

English Learners in AP Classes:
How Understanding the U.S. School System Shapes EL Students' Confidence and
Participation in Advanced Placement Courses

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August 2026

Abstract

English learners (ELs) make up a growing share of U.S. public schools, yet they remain substantially underrepresented in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This mixed-methods project examined how limited understanding of the U.S. education system affects the confidence and participation of immigrant students and ELs in advanced classes. I chose this topic because it reflects my own experience. As an English learner, I had to learn about grade point average (GPA), course levels such as the Katy Advanced Program (KAP) and Advanced Placement (AP), dual credit, graduation requirements, and the academic support available to students. For the study, 20 high school students who were current or former ELs completed an anonymous survey, and two experienced English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. Among the survey respondents, 90% had felt unsure about enrolling in AP, 65% had decided against taking an advanced class because of fear, language barriers, or insufficient information, and 85% said language barriers had affected their academic performance at least somewhat. Only 25% felt their school had clearly encouraged them to take AP, yet 50% still planned to take an AP course in the future. The interviews pointed in the same direction: students must learn English while also learning how grades, GPA, course pathways, and academic expectations work and how each choice can affect life after high school. Taken together, the findings suggest that low participation does not necessarily reflect low ability or motivation. For many students in this study, gaps in information and support also played an important role. Recommended responses include early bilingual orientation, peer mentoring, clear AP and GPA guidance, teacher training, continued language scaffolding, and better communication among students, counselors, teachers, and families.

Research Question

How does unfamiliarity with the U.S. education system—including Advanced Placement courses, grade point average, academic expectations, and available support—affect the confidence and participation of immigrant students and English learners in advanced high school classes?

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Starting over in a new school system takes much more than learning new material. Immigrant students also have to learn the language, the grading scale, the grade point average (GPA) system, graduation requirements, the different course levels, how counseling works, and what each academic choice can lead to. For an English learner (EL), all of this can happen at the same time as adjusting to a new country, building a new group of friends, and developing academic English. It is no surprise, then, that Advanced Placement (AP) courses can seem out of reach even to a student who has the ability and motivation to do well.

This topic is personal to me. After arriving in the United States as an English learner, I saw how English as a Second Language (ESL) placement could differ from one district to another, and I had to learn how grades, advanced courses, and academic pathways worked. A few supportive teachers made a meaningful difference through relatively small actions: noticing when language was the barrier, placing me where support was accessible, checking that I understood, and still holding me to high expectations. These experiences also led me to present recommendations during meetings of the Katy ISD Federal Programs Advisory Committee for Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV on April 28 and May 13, 2025. My participation in those meetings encouraged me to investigate whether other ESL students were facing similar barriers. This led me to a broader question: How many capable immigrant students avoid advanced opportunities simply because no one ever explained the system or encouraged them to try?

The EL population is large and continues to grow, making this issue increasingly important. Between fall 2011 and fall 2021, the number of ELs increased from 4.6 million to 5.3 million, rising from 9.4% to 10.6% of U.S. public school enrollment (National Center for Education

Statistics [NCES], 2024). Texas had the highest percentage among all states, at 20.2%. Nationwide, Spanish was the home language of 76.4% of ELs. Information presented by the district during those committee meetings projected that ELs could represent nearly 30% of Katy ISD students by 2027. Separately, earlier studies had already predicted long-term growth in linguistically diverse enrollment (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Kapoyannis, 2021). These trends make preparing schools and teachers an increasingly important concern.

Growth by itself does not create opportunity. Federal data show that ELs are far less likely than other students to enroll in AP. In schools that offered AP, ELs made up about 6% of the student body but only 2% of AP enrollment. When AP was available, just 7% of ELs enrolled, compared with 22% of students overall (Office of English Language Acquisition [OELA], 2021). A gap of this size shows that simply offering the course is not enough. Students also need information they can understand, equitable placement, academic preparation, confidence, and adults who recognize their potential.

This study brings previous research together with original survey and interview data to examine that gap. It does not assume that every ESL student should immediately enroll in AP, nor does it treat English proficiency as unimportant. Instead, it asks a narrower question: Are students receiving enough information and support to make informed academic choices and attempt advanced coursework once they are ready?

Literature Review

English Learners and Academic Language

An EL is a student still developing the English proficiency needed to meet the same academic standards as other students. However, the label encompasses substantial variation. Two students who are both classified as ELs might have completely different prior schooling, literacy

levels, migration histories, and family income, and their speaking, listening, reading, and writing may develop at different rates. Calderón et al. (2011) warn against lumping secondary ELs together as if they were one group. Trainor et al. (2016) make a similar point: identification and services vary by state, and a student may sound fluent in one area while still needing substantial support in another.

It is also important to distinguish between two kinds of English. The English students use with friends differs from the academic English required by textbooks and exams, and the latter generally takes much longer to develop. Social English can come within a year or two; academic English usually takes four to seven years (Lee, 2012). Academic language becomes more demanding in higher grades as technical vocabulary, less common words, and dense texts become more frequent (Kapoyannis, 2021). Vladu's (2016) participants make the point well: they were passing AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and still, at times, struggling with grammar, writing, or finding the precise English word they needed. Conversational fluency, therefore, does not necessarily indicate full academic proficiency, and an accent or occasional error is not evidence of limited ability.

Reclassification and Transition

Reclassification is what happens when a student meets the proficiency criteria and loses the EL label. However, the timing matters. Removing support too early can stall a student's progress, while waiting too long may cause the EL label to persist and sometimes limit access to certain courses (Ma & Winters, 2025; Westat, 2022). Ma and Winters (2025) followed students over time in Indiana and saw a pattern: scores tended to rise going into reclassification, level off or slip during the first year without services, and then start climbing again. They interpret this pattern as evidence that the transition, combined with the sudden loss of support, can create an

academic shock. It is only a preprint, so the numbers deserve caution, but the practical implication remains: schools should continue monitoring students after they leave ESL rather than treating reclassification as the finish line.

AP Access, Tracking, and Institutional Barriers

AP courses provide college-level content and can give students an academic head start in higher education. Enrollment, however, requires more than academic ability. Watkins (2022) traced how school policies, placement practices, and actual course availability can shut capable ELs out of advanced work. At the school she examined, native Spanish speakers gained access to AP Spanish preparation only after a teacher challenged existing practices. When those obstacles were reduced and the classroom environment became more supportive, more students succeeded.

Kanno and Kangas (2014) describe how tracking, course scheduling, teacher recommendations, and counselor beliefs can narrow the choices available to ELs. Required language classes can crowd out college-preparatory electives, and some educators assume students cannot handle advanced work until their English is fully proficient. This creates a circular problem: students are kept from rigorous content because their academic English is still developing, but low-track classes give them fewer chances to build the very academic language and critical-thinking skills that advanced work demands. Their review found that only 19% of ELs in one national dataset enrolled directly in four-year institutions from high school, compared with 45% of monolingual English speakers.

Mosqueda (2010) shows that English proficiency and academic placement work together rather than separately. Non-native English speakers with stronger English who were placed in the college track performed substantially better in mathematics than similar students in the general track, and nearly as well as native English speakers in the college track. Fenty and Allio (2017)

found that even a statewide virtual AP program designed to widen access still underrepresented ELs and students with disabilities. Taken together, these studies make the same point: simply offering advanced courses does not erase the informational, procedural, or attitudinal barriers that surround them.

Teachers, Counselors, Peers, and Families

One factor appears repeatedly as a protective influence: effective teaching and strong relationships. For Calderón et al. (2011), effective EL education rests on several components working together—language and content taught side by side, cooperative learning, professional development, tutoring, family support, and steady monitoring. Kapoyannis (2021) examines the same issue from the teacher’s perspective. When future teachers received structured, authentic practice with ELs, their empathy and their confidence both grew. These findings suggest that generic training is not sufficient on its own.

Vladu (2016) interviewed seven former ELs who were thriving in AP or IB and found five school factors they had in common: teacher-student relationships, high expectations, teacher clarity, academic support, and course-selection coaching. All seven had been encouraged by teachers, counselors, or other school staff to enter advanced classes while still in middle school. Friends and classmates mattered too, forming academic networks that helped students learn English, complete assignments and meet deadlines. Notably, several students who were not recommended for AP at first went on to do well once they were admitted.

Hanks-Sloan (2016), drawing on surveys and focus groups with 159 Latino ELs, similarly stresses educational goals, family obligations, aspirations, and school support. Evans et al. (2025) analyzed 67 newspaper articles and identified the barriers that appeared repeatedly: language barriers, discrimination, mental-health stress, financial concerns, lack of school resources,

unfamiliarity with policy, limited U.S. cultural knowledge, family obligations, and limited parent involvement. Because that study examines how the media frames these issues rather than direct student testimony, its findings should be generalized cautiously, but its focus on unfamiliarity with policy connects directly to the question at the center of this research.

Methodology

This project used a small mixed-methods design that paired an anonymous student survey with two semi-structured teacher interviews. The goal was exploratory. I wanted to identify common experiences and compare them with patterns in existing research, not to prove cause and effect or generalize the findings to all English learners in the United States.

Participants

A total of 20 high school students completed the survey. All participants were current or former ELs, and the survey was distributed to students through ESL teachers. On the survey item about ESL participation, 40% reported that they were currently in an ESL program, 45% reported previous participation, and 15% selected “no.” The three students who selected “no” had previously participated in ESL and had misunderstood the question as referring only to current participation. Most respondents were in grades 10 through 12: 45% sophomores, 35% juniors, and 20% seniors. Thirty percent had studied in the United States for one to two years, 35% for three to four years, and 35% for five or more. Because several questions allowed students to choose more than one option, some percentages add up to more than 100%.

Two ESL teachers were interviewed: Mrs. Karen Sparks and Ms. Lisa Zdancewicz. Both had extensive experience supporting English learners. Mrs. Sparks reported more than 20 years of teaching experience, including over eight years working with ESL students at her current school,

while Ms. Zdancewicz reported 19 years in education across general education and specialized programs.

Instruments and Procedure

The student instrument was a 19-question Google Forms survey. It asked about background, current placement, knowledge of the Katy Advanced Program (KAP) and AP courses, fear and confidence, language barriers, understanding of the U.S. school system, where students got their information, which supports they preferred, how encouraged they felt by their school, and their future AP plans. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and the responses were used only for this educational project. I calculated descriptive counts and percentages from the 20 responses.

The teacher interviews used the same ten questions, covering adaptation to U.S. schools, knowledge of KAP and AP, what shapes course choice, how language affects confidence, which supports are effective, recommended resources, advice for students, successful transitions, and the most important contributor to academic success. I reviewed the interviews thematically. The recurring themes were system knowledge, language development, emotional adjustment, teacher and peer relationships, family involvement, motivation, and academic advice tailored to the individual student.

Results

Academic Placement and AP Knowledge

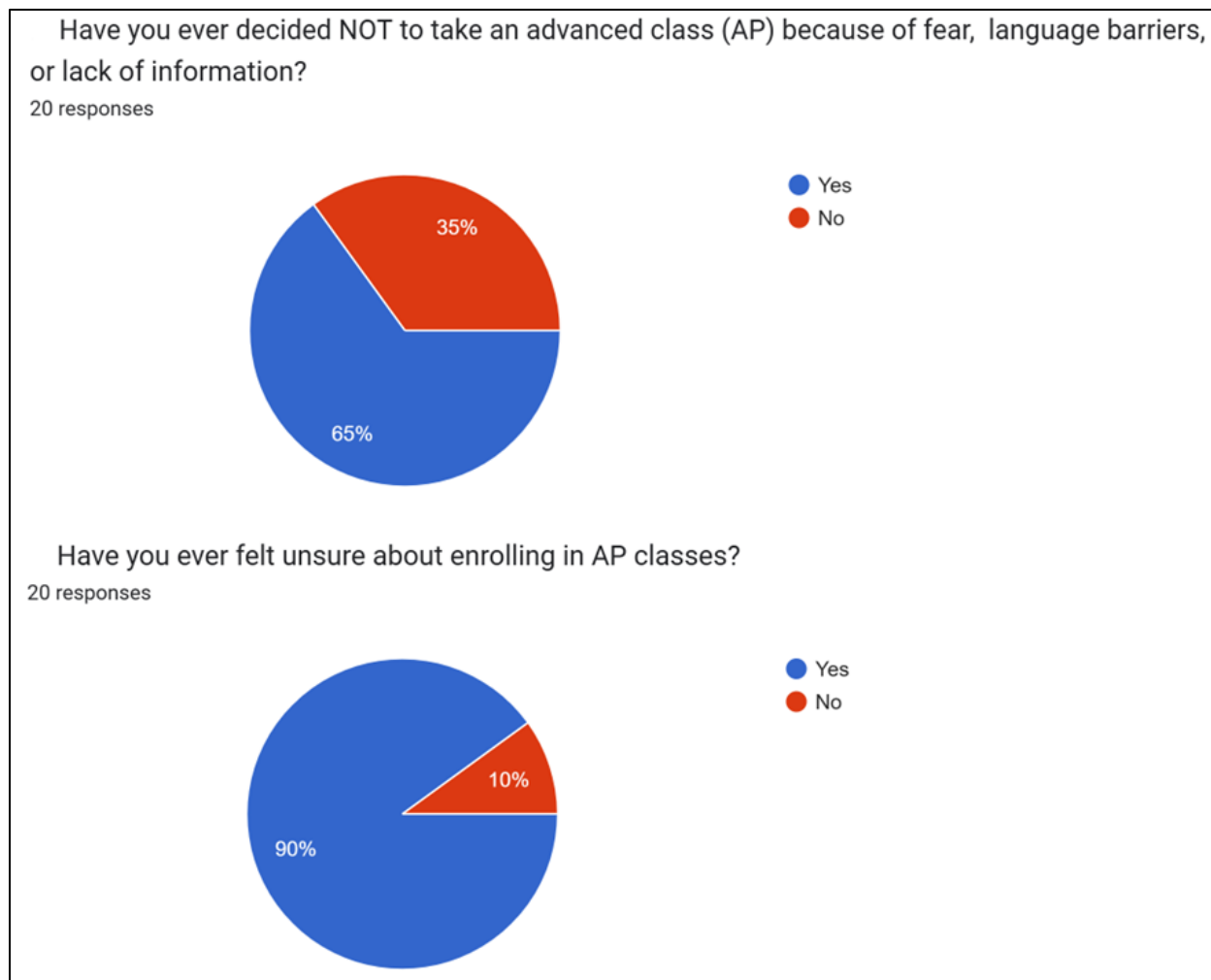
Fourteen respondents (70%) reported taking academic classes, nine (45%) AP classes, seven (35%) ESL classes, five (25%) KAP classes, and one (5%) reported dual-credit or dual-enrollment coursework. Asked directly whether they were currently taking AP, 40% said yes, 45% said no, and 15% said they were planning to. Before high school, 55% did not know what AP or

advanced courses were. The clearest signs of uncertainty appeared later in the survey: 90% had felt unsure about enrolling in AP, and 65% had declined an advanced class because of fear, language barriers, or insufficient information.

Figure

1

Student Uncertainty and Decisions About AP Enrollment (n = 20)



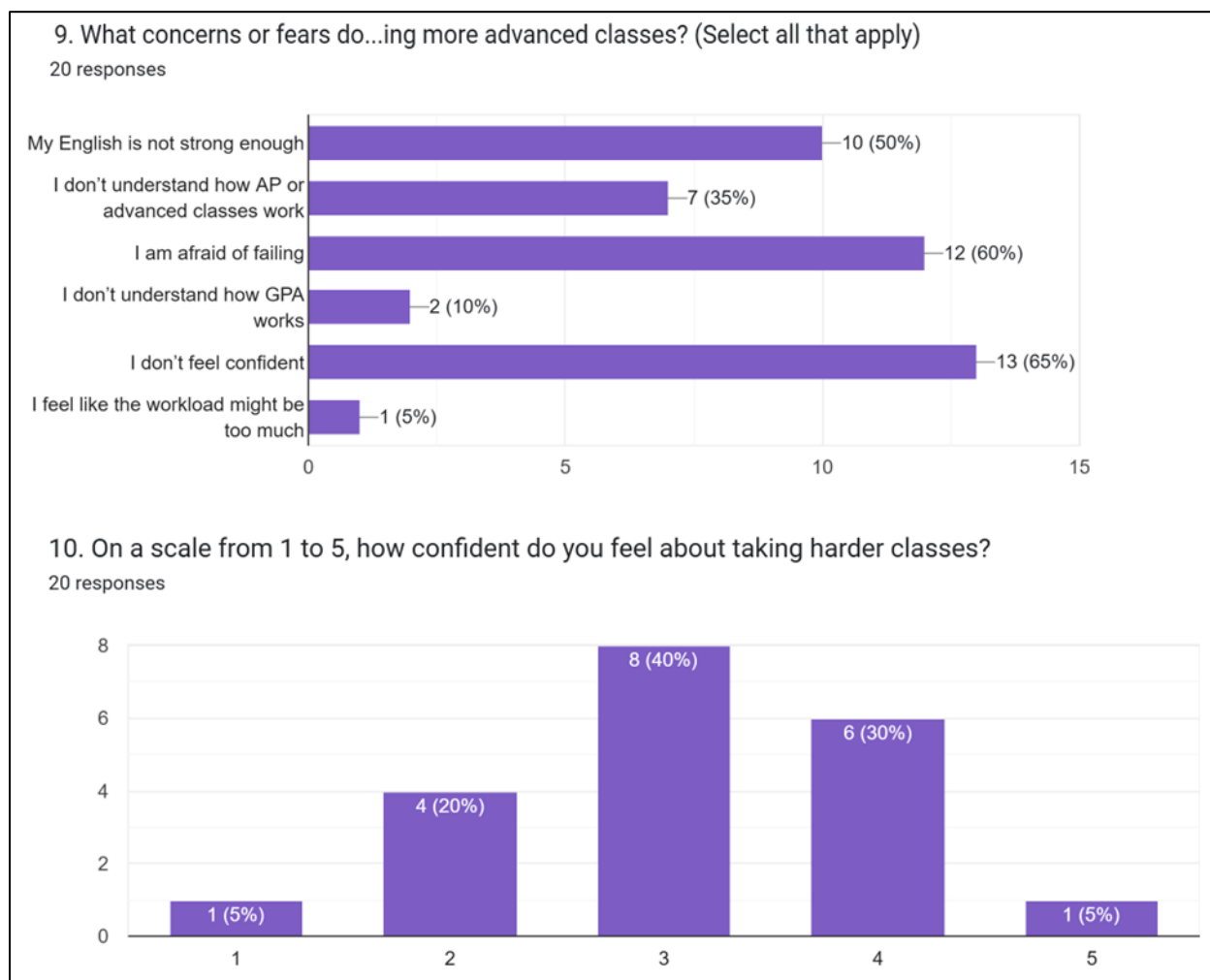
Note. Data are from the original student survey.

Fear, Confidence, and Language

The concern students selected most often was lack of confidence (13 students, 65%), followed by fear of failing (12, 60%) and concern that their English was not strong enough (10, 50%). Seven students (35%) did not understand how AP or advanced classes worked. Two (10%)

did not understand how GPA worked, and one (5%) identified workload. On a five-point confidence scale, the mean was 3.1: one student chose 1, four chose 2, eight chose 3, six chose 4, and one chose 5. Overall, responses clustered in the moderate range rather than at the high end.

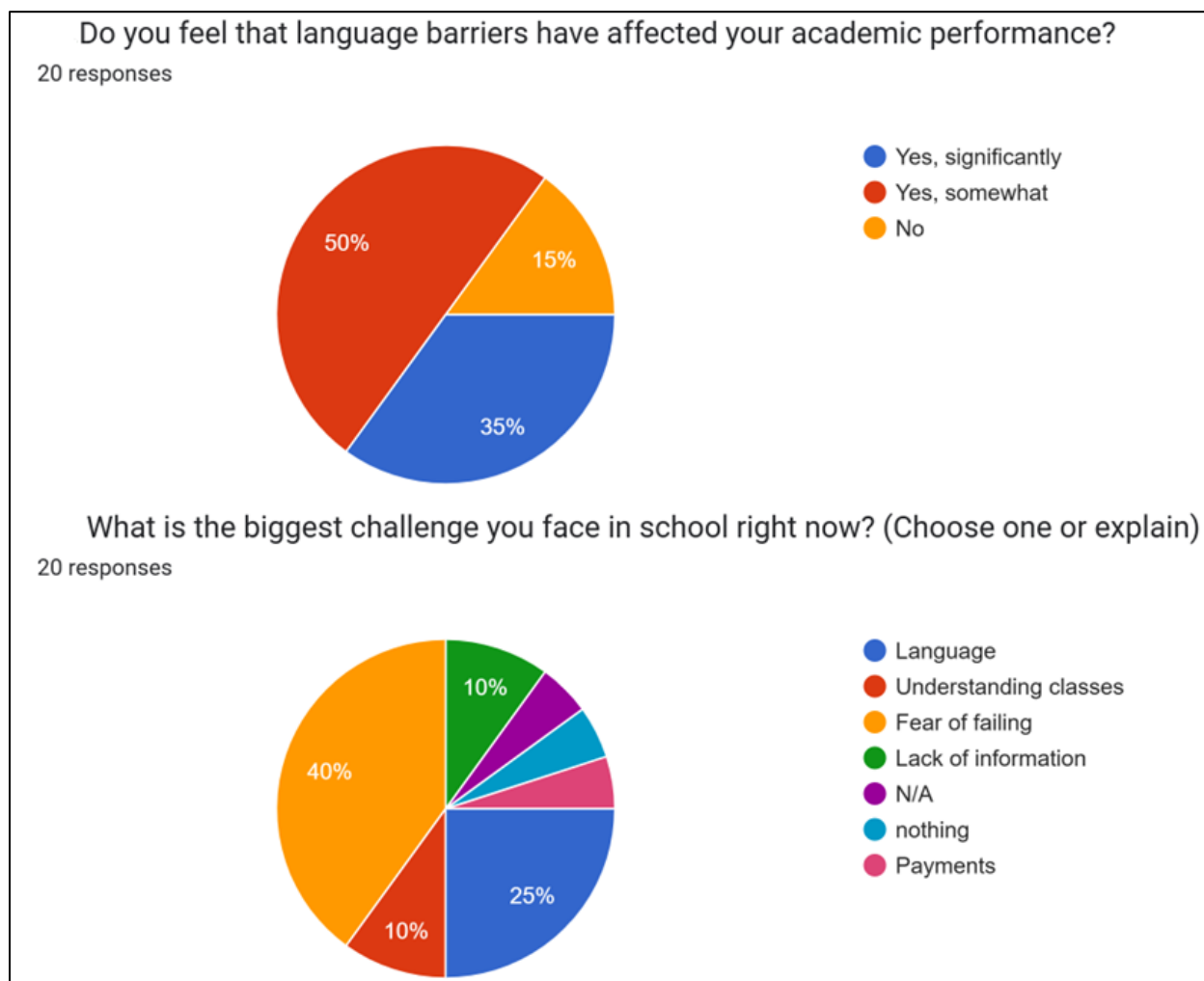
Language barriers remained prominent: 35% said language barriers had significantly affected their academic performance, 50% said somewhat, and 15% said not at all. Asked to name their single biggest current challenge, 40% chose fear of failing and 25% chose language. The remaining responses included understanding classes, lack of information, payments, no current challenge, and responses indicating that the question was not applicable.

Figure**2***Concerns About Advanced Classes and Self-Rated Confidence (n = 20)*

Note. Multiple responses were permitted for Question 9. Data are from the original student survey.

Figure 3

Reported Effects of Language Barriers and Students' Largest Current Challenge (n = 20)



Note. Data are from the original student survey.

Understanding and Sources of Information

Only 35% said they understood the U.S. school system—GPA, AP classes, and credits—very well. Another 55% understood it somewhat, and 10% said “not really.” For information about school, students turned most often to friends (18 students, 90%), then teachers (14, 70%), the internet (12, 60%), counselors (8, 40%), and family (5, 25%). This pattern is notable: formal sources were not always the primary way students learned to navigate the school system.

Table**1***Selected Survey Findings (n = 20)*

Measure	Response	Students	Percent
Understood AP before high school	No	11	55%
Ever felt unsure about AP enrollment	Yes	18	90%
Avoided an advanced class because of fear/language/information	Yes	13	65%
Language affected performance	Significantly or somewhat	17	85%
School clearly encouraged AP	Yes	5	25%
Plans to take AP in the future	Yes	10	50%

Note. Data are from the original student survey.

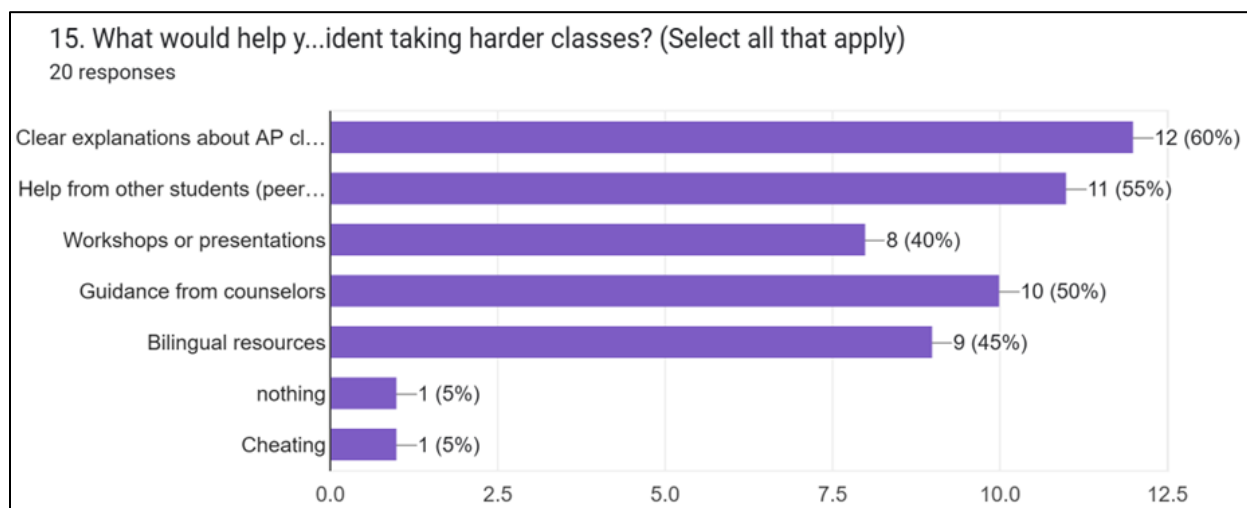
Support and Opportunity

Respondents pointed to practical supports that would increase their confidence. Twelve students (60%) wanted clear explanations of AP courses, 11 (55%) wanted help from other students or peers, 10 (50%) wanted guidance from counselors, nine (45%) wanted bilingual resources, and eight (40%) wanted workshops or presentations. Only one selected “nothing.” One additional write-in response, “Cheating,” was excluded from the analysis because it was not considered a valid form of academic support. This pattern suggests that students were not turning away from rigor; they were asking for clearer pathways into advanced coursework.

Views on school support were mixed. Twenty-five percent felt their school had encouraged them to take AP, 35% said “somewhat,” and 40% said no. Asked whether they had the same academic opportunities as non-immigrant students, 30% said yes, 40% said “somewhat,” and 30% said no. Even so, 50% planned to take AP in the future, 30% said maybe, 10% said no, and 10% did not know.

Figure**4**

Supports Students Said Would Increase Confidence in Harder Classes (n = 20)



Note. Multiple selections were permitted. Data are from the original student survey.

Teacher Interview Findings

Both teachers described adaptation as both academic and emotional. Mrs. Sparks stressed that a student may be grieving the loss of home, community, and language while also trying to read, write, listen, participate, and keep up with demanding coursework. Frustration or silence, she noted, should not automatically be interpreted as a lack of interest. She pointed to supportive teachers, peers, and parents—and especially the relationships built during freshman year—as important foundations for a successful transition. Her advice to students was direct: do not be afraid, work hard, and remember that you are just as intelligent as anyone else.

Ms. Zdancewicz stressed that learning the school system itself is a major challenge. Students have to grasp what an A, B, C, or D represents, how grades are reported, how GPA is calculated, and how those numbers connect to college, trade school, and other paths after graduation. She explained that how well students understand AP depends on their previous schools and their stage of English-language development. Home environment, peers, personal motivation,

sheltered or newcomer programs, and a sense of community can all influence whether a student participates.

The interviews also emphasized that support must be individualized. Ms. Zdancewicz cautioned that an intermediate English learner might need to strengthen reading skills before taking an advanced course with heavy language demands, while another student could be ready for KAP or AP with the right scaffolding. That difference matters. Equal opportunity does not mean putting every student into the same class. Students should understand their options, receive honest advice about whether they are ready, and get the support they need to move into more advanced classes when they are prepared. Both teachers identified parents and family support as especially influential.

Discussion

The results help answer the research question. Within this sample, students reported both limited familiarity with parts of the U.S. education system and considerable uncertainty about advanced courses. The strongest evidence comes from four findings considered together: 55% entered high school without understanding AP, 90% had felt unsure about enrolling, 65% had avoided an advanced class because of fear, language, or lack of information, and only 25% felt clearly encouraged by their school. On their own, these numbers do not prove that information alone drives AP underrepresentation, but they do show that system knowledge is an important part of students' experiences.

These findings align closely with Kanno and Kangas (2014), Watkins (2022), and federal data reported by OELA (2021). Those sources show that formal requirements, placement, adult expectations, scheduling, and weak recruitment can limit access even when AP is available. This survey adds the student perspective: respondents reported feeling uncertain and lacking

confidence, and they relied on friends more than counselors for information. That does not mean counselors are indifferent—heavy caseloads and a complicated system can limit one-on-one outreach. It does mean that important information is not reaching students consistently through formal channels.

The language results need to be read carefully. Eighty-five percent reported some academic effect from language barriers, and both teachers confirmed that reading, writing, listening, vocabulary, and academic expression can remain difficult over time. This supports Kapoyannis (2021), Lee (2012), and Vladu (2016). Still, language cannot be the only factor, because 50% planned to take AP and another 30% were considering it. Students showed interest but asked for explanations, peer help, counseling, bilingual resources, and workshops. The challenge, then, appears to involve an interaction among language, confidence, information, and opportunity.

The interviews also reinforce prior research on relationships and high expectations. Mrs. Sparks' focus on belonging and encouragement echoes Vladu's (2016) findings about teacher relationships, clarity, academic networks, and course coaching. Ms. Zdancewicz's attention to grades and GPA supports Evans et al.'s (2025) point about policy and cultural unfamiliarity as barriers. Her caution about readiness, though, helps avoid the oversimplified conclusion that every EL should enroll in every advanced class right away. What students need is access to rigorous opportunities paired with language-aware guidance, not automatic placement into the highest or lowest track.

The study also connects to my own experience. A teacher who notices a language gap, checks for understanding, and maintains high expectations can change the way a student sees advanced work. Conversely, inconsistent classification between districts or unclear course rules can leave students confused. The data suggest these experiences are not isolated—many

respondents were trying to make sense of the system at the same time they were deciding whether they could succeed within it.

One finding that stood out to me was how many students said they relied on friends for information about school. I remember having many of the same questions when I was learning how the U.S. school system worked. This made me realize that students may not always know what questions to ask a counselor or teacher. Sometimes they first need someone to explain which opportunities are available.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the survey results, teacher interviews, and research reviewed for this paper. I first presented several of these ideas during meetings of the Katy ISD Federal Programs Advisory Committee for Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV on April 28 and May 13, 2025. At that time, they were based mainly on my own experience as an ESL student. The findings of this study later supported and helped refine those initial proposals:

Provide early bilingual academic orientation for ESL students and their families. Schools should hold informational meetings at the beginning of and throughout the school year in families' native languages. These meetings should explain GPA, credits, graduation requirements, regular courses, KAP, AP, and dual-credit courses, prerequisites, course workloads, exams, extracurricular activities, college preparation, scholarships, school platforms, and available support services. Providing this information early can help students and families make informed academic decisions before important opportunities are missed.

Improve direct communication and family participation. Schools should communicate directly with newly arrived families through phone calls, translated emails and messages, and familiar platforms such as Remind. They could also create voluntary, school-supported Remind groups

where multilingual families can receive information, ask questions, and support one another. These groups should be moderated by authorized school staff, and participation and the sharing of contact information should always be voluntary. Schools should also clearly inform families when interpretation is available and offer flexible meeting times.

Establish a Student Buddy program for newly arrived students. New students should be paired with responsible upper-grade students, preferably multilingual students or former ESL students, who can help them navigate the campus, understand school routines, find extracurricular opportunities, and learn how to select appropriate courses. Student buddies could also explain advanced classes and share realistic strategies for succeeding in them. This type of peer support could reduce students' stress and help them become more confident and involved in school.

Train counselors and advanced-course teachers to support ESL students. School counselors and KAP and AP teachers should receive training about the linguistic, academic, social, and emotional challenges ESL students may face when entering advanced courses. Teachers should receive the training and information needed to provide appropriate support when a current or former ESL student enters their class, while respecting the student's privacy. This training should help educators distinguish developing English proficiency from academic ability, maintain high expectations, check students' understanding, explain academic vocabulary clearly, and provide language support without reducing the rigor of the course.

Implementation Through Together We Grow & ESL Connect. Together We Grow & ESL Connect can help turn these recommendations into practical support for students and families. First, the club can create a short guide called "Understanding Your High School Pathway." It can explain GPA, credits, graduation requirements, KAP, AP, dual-credit courses, extracurricular activities, and the questions students should ask before choosing their classes. The club can also

use this guide during bilingual meetings and presentations for new ESL students and their families. The club can provide copies to KAP and AP teachers who are willing to share the guide with ELs in their classes.

The club can use its existing Remind channel to communicate directly with students. Through this channel, the club can share information, meeting reminders, academic opportunities, and clear explanations of school programs. Students can also use it to ask questions and learn where to find additional support. To help this information reach a wider audience, the club can also share it through its Instagram account, which already has more than 1,000 followers.

During the club's upcoming meetings, another step will be to create a Student Buddy program. New ESL students can be paired with multilingual students or former ESL students who are already familiar with KAP, AP, dual credit, clubs, SchoolLinks, and other school opportunities. These buddies can help new students navigate the school, answer questions, and share honest advice about the work required in advanced classes. The goal is not to pressure students into taking AP, but to make sure they understand their options and know where to find help.

After the students have had time to work with their buddies, Together We Grow can administer a short anonymous survey to participating EL students. The survey can ask whether their buddy helped them understand the school system, learn about advanced courses and extracurricular activities, find support, and feel more confident at school. Their responses can help the club understand what is working and improve the Student Buddy program for future students.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The survey reached only 20 current or former ELs and used a convenience sample recruited through ESL teachers, so its percentages cannot be generalized to all immigrant students or ELs. The answers were self-reported and may reflect each

student's own perceptions of KAP and AP, language barriers, and encouragement. Three respondents selected "no" on the survey item about ESL participation even though they had previously participated in ESL; this inconsistency reflects a misunderstanding of the item as referring only to current participation. The sample did not break down results by language-proficiency level, school, time in the United States, or specific KAP or AP subject. Multiple-response questions reveal common concerns but do not show which one mattered most to any single participant. The two teacher interviews added valuable depth, yet two participants cannot represent every educator or program. Finally, the design is descriptive, so it cannot prove that unfamiliarity causes students to avoid KAP or AP. A larger future study could compare schools, proficiency levels, and reclassified students and measure outcomes before and after an orientation or mentoring program.

Conclusion

As the EL population continues to grow across the country and remains especially large in Texas, schools must be ready to do two things: teach English and make the education system itself understandable to students and families. During my participation in the Katy ISD Federal Programs Advisory Committee for Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV, a projection shared during the meetings indicated that ELs could make up nearly 30% of Katy ISD students by 2027. This projection makes it even more important to strengthen multilingual communication and help families understand the school system.

This study found significant uncertainty about AP, moderate levels of confidence, continuing effects from language barriers, and uneven encouragement from schools. At the same time, it found substantial interest in taking AP in the future and a clear need for information, mentorship, counseling, and resources that students and families can understand.

The evidence points to a clear conclusion: many ELs do not need lower expectations; they need clear and visible pathways. A student's ability can remain hidden when the student does not understand how GPA works, which classes are available, whom to ask for help, or whether teachers believe that the student belongs in an advanced class. Supportive relationships and language assistance do not make AP less rigorous; they make rigorous coursework more accessible.

The final phase of this project will put these findings into action through the Together We Grow & ESL Connect club by creating practical resources, communicating with students through Remind, sharing information with a wider audience through Instagram, and establishing a Student Buddy program. These actions can help students understand the school system, make informed choices, and approach advanced opportunities with greater confidence.

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Appendix

A

Student Survey Summary

Q	Topic	Result
1	Grade level	10th 45%; 11th 35%; 12th 20%
2	ESL participation	Current 40%; former 45%; selected “no” 15%
3	Time studying in the U.S.	1–2 years 30%; 3–4 years 35%; 5+ years 35%
4	Current course types	ESL 35%; academic 70%; KAP 25%; AP 45%; dual credit/enrollment 5%
5	Currently taking AP	Yes 40%; no 45%; planning 15%
6	Understood AP before high school	Yes 45%; no 55%
7	Declined advanced class due to fear/language/information	Yes 65%; no 35%
8	Ever unsure about AP enrollment	Yes 90%; no 10%
9	Advanced-class concerns	Low confidence 65%; fear of failing 60%; English 50%; unclear AP 35%; GPA 10%; workload 5%
10	Confidence, 1–5	1: 5%; 2: 20%; 3: 40%; 4: 30%; 5: 5% (mean 3.1)
11	Language affected performance	Significantly 35%; somewhat 50%; no 15%
12	Biggest current challenge	Fear of failing 40%; language 25%; other categories 35%
13	Understanding of U.S. school system	Very well 35%; somewhat 55%; not really 10%; not at all 0%
14	Sources of school information	Friends 90%; teachers 70%; internet 60%; counselors 40%; family 25%
15	Desired supports	AP explanation 60%; peers 55%; counselors 50%; bilingual resources 45%; workshops 40%
16	School encouraged AP	Yes 25%; somewhat 35%; no 40%
17	Same opportunities as non-immigrant students	Yes 30%; somewhat 40%; no 30%
18	Plans to take AP	Yes 50%; maybe 30%; no 10%; do not know 10%
19	Suggested changes or support	Open-ended responses; no percentage calculated

Note. The three respondents (15%) who selected “no” had previously participated in ESL and had misunderstood the item as referring only to current participation.

Appendix**B****Teacher Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been working with ESL students?
2. What are some common challenges ESL students face when adapting to the U.S. school system?
3. In your experience, how well do ESL students understand what AP classes are?
4. What factors influence whether ESL students choose to take AP classes?
5. How does language impact students' confidence or participation in more advanced classes?
6. What types of support have you seen help ESL students succeed academically?
7. What resources or strategies could help ESL students feel more confident taking AP classes?
8. What advice would you give to an ESL student who is thinking about taking AP classes?
9. Can you share an example of a student who successfully transitioned into more advanced classes? What helped the student succeed?
10. What do you think is the most important factor that helps ESL students succeed academically?