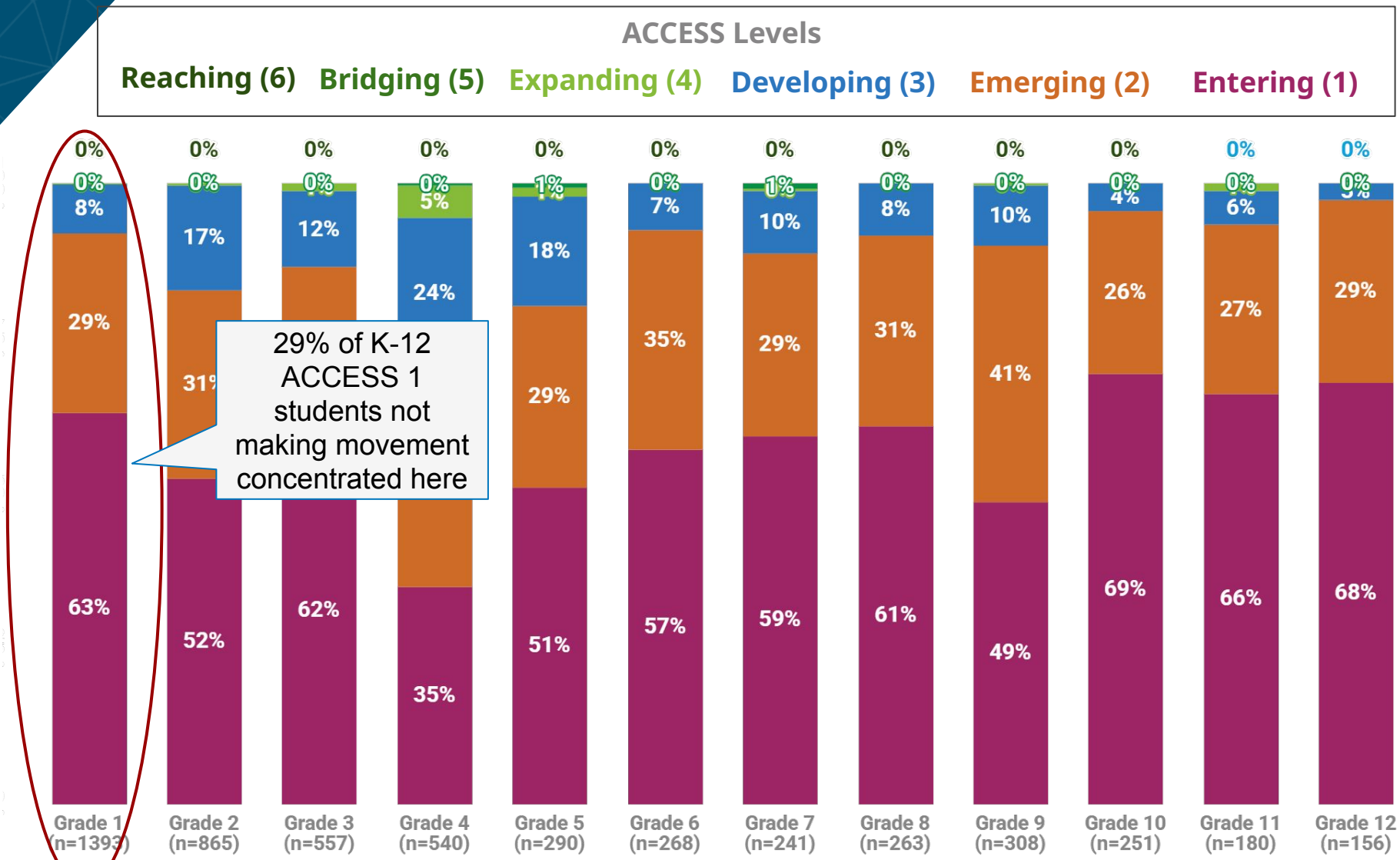
55% of students who tested at Level 1 in WIDA ACCESS in 2025-26 had 2 or more years at this level.



n=The number of students with Overall ACCESS scores at Level 1.

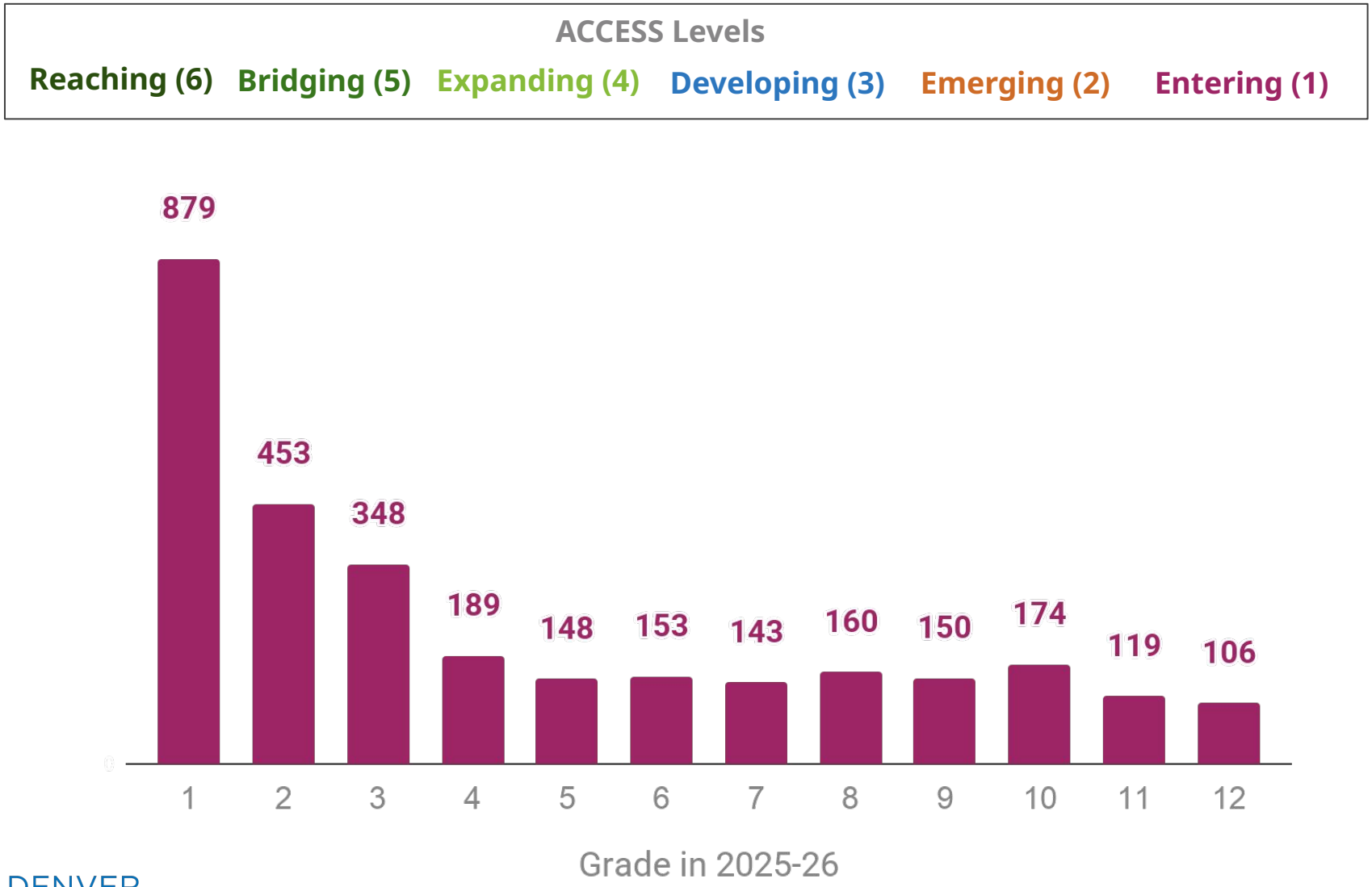
Level 1 by Grade

Students who tested at Level 1 in 2024-25 and have ACCESS scores in 2025-26 by Grade.



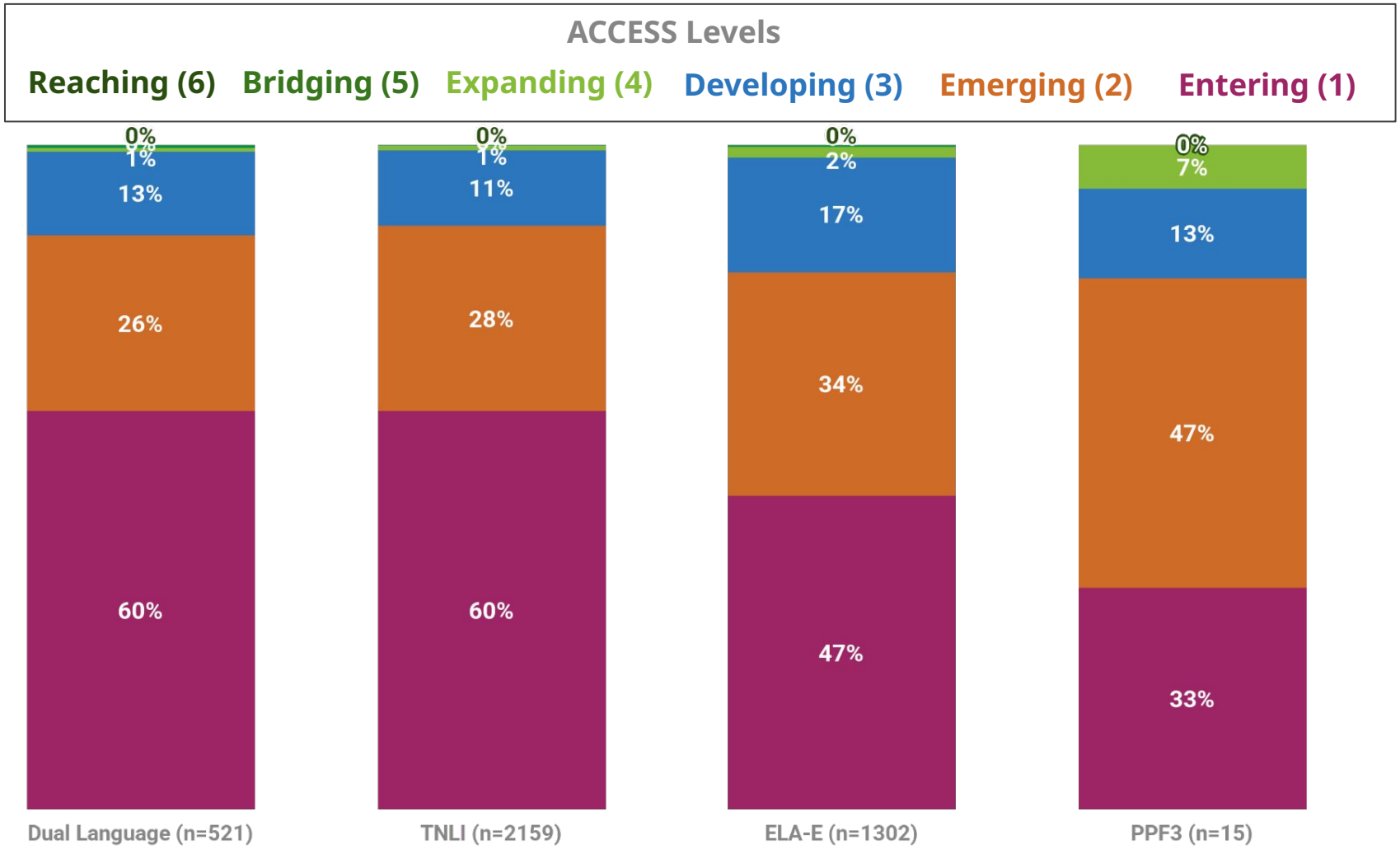
DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Students who tested at Level 1 in 2024-25 2025-26 by Grade.



Students in Grades K-5 who tested at Level 1 in 2024-25 and have ACCESS scores in 2025-26 by Program in 2025-26.

- K is excluded (didn't test last year)
- Only students who assessed last year at ACCESS level 1



Considerations

29%
(878 STUDENTS)

Key Finding: 1st Grade Focus

The highest number of students at ACCESS level 1 who did not grow as expected are concentrated in 1st grade, accounting for 29% of all K-12 ACCESS 1 students.

Rigor & Expectations

1st grade ACCESS expectations are highly rigorous.

Includes early decoding requirements that significantly impact performance outcomes at Level 1.

Language Allocation

52% of bilingual program schools fully/mostly align to Guidelines.

74% LAP Audit
Have Articulation Plans aligned with 90/10 model.

42% Assessment Data
Literacy language fully/mostly aligns to 90/10 Guidelines.

ELD Trends

Assessment Participation

Decreasing unit assessment participation data requires active monitoring and intervention.

Implications

Action 1

Language Allocation

Adherence to Language Allocation Guidelines

- Language Articulation Plan submissions
- Review of alignment through walkthroughs

Action 2

ELD Implementation

Strengthening ELD Instructional Models

- ELD instruction with focus on instructional routines
- Monitoring via walkthroughs

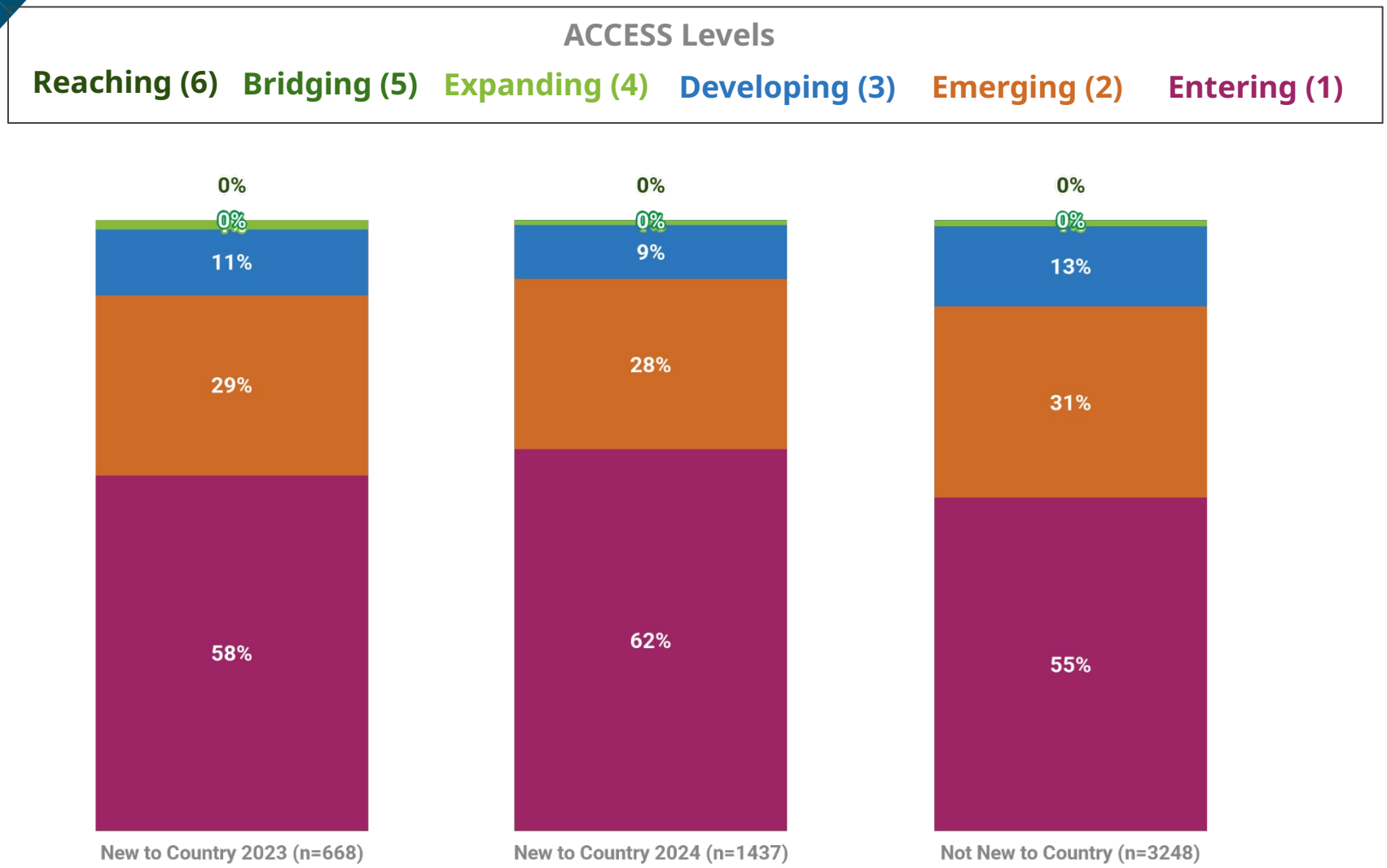
Action 3

Leadership Connection

Cross-Level Leadership Alignment

- Strategic leadership connection points

Students who tested at Level 1 in 2024-25 and have ACCESS scores in 2025-26 by New to Country Status.



Students who are New to Country 2023 arrived between 1/1/2023 and 112/31/2023.
Students who are New to Country 2024 arrived between 1/1/24 and 12/31/2024.

Considerations

Key Challenge

We are still not seeing the expected growth in students at ACCESS level 1 across grade levels.

Possible Root Cause 01

Elementary Level

- Adherence to language of **instruction** in bilingual programs.

Possible Root Cause 02

Secondary Level

Specialist notes & walkthrough data indicate continued use of translated materials without meaningful connections to English in content classes (some schools showing improvement).

- Especially common with **ELA-S support models**
- Scheduling audits note students in **> 2 recommended ELA-S courses**

Student Progression Data Across ACCESS Levels (Students Not Progressing at Expected Rates, Especially Level 1)

struction	Score decreased in 2025-2026 18.4%	Results ACCESS for ELL 2025-2026 Composite Proficiency Level	Results ACCESS for ELL 2024-2025 Composite Proficiency Level	Results ACCESS for ELL 2023-2024 Composite Proficiency Level	Results ACCESS for ELL 2022-2023 Composite Proficiency Level	Results ACCESS for ELL 2021-2022 Composite Proficiency Level
gh School	1	3.7	3.9	3.9		
gh School	1	1.6	1.9			
gh School	1	1.8	1.9			
gh School	1	1.8	2.1			
gh School	1	1.8	2.2			
gh School	1	1.6	1.9			
gh School	1	3.5	3.6			
gh School	1	2.1	2.8			

Implications

ACTION 1

Language Allocation Guidelines

- **Focus on Guidelines adherence**
- Language Articulation Plan submissions
- Review of alignment through walkthroughs

ACTION 2

Translanguaging Strategy

- **Continued focus on strategy implementation**
- Embedded walkthrough monitoring

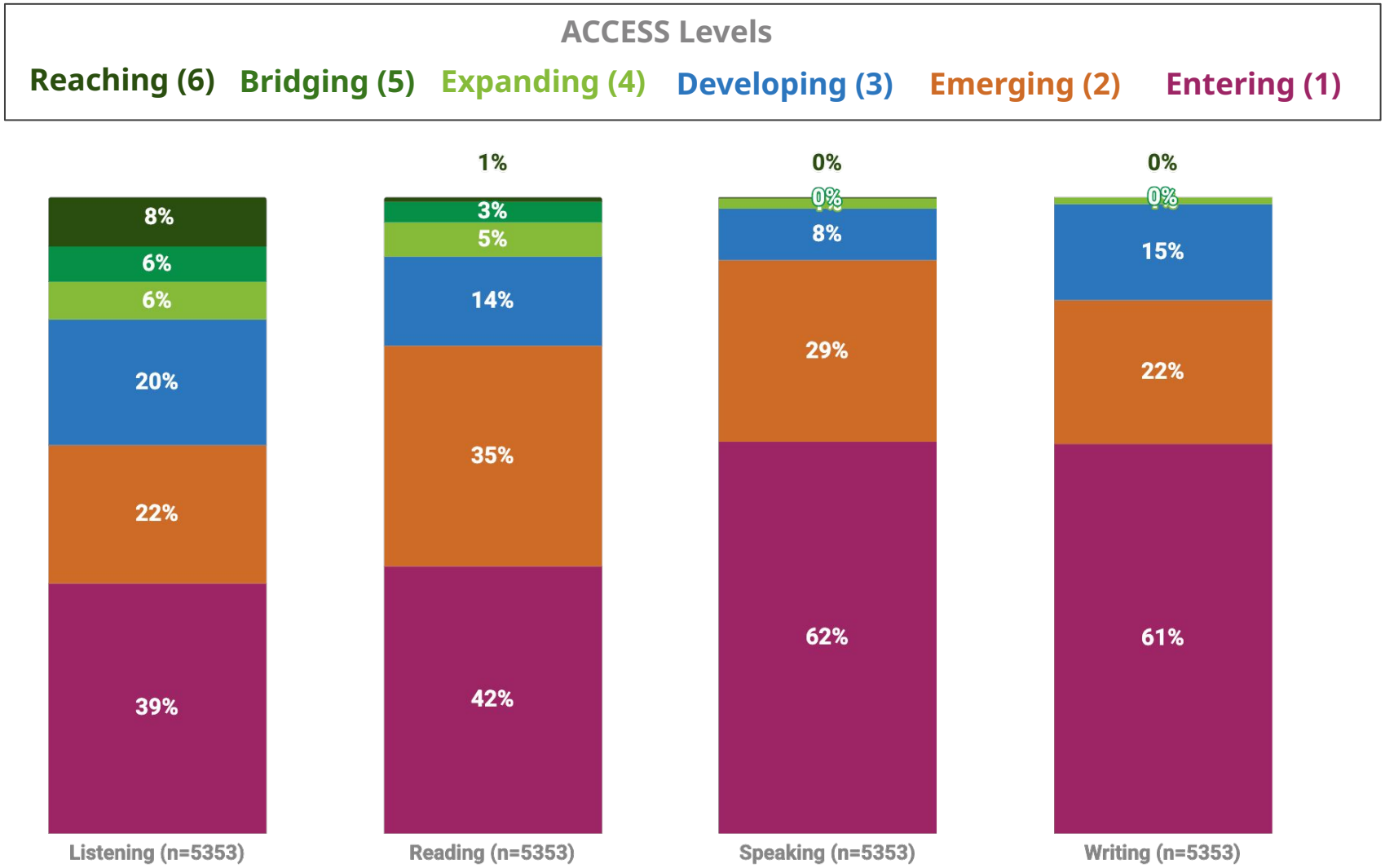
ACTION 3

Leadership Connection

- **Strategic leadership connection points**

Level 1 by Domain

Domain results for students who tested at Level 1 in 2024-25 and have ACCESS scores in 2025-26



DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Considerations

DOMAIN ANALYSIS

Language Domain Gaps

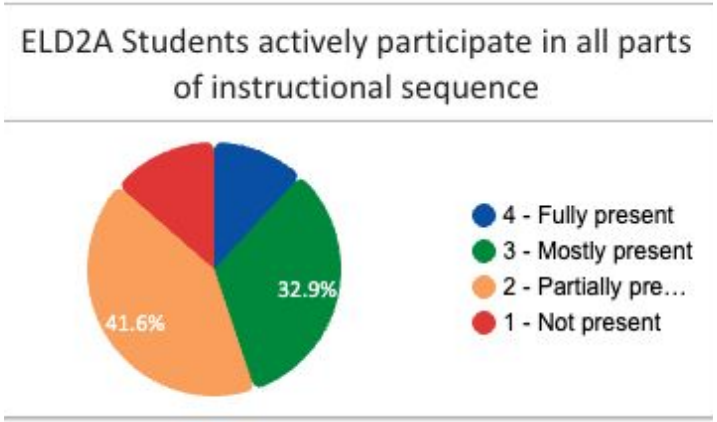
Domain results show increased gaps for students who did not move from ACCESS level 1.

For students at ACCESS 1, gaps in Receptive Language (Listening and Reading) and Productive Language (Speaking and Writing) were even more pronounced

WALKTHROUGH DATA

Active Student Participation

Walkthrough data shows the lowest indicator in ELD is active student participation.



Systems Connections

Support Implications

01

Language Allocation Guidelines Adherence

- Language Articulation Plan submissions
- Review of alignment through walkthroughs

02

Translanguaging Strategy

- Continued focus with embedded walkthrough monitoring

03

Accountable Student Production (Talk, Writing)

- Professional Learning (PL)
- Walkthroughs and follow-up support

04

ACCESS Level 1 Expectations Across Content Areas

- Clarify what meaningful participation (speaking/writing) looks like

05

Strategic Leadership Connection Points

- Building embedded coach (Content Lead) alignment and collaboration

Strategic Professional Learning: Content Leads

Supporting leadership with instructional systems

Month	Language Content Leads	Biliteracy Content Leads
August	Who are our MLLs?	Setting up Bilingual Program Systems
September	Coaching for Semester 1 ELD	Monitoring LAP Implementation
October	Coaching for Semester 1 ICLD	Biliteracy Data Analysis and Action Planning
November	Supporting MLLs on ACCESS	Responsive and Rigorous Instruction
December	Mid-year Data Analysis	Semester 1 Reflection & Looking Ahead
January	Coaching for Semester 2 ELD	Pathways to the Seal of biliteracy
February	Coaching for Semester 2 ICLD	Biliteracy Data Analysis and Action Planning
March	ELD: Setting up Systems for 26-27	Responsive and Rigorous Instruction
May	End of Year Data Analysis	End of Year Reflection/Systems for 27-28

Leadership Implications

01

Accurate, Validated Data Infrastructure

• Essential partnership with our Reporting, Analytics, Assessment and Data team

02

System-Wide Data & Root Cause Literacy

All layers of our system needed to understand this data and associated root causes:

- Principals
- Instructional Specialists (Central)
- School based instructional coaches
- Principal supervisors

03

Continuous Progress Monitoring

• Ongoing monitoring needed to be built in to ensure we're on track

Note: Final impact on student data remains to be seen; immediate impact has been more alignment across teams in identifying the correct problem and aligning our supports.

Monitoring Implications

01 Observation Data & Look-Fors

Teams (including Instructional Specialists, Principal Supervisors and Instructional Leadership Teams) use Instructional Look Fors to generate and monitor Observation Data based on target indicators.

02 Program Monitoring System

DPS has a program monitoring system for MLL programming; embedding this focus on how we monitor various program components (e.g. LAG adherence, ELD scheduling).

DPS Dedicated ELD Observation Rubric

Focus Area 1: Language Instruction	
1A: The teacher is using **a district approved curriculum.**	**Yes** **No**
1B: The teacher is using the **approved materials as designed**. *(I.1, I.2)*	

• The teacher uses the ***instructional materials and routines from the curriculum,*** *as designed, which might include:*
  ▫ Teacher guide/notes
  ▫ Slides, texts
  ▫ Student materials
	4 - Fully
	3 - Mostly
	2 - Partially
	1 - Minimally

Common Pitfall: The teacher facilitates the lesson using only the curricular slides without utilizing best practices included in the teacher guide/notes.	
1C: The teacher implements **explicit instruction** to ensure **language** is the **primary focus of the lesson.** *(I.1, I.3)*	

• The teacher clearly communicates the ***content-language objective(s)***.
• The teacher provides language instruction for ***the entire Dedicated ELD block***.
  ▫ Language instruction occurs in all three dimensions of language: word/phrase, sentence, and discourse.
  ▫ Language instruction honors that Academic English is not the "right" language, but rather is language to access opportunity.
• The teacher ensures ***language is the primary purpose*** of the lesson, including a ***mix of language domains***: listening, speaking, reading, and/or writing. *(While foundational literacy skills may be referenced during ELD instruction, the larger purpose of the lesson should be about language functions and forms, not to build phonemic awareness and phonics skills in isolation.)*
• The teacher provides ***explicit instruction in the functions*** (e.g., compare/contrast) ***and forms*** (e.g., however, both, opposed to) of language.
	4 — Fully present
	3 — Mostly present
	2 — Partially present
	1 — Not present

Common Pitfall: The teacher accepts single word responses from students and/or focuses only on the content (e.g., which animals live desert).	

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Thank you!