Trends in Accommodations and Accessibility Features English Learners Received on Statewide Assessments

YI-CHEN WU & MARTHA THURLOW

MARCH 7, 2019

NCEO
National Center on Educational Outcomes

DIAMOND
DATA INFORMED ACCESSIBILITY: MAKING OPTIMAL NEEDS-BASED DECISIONS

Outline

- Project Supporting Work
- Accessibility Paradigm Shift
- Analysis of State Data on Accommodations

Overview of the DIAMOND Project

Need for Project

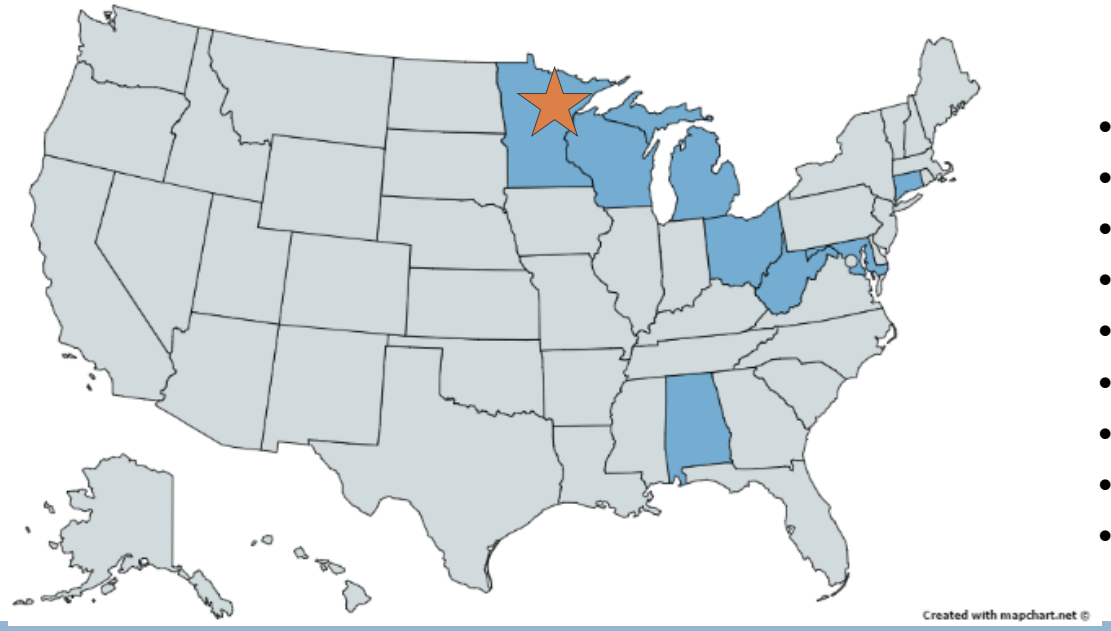
- Sometimes educators make decisions about accessibility features and accommodations based on:
  - Feasibility (e.g., selecting only supports that are readily available)
  - Placement information (e.g., selecting the same supports for all below-level readers)
  - Demographic information (e.g., selecting the same supports for all English learners)

Purpose

- *The DIAMOND Project aims to improve the validity of assessment results and interpretations for students with documented needs by developing guidelines for educators to make informed decisions about accessibility features and accommodations.*

Partners

- Funded by a US Department of Education Enhanced Assessment Instruments Grant
- Collaboration between the National Center on Educational Outcomes and the departments of education of nine states



- Alabama
- Connecticut
- Maryland
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Ohio
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin
- U.S. Virgin Islands

Research Activities

1. Facilitating online focus groups with teachers
2. Conducting teacher interviews and student demonstrations
3. **Analyzing state assessment data**
4. Hosting a forum with national experts to develop guidelines
5. Creating a training module and supplemental materials
6. Piloting and revising the professional development materials

Accessibility Paradigm Shift

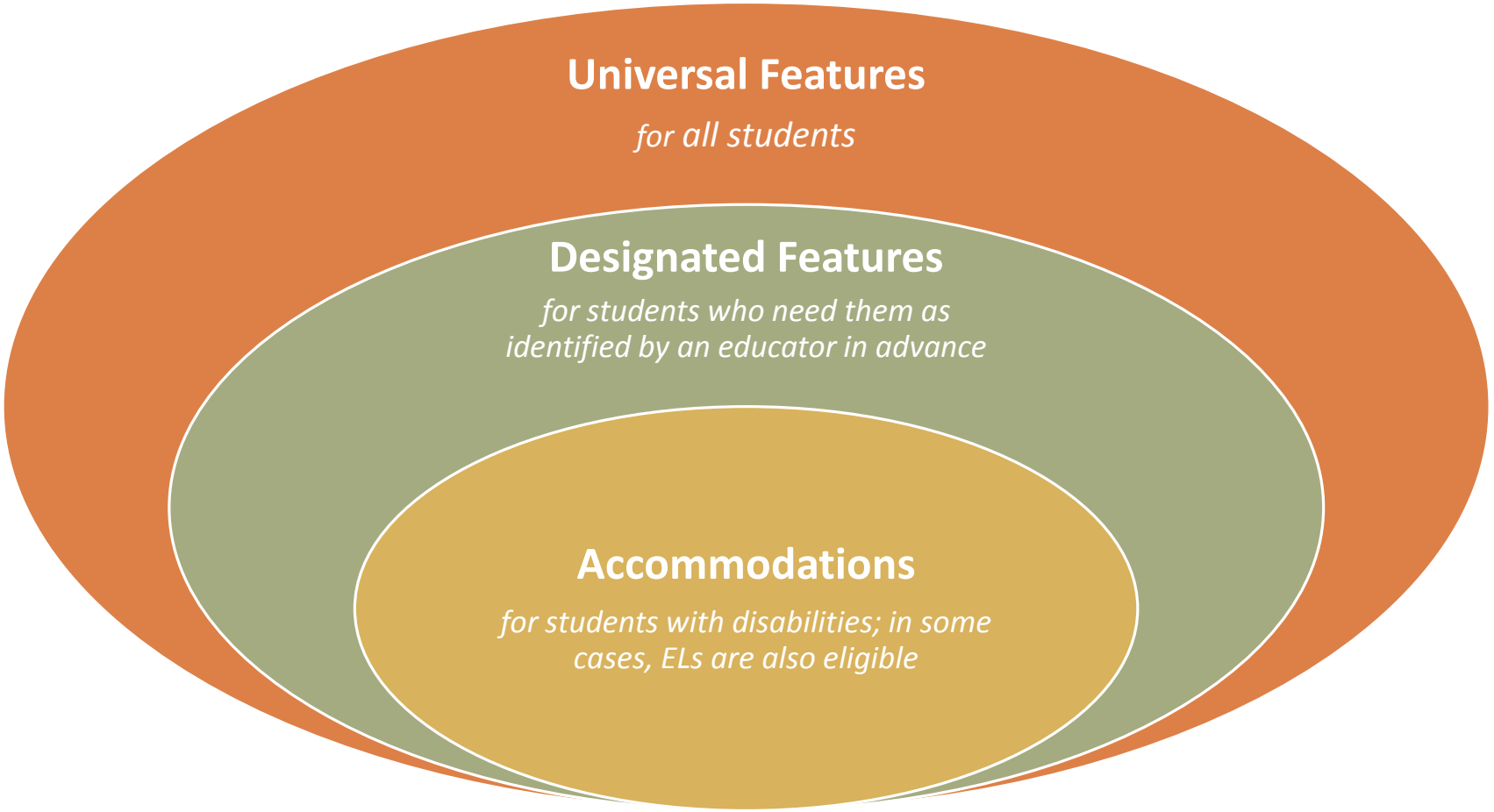
What Do We Mean by Accessibility?

- Accessibility means providing students with tools or supports that level the playing field
- Some examples:
  - ASL video for a deaf student
  - Extended time for an English learner
  - Answer masking for a student with ADHD
  - Separate setting for struggling student

Accessibility Paradigm Shift

- Started without requirements in law
- The federal government funded consortia of states to develop a general assessment, alternate assessment, and English language proficiency (ELP) assessment
- These consortia used principles of universal design and opened up the concept of accessibility

Tiers of Accessibility



Your Thoughts

Has this accommodations paradigm shift occurred in your state?

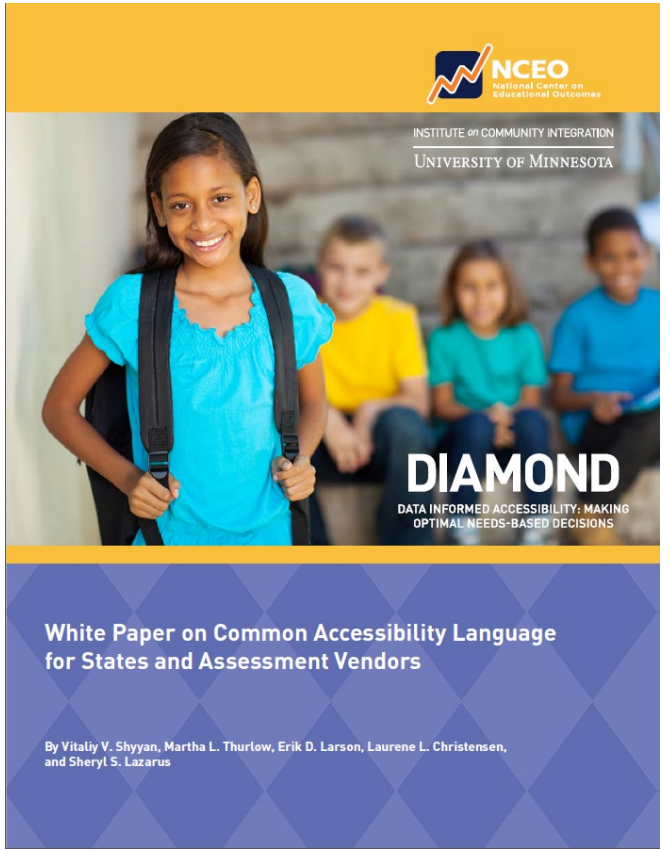
Developing a Common Language

Accessibility Features and Accommodations

- More than 50 distinct accessibility features and accommodations have been identified
- These supports often have different names
- For example, one support that allows students to cross out answers that seem incorrect is called *strikethrough*, *eliminate answer choices*, and *answer choice eliminator* on different tests

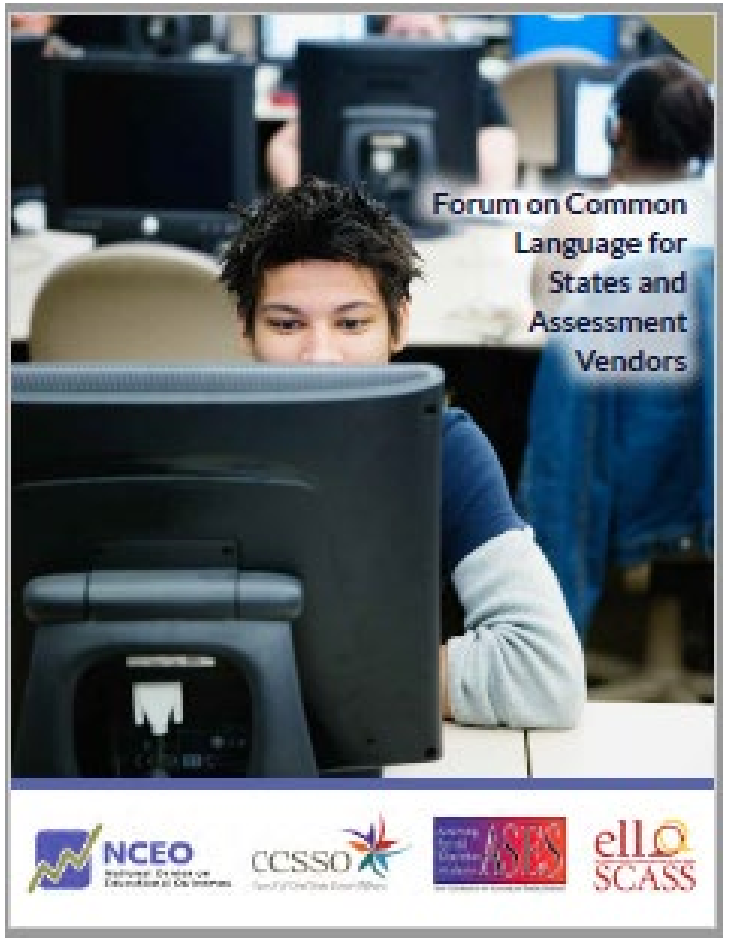
White Paper

- Describes inconsistencies in accessibility language
- Advocates for consistent language and implementation
- Input obtained from more than 80 educators, policymakers, and test vendors in 2016
- Available in English and Spanish



Forum on Common Language for States and Assessment Vendors

- Highlighted *White Paper* on common accessibility language
- Provided demonstrations by three vendors
- Led discussions of 80 participants, focused on:
  - Students with IEPs and 504 plans
  - English learners
  - General education students



Data Analyses

Rationale

- ESSA reaffirmed the importance of ensuring that assessments are accessible and that ELs are provided accommodations for classroom and state assessments.
- *English Learner Tool Kit* (2017) includes information on providing accommodations to ELs
- ESEA Peer Review Guidance emphasized that states monitor the provision and use of accommodations.

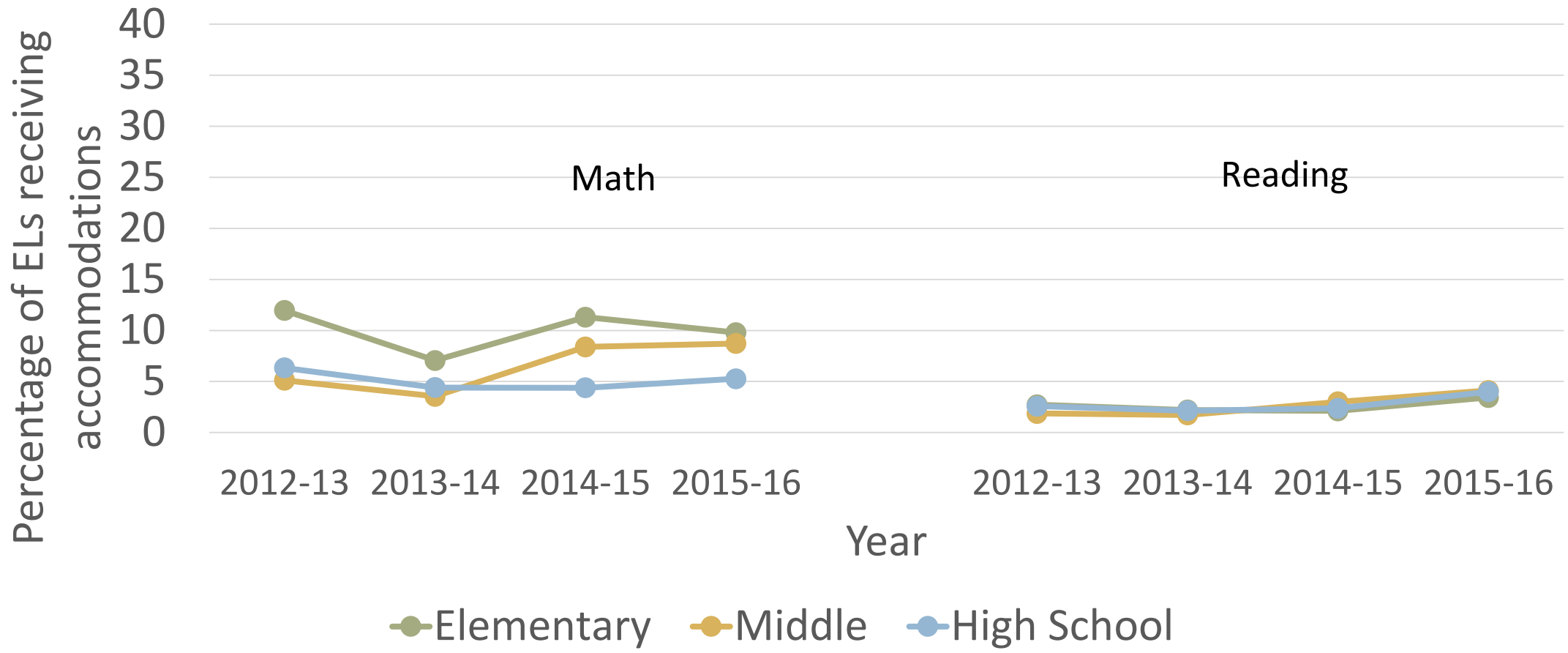
Data

- Student-level data
  - One state's data to illustrate how data can be used to answer important questions about accommodations.
  - Results will be analyzed by school level (elementary, middle and high school levels).
- Research Questions
  - Receiving accommodations
    - How many ELs received accommodations?
    - What is the performance of ELs who received accommodations?
    - What were the characteristics of ELs receiving accommodations?
    - How does performance relate to changes over time in accommodations received by individual ELs?
  - Commonly used accommodations
    - What were the commonly received accommodations and accessibility features for ELs?

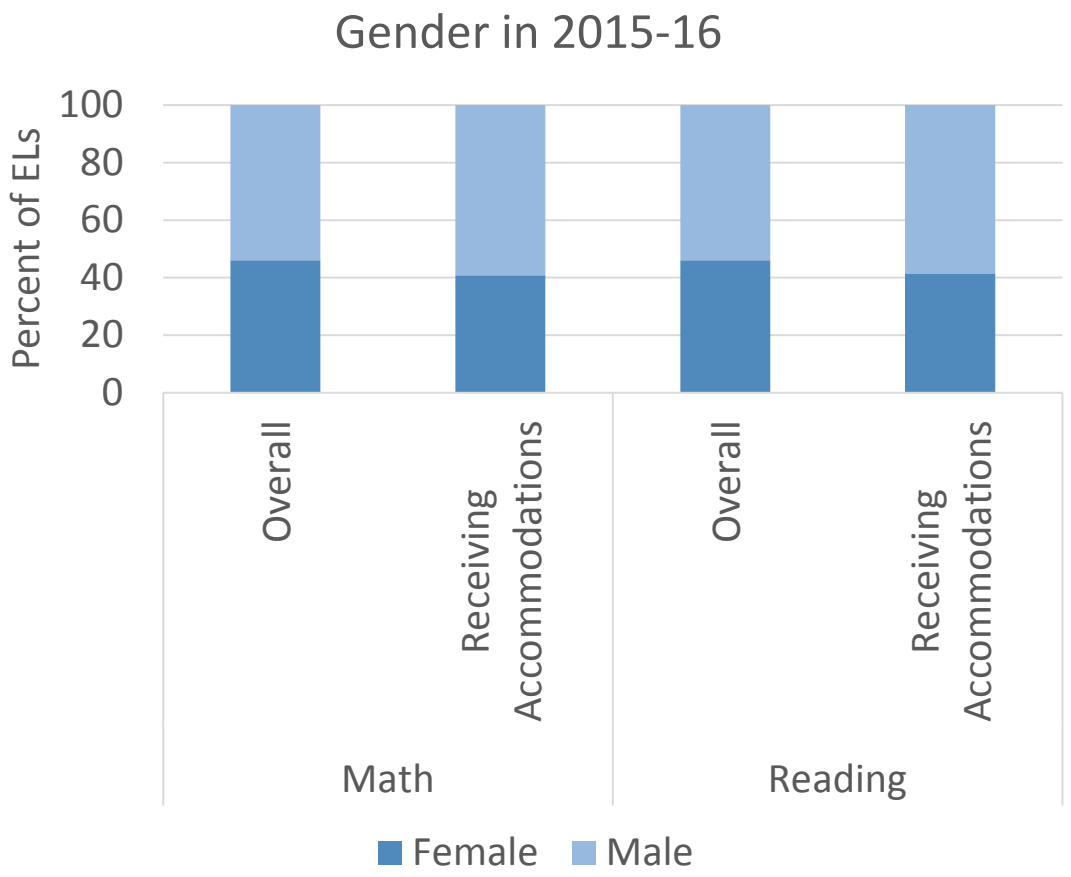
Results

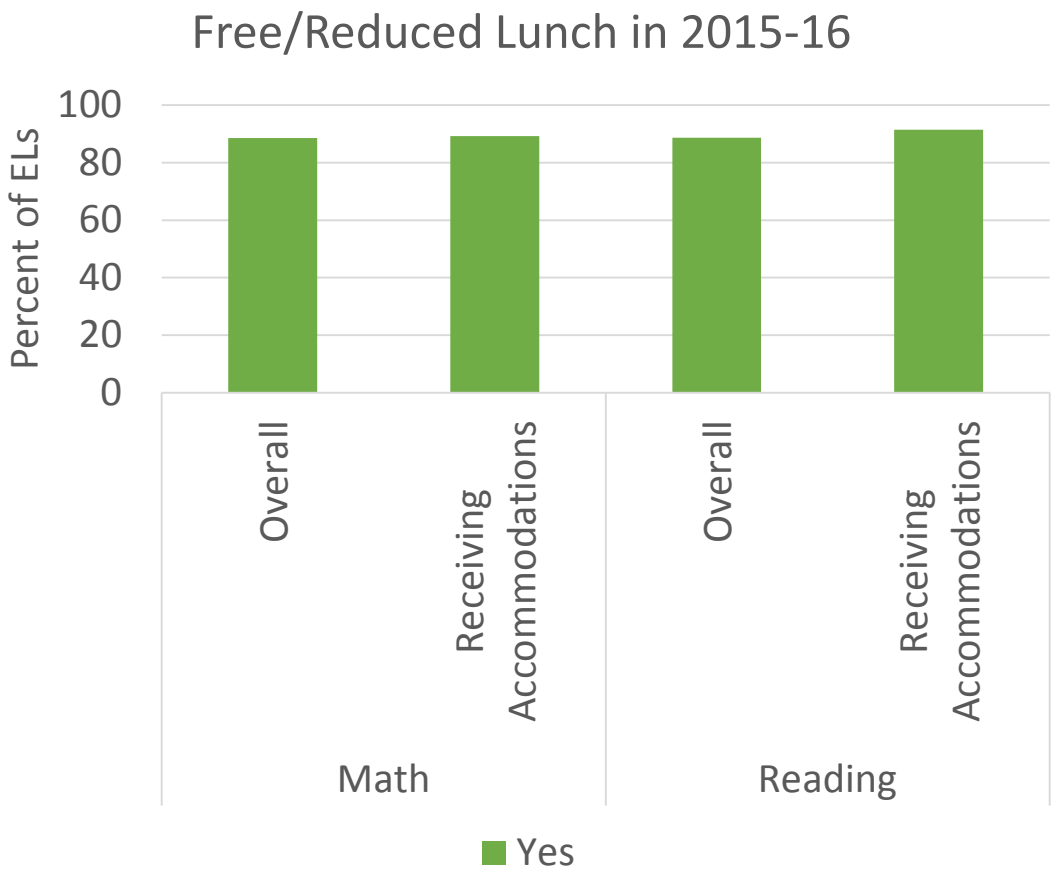
- **Receiving Accommodations**
  - Accommodations Received During Regular Assessments
  - Characteristics of Students Receiving Accommodations
  - Performance Related to Changes Over Time in Accommodations Received by Individual Students
- **Commonly used Accommodations**
  - Changes Over Time in Most Commonly Used Accommodations

Receiving accommodations



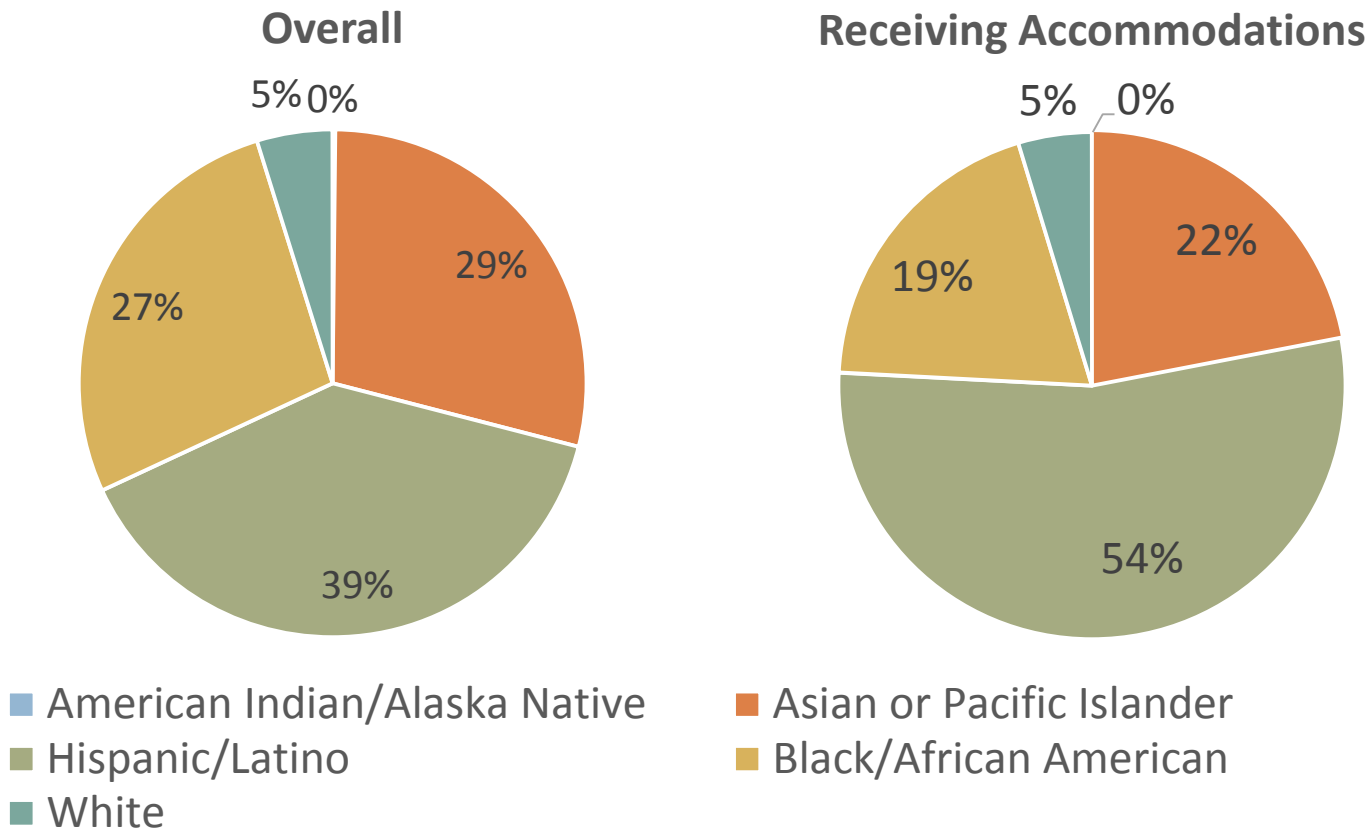
Characteristics





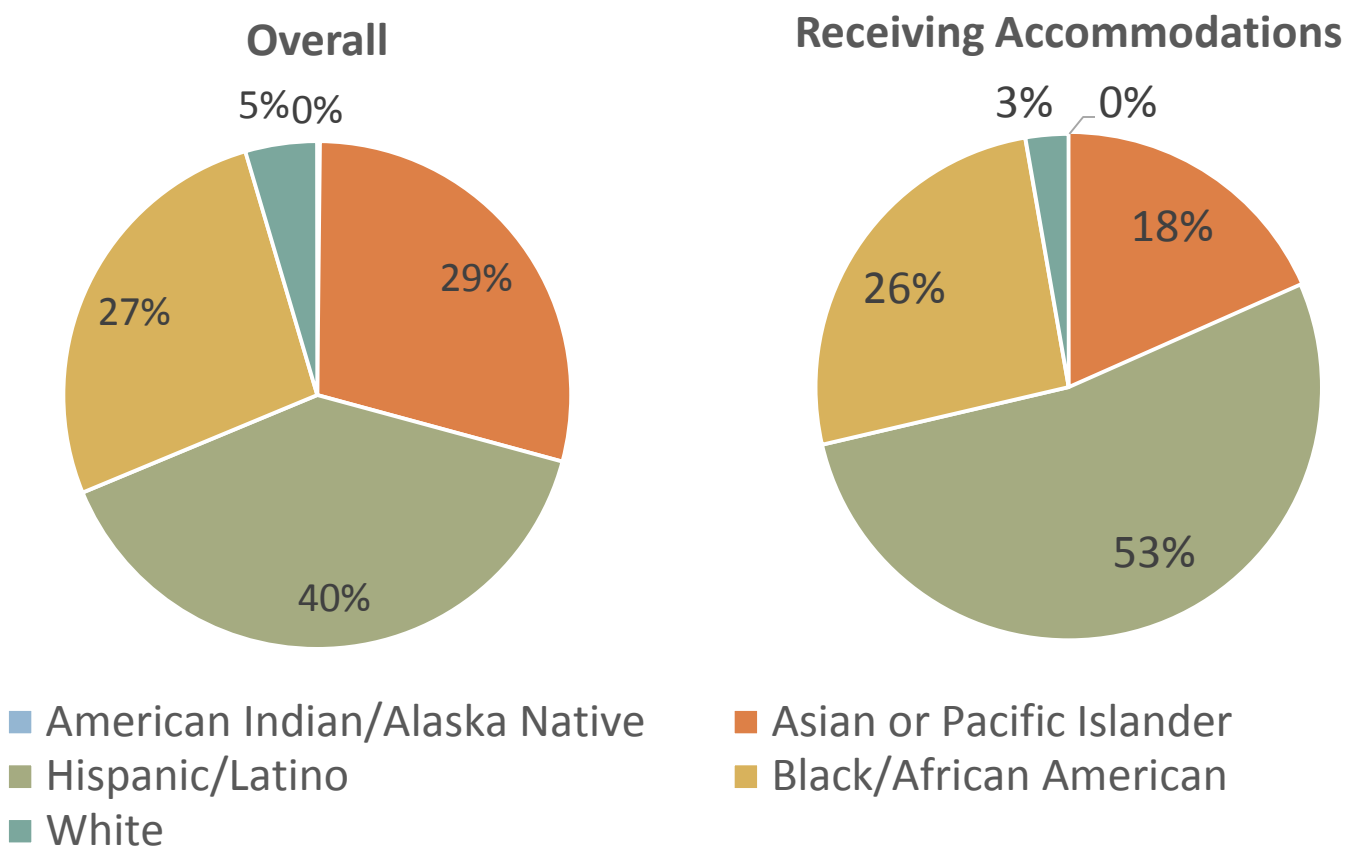
EL Characteristics - Math Assessment in 2015-16

Ethnicity

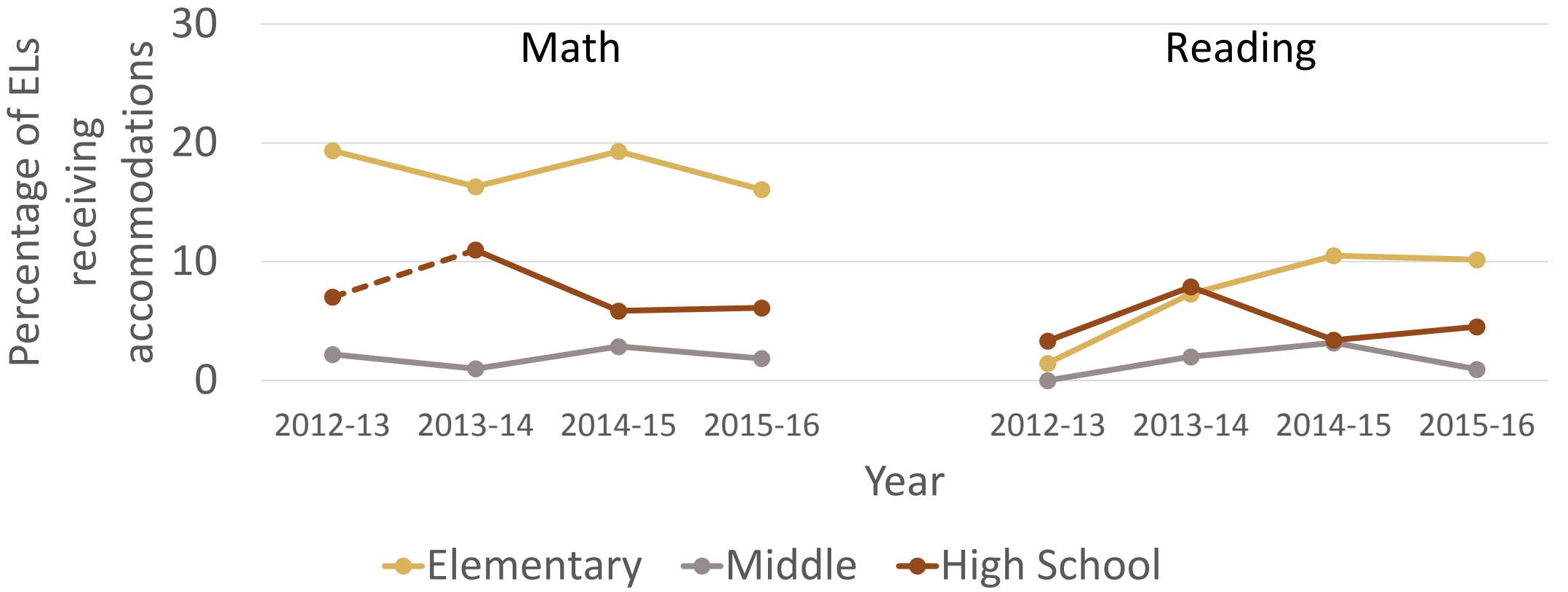


EL Characteristics - Reading Assessment in 2015-16

Ethnicity

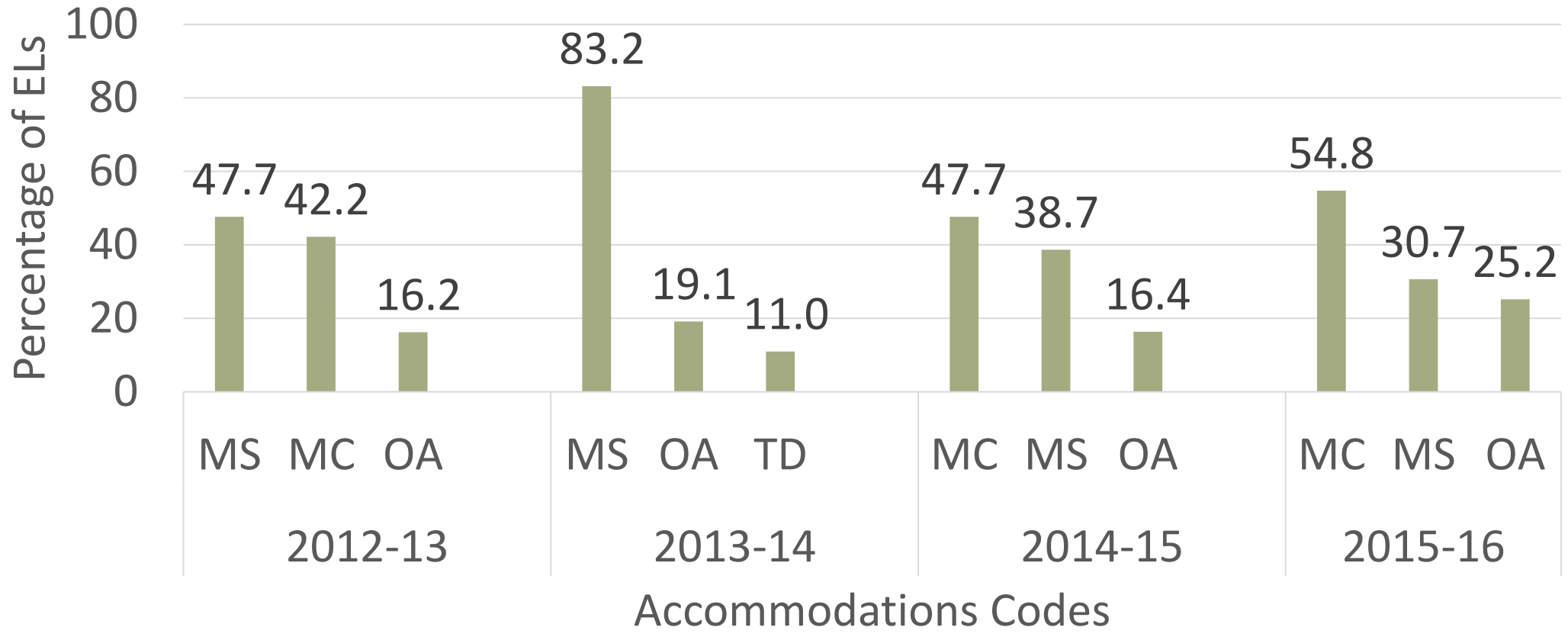


Performance



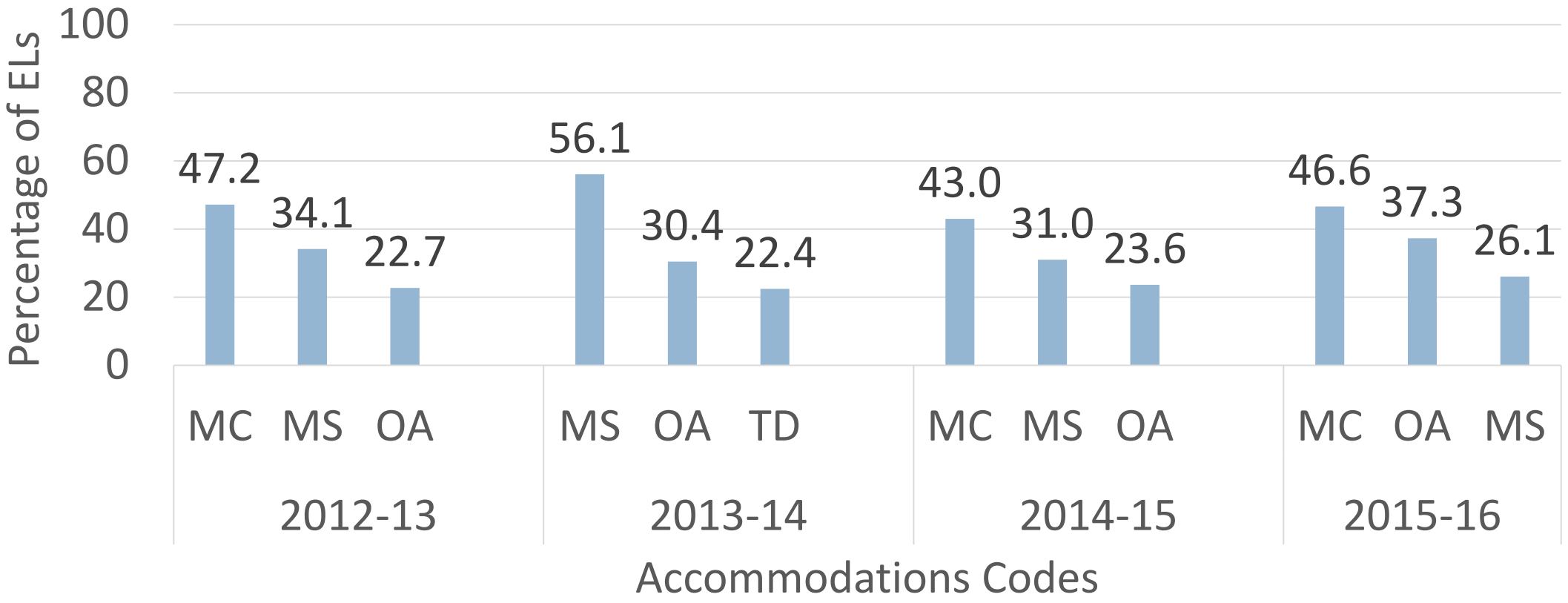
Note. Old high school math assessments were administrated in 2012-13 and New math assessment were administrated from 2013-14. The new academic standards administered from 2013-14 for high school math only.

Commonly Used Math Accommodations —Elementary



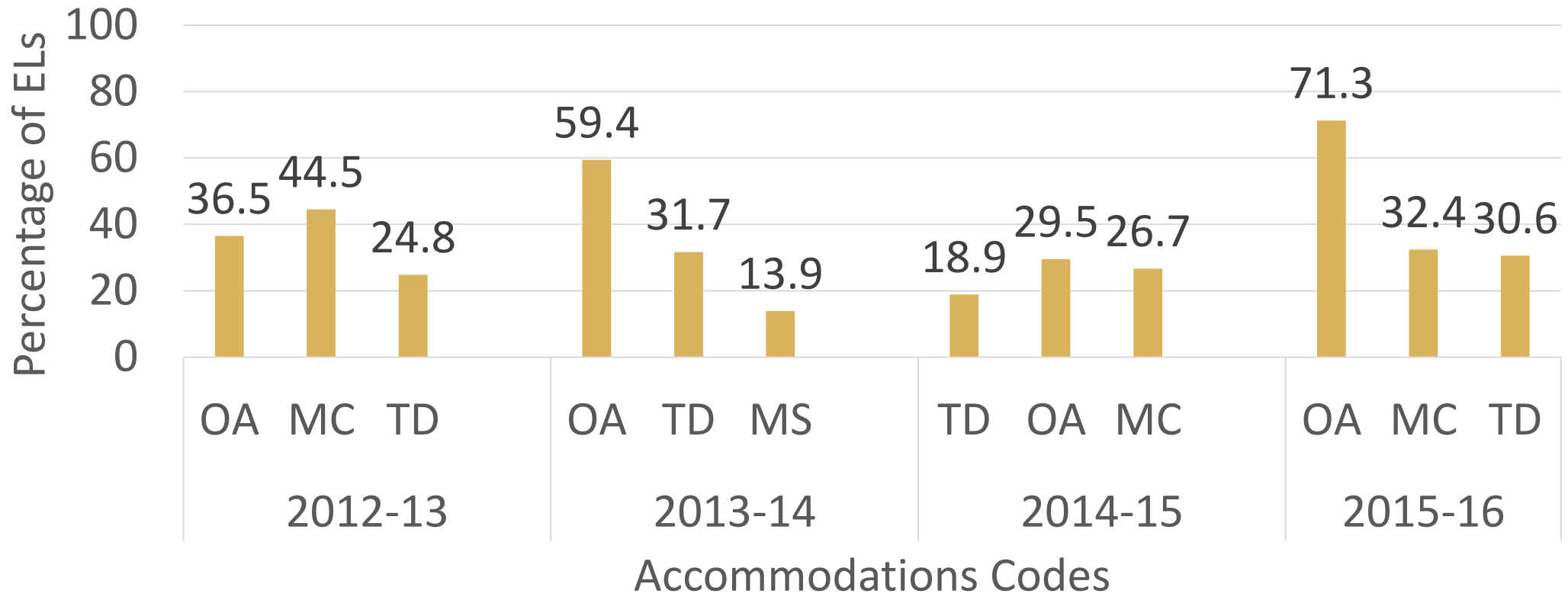
Note. MS = math script; MC – math CD; OA = other accommodation; TD = translated directions.

Commonly Used Math Accommodations —Middle school



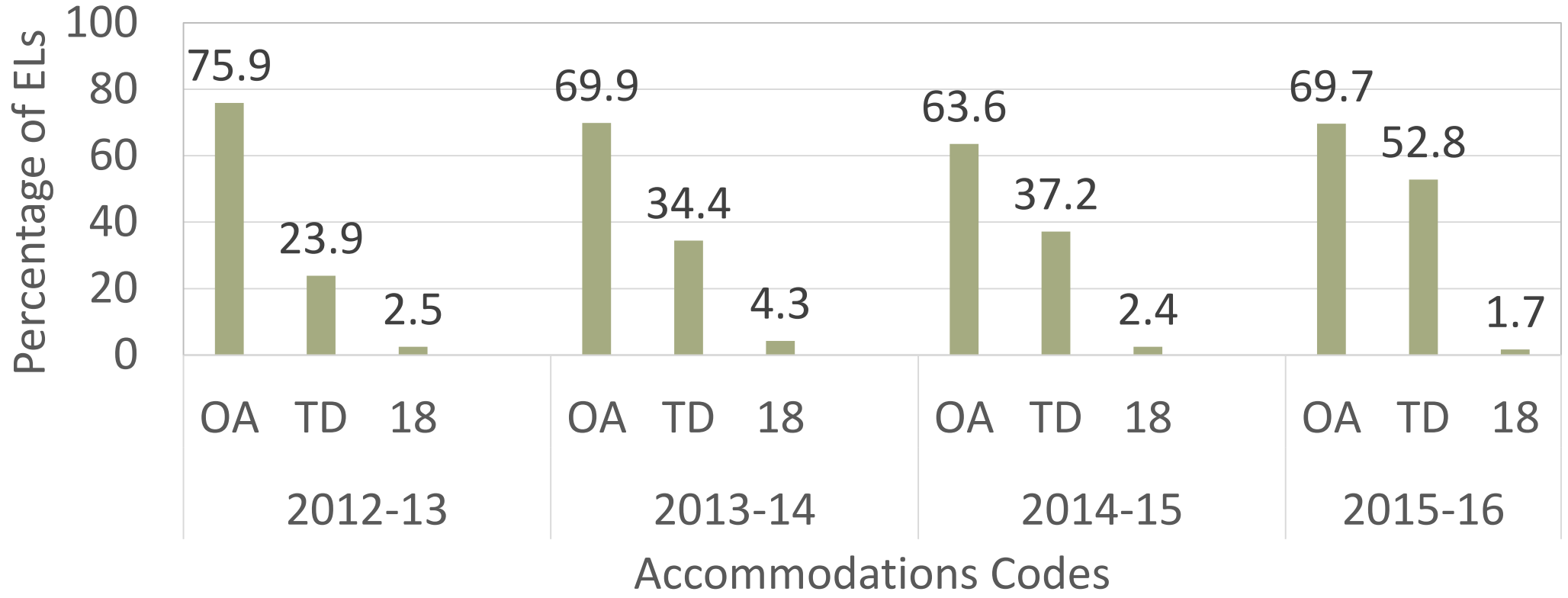
Note. MS = math script; MC – math CD; OA = other accommodation; TD = translated directions.

Commonly Used Math Accommodations —HS



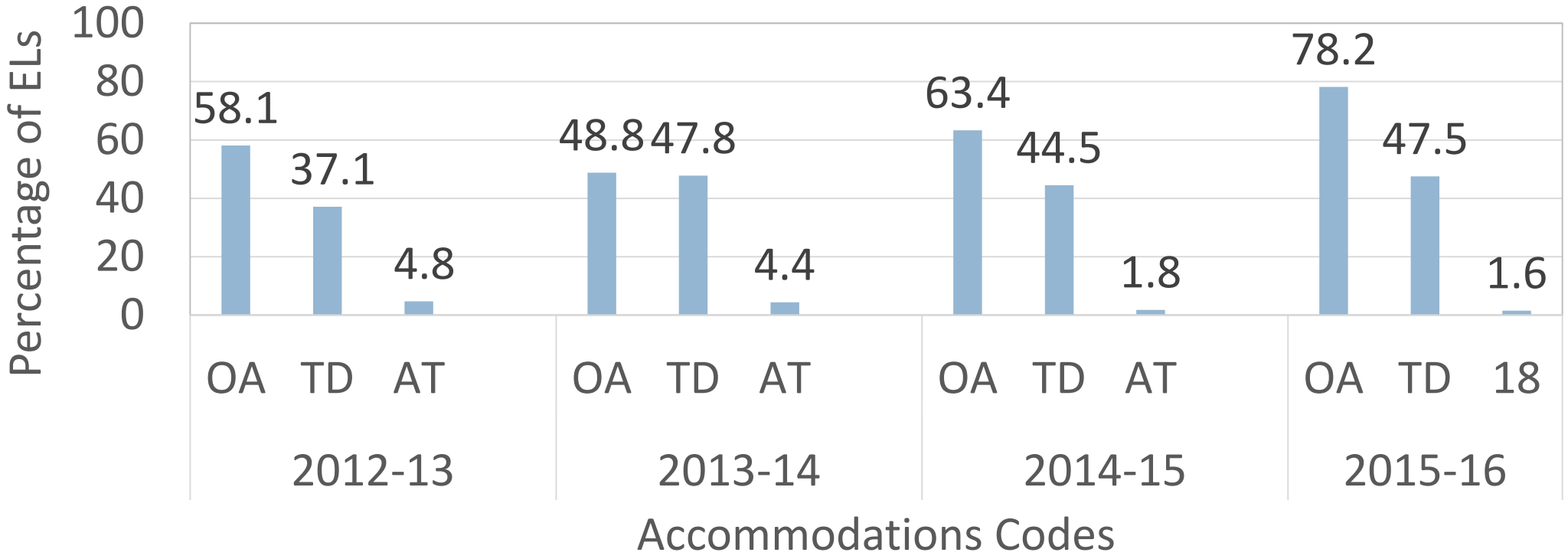
Note. MS = math script; MC – math CD; OA = other accommodation; TD = translated directions.

Commonly Used Reading Accommodations—Elementary



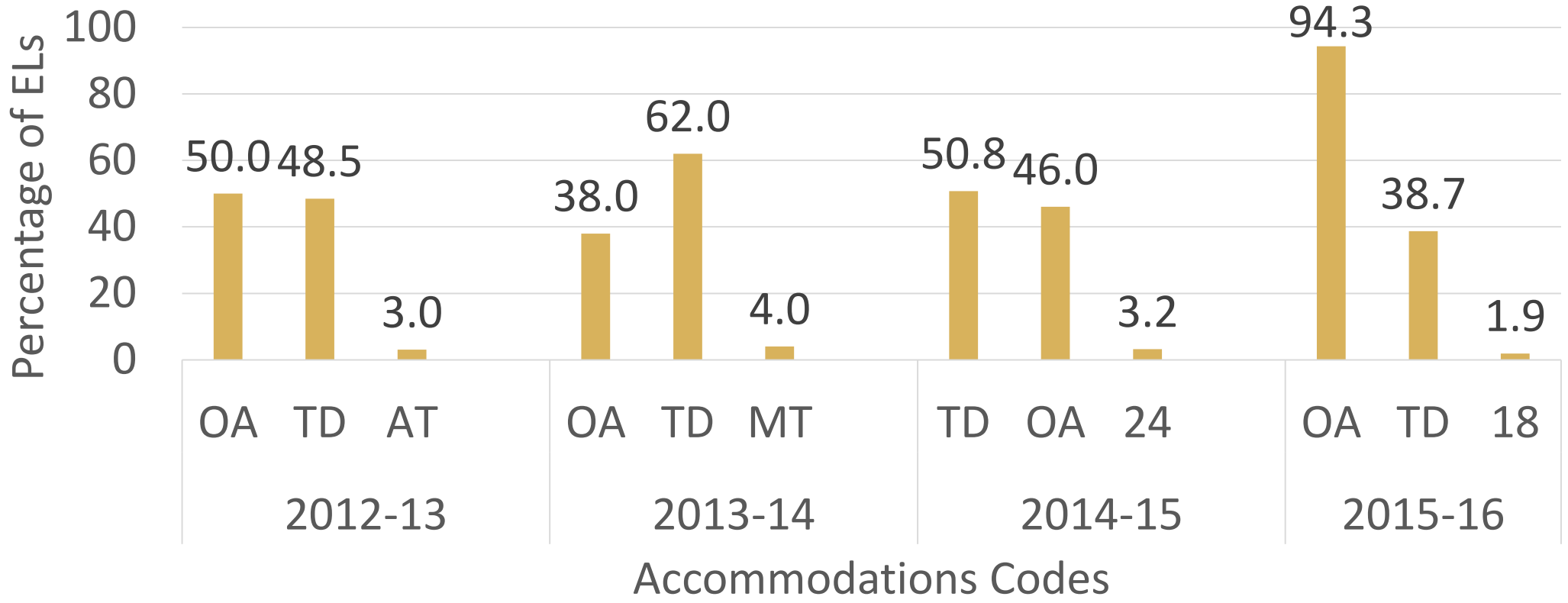
Note. OA = other accommodation; TD = sign interpretation of test directions or writing prompt; 18 = large print.

Commonly Used Reading Accommodations —Middle school



Note. OA = other accommodation; 18 = large print; 24 = large print; TD = sign interpretation of test directions or writing prompt; AT = assistive technology.

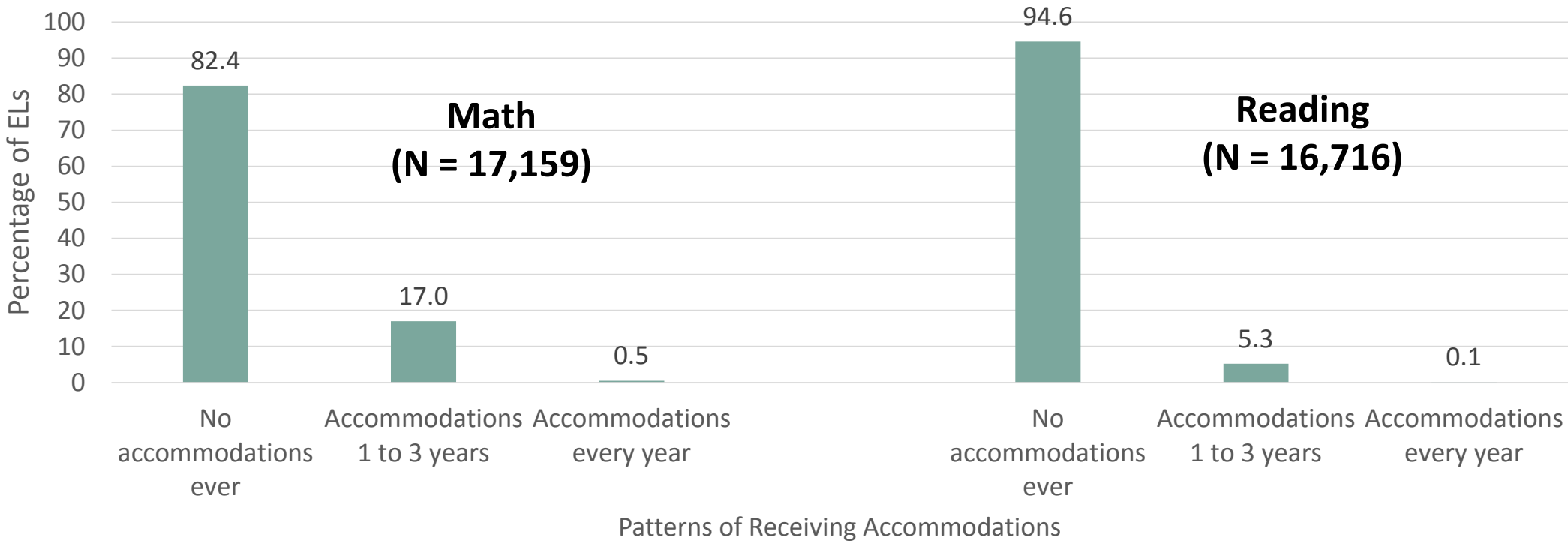
Commonly Used Reading Accommodations—HS



Note. OA = other accommodation; 18 = large print; 24 = large print; AT = assistive technology; TD = sign interpretation of test directions or writing prompt.

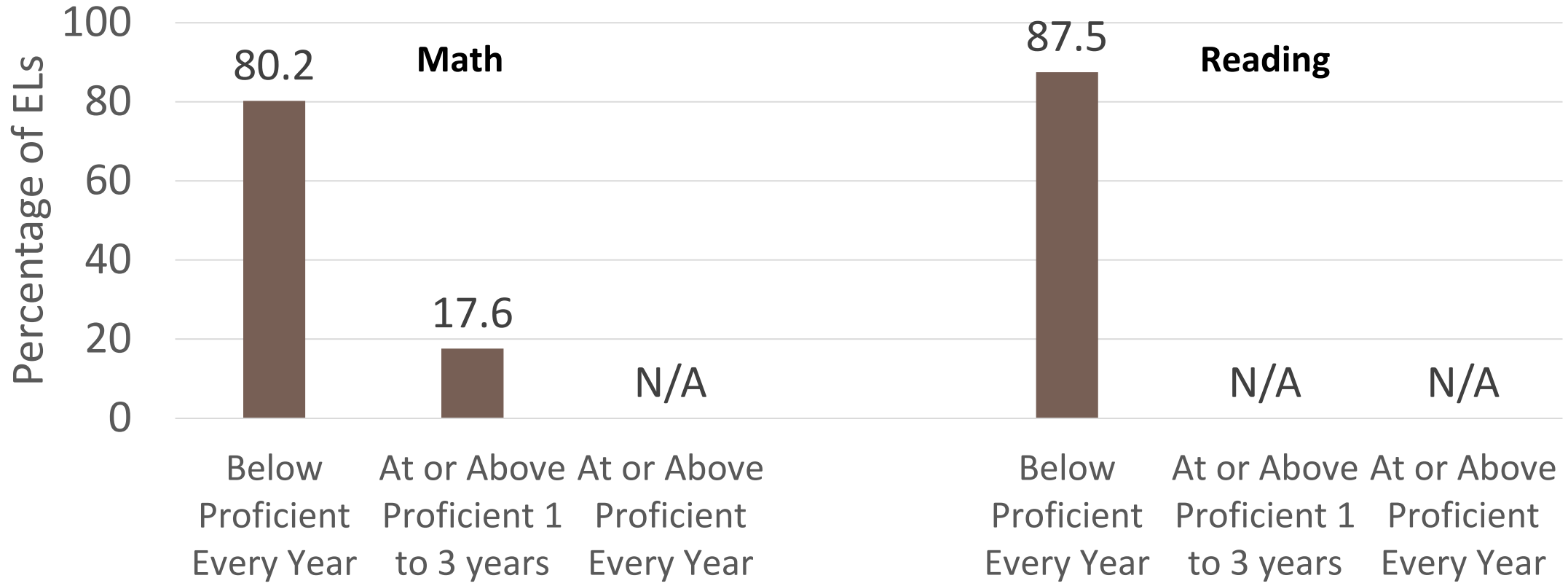
Student Level Data—Consistency

- Patterns of accommodations received for ELs with 4 years of records who ever received special education services



Performance

Performance for ELs who received accommodations 4 years



Summary

- Percentages of ELs receiving accommodations were lower for reading than math.
- Differences among school levels were obvious for math assessments, but not for reading assessments.
- Gender distributions for the two groups (EL vs. EL with accommodations) were very similar, with just slightly more of the ELs receiving accommodations being male.
- More ELs receiving accommodations were Hispanic/Latino, and fewer ELs were Asian or Pacific Islander.
- For both math and reading, the percentages of ELs in each group receiving free/reduced price lunch were similar (90%).

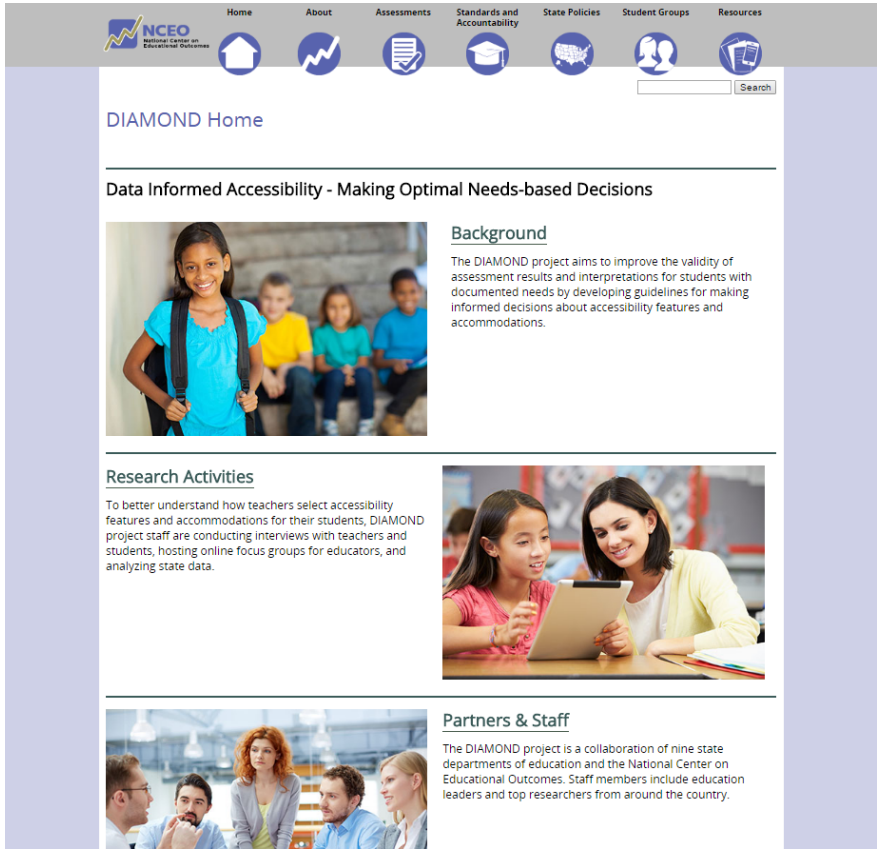
Summary – cont.

- The percentage of ELs proficient across years was generally higher for math compared to reading for ELs in the elementary school level, but about the same for ELs in the middle school and high school levels.
- Math script was always used by the largest percentage of ELs at the elementary school level. "Other Accommodations" were among the top three most commonly used accommodations.
- ELs with 4 years of accommodations data
  - Low percentages of ELs received accommodations
    - Not consistently receiving accommodations might be due to accessibility features only available since 2014-15.
  - Most ELs who received accommodations for four years had performance below proficient.

Implications

- Educators should examine information on the accommodations provided to ELs. Are the numbers and types of accommodations appropriate for the students' needs?
- Educators should study the characteristics of ELs receiving accommodations (e.g., gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch) to determine whether accommodations are used equitably.

Questions or Comments?

For More Information

- Visit the DIAMOND webpage on the NCEO website: https://nceo.info/About/projects/nceoprojects/diamond