



# GETTING DOWN — TO FACTS II —

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## English Learners: Charting Their Experiences and Mapping Their Futures in California Schools

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The order of the authors does not reflect their contribution to this brief.

**About:** The Getting Down to Facts project seeks to create a common evidence base for understanding the current state of California school systems and lay the foundation for substantive conversations about what education policies should be sustained and what might be improved to ensure increased opportunity and success for all students in California in the decades ahead. *Getting Down to Facts II* follows approximately a decade after the first Getting Down to Facts effort in 2007. This research brief is one of 19 that summarize 36 research studies that cover four main areas related to state education policy: student success, governance, personnel, and funding.

This brief summarizes two *Getting Down to Facts II* technical reports on the education of English learners in California:

**State Policies to Advance English Learners' Experiences and Outcomes in California's Schools**  
Ilana Umansky, September 2018.

**Teaching English Learners in California: How Teacher Credential Requirements in California Address Their Needs**  
Lucrecia Santibañez and Christine Snyder, September 2018.

The brief also draws on information provided in other studies in the *Getting Down to Facts II* project, including:

**A Portrait of Educational Outcomes in California**  
Sean F. Reardon, Christopher Doss, Josh Gagné, Rebecca Gleit, Angela Johnson, and Victoria Sosina, September 2018.

**Early Childhood Education in California**  
Deborah Stipek and Colleagues, September 2018

**District Dollars 2: California School District Finances, 2004-05 Through 2016-17**  
Paul Bruno, September 2018.

These and all GDTFII studies can be found at [www.gettingdowntofacts.com](http://www.gettingdowntofacts.com).

## Introduction

California is home to more English learner (EL) students (1.3 million) than any other state, and the state also has the highest proportion of ELs (21%). In total, 38% of California's students enter the school system as English learners. As a group, ELs in California perform well below average based on state test results and high school graduation rates.

Reflected in many statistics is a tendency to think about English learners as a monolithic group. Such thinking masks the dramatic variation in background, academic needs, and educational outcomes found among these students. What all English learners do share, however, is additional learning needs in school, as they are called upon to master both academic content and the English language.

To support California educators' abilities to effectively teach this large and diverse population of students, the State Board of Education adopted the [California English Learner Roadmap](#) in 2017. This roadmap came on the heels of voters' passage of Proposition 58, which repealed previous limitations on the use of bilingual education programs. In addition, in 2015, the state adopted an integrated English language arts/English language development framework for EL instruction.

Within the context of those major policy actions, this brief explores the needs of these students, current strategies for providing them with both English proficiency and content mastery, educators' capacity for teaching them successfully, and some barriers within the larger educational system that may be impeding their success. The brief also takes a look at the variation found in school districts related to their EL student outcomes and the revenues they have available to support English learners.

## KEY FINDINGS

- EL students in California have diverse, individual educational assets and needs that California policy is just beginning to take into account.
- Interpreting EL outcomes from data can be complex, and at times misleading, because students continuously move in and out of the English learner subgroup.
- K-12 education, early childhood education, and postsecondary education are not well aligned to address the needs of English learners.
- Many ELs in California do not have equitable access to grade-level core content instruction, and the English language development (ELD) instruction they receive may fall short of state standards.
- California has increased bilingual and dual immersion programs, which on average benefit English learners' academic, linguistic, social, and life outcomes.
- Reclassification policies, which are highly consequential for students, are currently in flux in California.
- English learners are likely to be taught by early-career teachers whose preparation may not be sufficient.
- Mechanisms are weak for ensuring that funds targeted for English learners are reaching them and being used in effective ways.

## WHO ARE CALIFORNIA'S ENGLISH LEARNERS?

### Based on the averages

- A typical English learner in California speaks Spanish, was probably born in the United States, and is likely to be reclassified as fully English proficient within six years of entering school.

### Outside of the averages

- After Spanish, the next largest language groups include Vietnamese, Mandarin, Arabic, and Filipino (Figure 1), each of which represents thousands of students, and about 11% of English learners speak a multitude of other languages.
- Each year, 3,000 to 4,000 new immigrant English learners enter grades 6–12 in California schools.
- Less than 10% of students are classified as *long-term English learners* (secondary school students who have not been reclassified after six years nor made expected progress on English proficiency and academic benchmarks), and a considerable proportion of those long-term ELs will at some point be identified with a disability (14% nationally).

### A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT DESIGNATIONS ARE GIVEN TO STUDENTS WHOSE PRIMARY LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH

**English learner (EL)** is the designation officially given to a student in the K-12 system who:

- lives in a family where a primary language other than English is spoken,
- has completed an assessment of English-language skills and been identified as needing extra support to learn English, and
- has not yet been reclassified as fully English proficient.

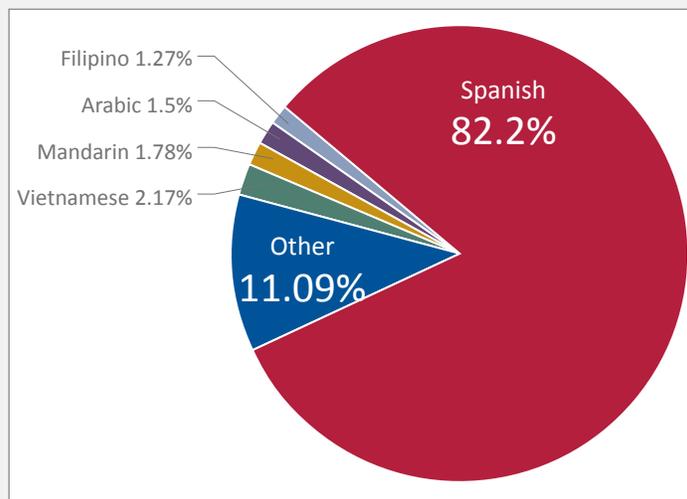
**Dual Language Learner (DLL)** is the term used in most early education systems to identify young children who are still learning their home language while they are also learning English.

**Initially Fully English Proficient (IFEP)** students speak a language other than English at home but demonstrate English proficiency when they first enter school.

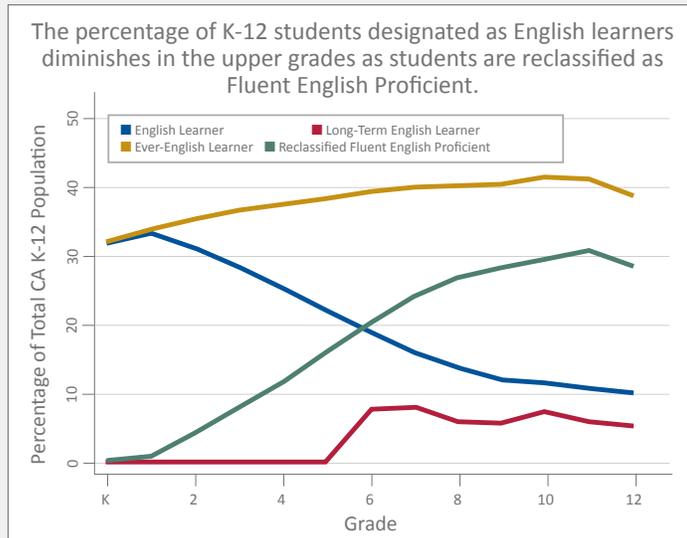
**Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP)** students are those students who are initially classified as English learners but are exited out of that status once they demonstrate English proficiency and readiness to enter mainstream instructional services. Reclassification criteria currently vary by district.

**Long-term English Learner (LTEL)** students refers to ELs who have not reached reclassification criteria within a timeframe considered typical. In California, state law concerning the classification LTEL also includes other factors including student grade level, advancement in English proficiency, and English language arts test score.

**Figure 1: Languages Spoken by California English Learners, 2017-18 School Year**



**Figure 2: California's English Learners as a Percentage of Total K-12 Population 2017-18**



Data: California Department of Education DataQuest: California English Learner Data 2017-2018  
Retrieved on July 7, 2018 from <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/longterm/ELAS.aspx?cd=00&aggllevel=State&year=2-17-18>

## Summary of Key Findings

### EL students in California have diverse, individual educational assets and needs that California policy is just beginning to take into account

By definition, the state’s English learner subgroup is constantly in flux, with students entering and exiting the group every year (see Figure 2). ELs are evaluated annually to see whether they qualify for reclassification. California counted 1.3 million students as English learners in 2018 and about 1 million more students who were English learners at some point but have been reclassified. The state—along with many researchers—refer to this combined population as “ever-ELs.”

EL-classified students are a diverse group in terms of their needs, assets, experiences, and outcomes. State and federal policy tends to cluster ELs together under an assumption that they all have similar educational needs. California is increasingly moving away from this simplistic notion by addressing both the needs of groups within the EL subgroup and inching toward providing more individualized services. The California EL Roadmap, for example, states: “Recognizing that there is no universal EL profile and no one-size-fits-all approach that works for all English learners, programs, curriculum, and instruction must be responsive to different EL student characteristics and experiences.”

Researcher Ilana Umansky details three specific categories of English learners with different needs: those with disabilities, newcomers, and long-term ELs. Within each of these groups, there is also enormous diversity.

**English learners with disabilities.** A significant proportion of EL-classified students will, at some point during their educational trajectory, be identified as having a disability. However, research highlights several ways in which these students’ needs are not addressed well. First, practices related to the evaluation of ELs for special education may mean that many EL-classified students are not receiving timely and appropriate special education services. Second, schools often have problems determining and providing appropriate services for EL students with disabilities. Finally, some districts fall short in terms of what criteria, mechanisms, and procedures they use—and how they use them—to determine if dually-classified students should be exited from either EL classification or disability identification. The state is in the process of developing a manual that provides guidance on these issues.

**Newcomers.** Students who have recently arrived in the United States from another country are often loosely termed newcomers. Research on newcomer students highlights their unique needs when compared to other ELs, most of whom are born in the United States. Newcomers enter U.S. schools with far lower English proficiency levels than their non-newcomer EL peers. Significant proportions of newcomer students have gaps in formal schooling and, as such, enter school academically behind their grade-level peers. Newcomers also frequently have other acute needs, as many arrive fleeing war, violence, and other hardships, and many experience trauma as they migrate.

Despite these barriers, research suggests that many newcomers progress very quickly when they first enter U.S. schools, indicating that the first few years are a window of opportunity for these students. However, many students who enter U.S. schools for the first time in middle or high school struggle to complete graduation requirements before they age out of the K-12 school system. California has no policies in place that specifically address the education of newcomer students.

**Long-term English learners.** Long-term English learners have not exited EL classification within a “typical” timeframe of six years and, according to the definition established by state law, have not made sufficient progress with regard to English proficiency. Critics note that while the classification ‘long-term EL’ labels the student, the onus of responsibility may lie with schools when they create barriers that limit reclassification among these students. Several studies have identified structural barriers faced by students who become LTELs including:

- a lack of alignment between how academic reading is taught in classrooms and how it is assessed on standardized tests;
- a devaluation of students’ and families’ language practices;
- inconsistent instruction as students move between different educational programs;
- less than full access to core academic content—content that is then tested for reclassification eligibility; and
- simultaneous classification in a disability category, which can create challenges with regard to identification and providing services, as discussed above.

### Interpreting EL outcomes from data can be complex, and at times misleading, because students continuously move in and out of the English learner subgroup

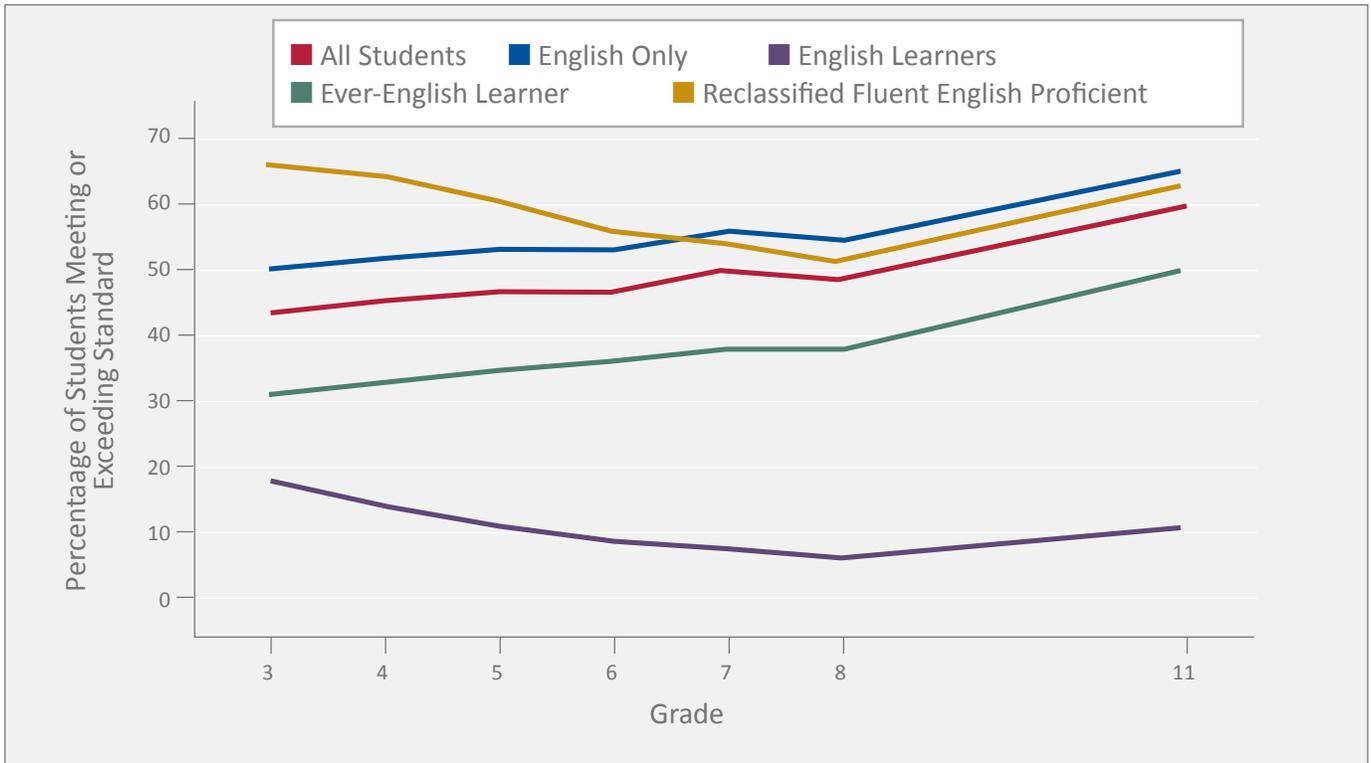
On average, English learners have far lower educational outcomes than their non-EL peers across multiple measures. They are, for example, far less likely to meet or exceed state standards in English language arts (ELA) and math. Data from state tests administered in 2017 show:

- In English language arts, only 12% of ELs met state standards, far less than the overall state average of 49%.
- In math, 12% of ELs met state standards compared with the overall state average of 38%.

When analyzing outcome data for California’s large, highly diverse EL population, however, it is important to understand that the population changes across grade levels. As students get older, most higher performing students are reclassified so lower performing students and newly-arrived students make up larger proportions of the EL population (see Figure 2).

As Figure 3 on the following page shows, the average scores of ELs decline across grades in English language arts. This is largely due to higher performing students being reclassified out of EL status. In fact, students who reclassify out of EL status outperform English-only students until about 7th grade. The trends are similar in mathematics.

**Figure 3: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress 2017  
English Language Arts/Literacy**



Data: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress 2017 California Statewide Research File. Retrieved July 8, 2018 from: <https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2017/ResearchFileList>

State data on the 4-year graduation rates for ELs versus all students also show a gap that has been consistent over time. Specifically, in 2016, the overall state 4-year graduation rate was 84%, while that of ELs was 73%: more than one in four ELs did not graduate from high school. Unfortunately, the state does not provide data on ever-EL and English-only (never-EL) graduation rates, which would provide a clearer picture.

In general, evaluating English learners' knowledge and skills is a challenge. The California EL Roadmap calls for "valid and reliable assessment [that] supports instruction, continuous improvement, and accountability for attainment of English proficiency, biliteracy, and academic achievement." Such an assessment system would include English language assessment, content area assessment, home language assessment, interim assessment, and formative assessment. In California, home language assessment and formative assessment are particularly underdeveloped and underutilized. The California Department of Education (CDE) is making progress by creating a Spanish language arts assessment but, to date, the state is not planning on using that assessment for accountability purposes, and there are no state assessments in other key languages.

Many high-stakes English proficiency and content area assessments given to ELs have limited validity and reliability because of the difficulty of creating a test that can separate students' knowledge of content from their abilities in English. (Validity is the ability of an assessment to measure the skills or knowledge it is designed to measure; reliability is the ability of an assessment to measure a given individual consistently.) Content

area assessments (in English) with fewer linguistic demands tend to measure ELs' skills with greater validity and reliability; however, the linguistic demands of content area tests have increased dramatically with the implementation of standards such as the Common Core State Standards.

### AN EXAMINATION OF EL ACHIEVEMENT LOOKS AT GAPS IN A MORE NUANCED WAY

In their examination of test score performance over time, Sean Reardon and Christopher Doss contrast the average scores of students who have ever been classified as English learners in California versus those who have not. They examine the results based on the relative affluence of the school district students attend. They find:

- The gap between never-EL and ever-EL students is larger on English language arts tests than math tests.
- Both groups of students tend to score better in more affluent districts, but the gap between the groups is larger in affluent districts than in poor districts.
- The EL gap narrows as students progress through school and does so most substantially in poor districts.

Based on their analysis, the authors estimate that after five years of schooling, the gap in English language arts test scores between the never-EL and ever-EL student groups would shrink by 25% in affluent districts and by 50% in poor districts.

### K-12 education, early childhood education, and postsecondary education are not well aligned to address the needs of English learners

Education in California is separated into three main systems: pre-K education (before children enter kindergarten), the K-12 system, and postsecondary education. The three levels often have entirely different rules, policies, and frameworks for supporting the education of students whose primary language is not English. For example, the category of students called English learners—and the rights that correspond with that category—only exist within the K-12 system. Neither pre-K nor postsecondary systems are bound by law to identify and serve this group of students. In addition, unlike the K-12 system, which is largely public and state-run, both the pre-K and the higher education levels are operated by a mix of public and private providers, with disparate private, local, state, and/or federal funding and oversight.

**English learners' opportunities in pre-K impact their K-12 readiness.** Compared to the nation as a whole, California has about twice as many children 0–5 years who are first- or second-generation immigrants and live in families in which the adults are not fluent in English. In pre-K systems, these children are called dual language learners (DLLs). Young DLLs are at significant risk, given that 29% are in families below the federal poverty line, and the same proportion has parents who do not have a high school diploma.

Research on DLLs in pre-K settings indicate that high-quality pre-K is positively associated with greater K-12 school readiness and more advanced English proficiency as students enter kindergarten. DLLs benefit from

an instructional focus on pre-reading skills, English oral language development, and home language development/maintenance. Yet, even controlling for income, researchers find that children of parents who are not native English speakers are less likely to participate in pre-K programs.

Pre-K systems increasingly are developing policies and guidelines for supporting DLL students. For example, recent regulations adopted by Head Start, the largest federally-funded preschool program, require linguistically appropriate assessments for DLLs and teacher professional development regarding the needs and assets of DLLs. No such policy has been developed for California's state preschools, however.

**ELs' opportunities in K-12 affect their college-going decisions and outcomes.** At the opposite end of the education continuum, ELs are far less likely to graduate from high school, enroll in college, and complete college compared to their non-EL peers. Because many ELs have immigrant parents who are less likely to be familiar with the U.S. education system, research points to the importance of college advising among ELs and former (reclassified) ELs. Research highlights that with insufficient supports, students who graduate from high school as ELs tend to enter less selective schools, such as community colleges, and that even academically high-performing ELs face numerous barriers to college entry.

These findings point to the interconnections between the three levels of schooling for EL students. High-quality pre-K that includes targeted supports for DLLs improves students' preparedness as they enter kindergarten. Course access, high-quality instruction, and college advising improve EL students' likelihood of attending and succeeding in college. In addition, research findings indicate that across levels, ELs tend to face similar barriers and challenges within their schooling experiences. These pertain to appropriate targeted supports, teacher preparation, curricular access, and home language instruction, among others. In the K-12 system, some of these barriers and challenges are receiving attention.

### Many ELs in California do not have equitable access to grade-level core content instruction, and the English language development (ELD) instruction they receive may fall short of state standards

Federal law and state policy regarding the education of EL students are framed around two core rights: the right to equitable and accessible grade-level content and standards, and the right to English language instruction for English acquisition. California state policy has identified a clear preference for simultaneous provision of English instruction and content instruction. This is laid out in the state's EL Roadmap, which states: "English language proficiency development...can take place as an integrated process simultaneous with academic content learning..."

Despite this stance, there is clear evidence that many ELs do not have equitable access to grade-level core content instruction. Umansky reports that ELs are both tracked into lower-level content area classes and excluded outright from content area classes.

The evidence is particularly clear at the middle- and high-school levels, where analysis of course-taking is possible. Many ELs are not enrolled in a full load of academic classes, meaning that they are missing one or more core content area classes including math, science, English language arts, or social studies. As reported in an analysis for Assembly Bill 2735 (signed into law in September 2018), lack of access to core content instruction is the most frequent violation found by the California Department of Education (CDE) during EL compliance monitoring. Numerous studies support this finding. EL students are also disproportionately ushered into low-track classes that do not prepare them for college, rather than having access to grade-level classes, Advanced Placement courses, and honors-level classes. With some specific exceptions, the new law

prohibits schools from denying a middle or high school student, classified as an English learner, enrollment in courses required for graduation and college admission, beginning with the 2019-20 school year.

Inclusion in more challenging courses will not, in and of itself, be sufficient to ensure that ELs are able to learn and succeed in those classes. Instead, guidance, support, and professional development are necessary to build teacher capacity to effectively teach ELs within an integrated grade-level setting.

The second core right of students acquiring English is instruction in the English language with the goal of English proficiency. This is considered a fundamental responsibility of schools given that English proficiency is a necessity for accessing mainstream instruction (when provided in English) and for full social, economic, and political access within the larger U.S. society.

California’s framework related to English language development mandates that all ELs in California be provided with both designated (English only) and integrated ELD (English embedded in other subjects). (See the box). This approach is consistent with research that shows that English learners benefit from high-quality ELD instruction that is provided in both formats.

However, integrating language and content instruction requires specific skills and training, and several studies suggest that many content area teachers feel underprepared to do so. Preliminary research finds that implementation of the state’s ELD standards and framework may be weak. In response, CDE has been creating resources to support improved implementation, such as videos and extensive lesson planning supports.

### EL INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

**Formats in which English language development is provided:**

- **Designated instruction** in which EL students are provided with focused English instruction for a set period of time each day.
- **Integrated ELD instruction** in which English instruction is embedded within content area instruction such as science, math, and language arts.

**Instructional program models:**

- **Bilingual programs** serve language minority students and provide some instruction in English and students’ home language.
- **Dual immersion programs** likewise provide instruction in English and a target language but serve both speakers of that target language and English-only students.
- **English immersion programs** can serve all students (ELs and non-ELs) providing instruction in English with modifications and supports to increase ELs’ access and comprehension.

## California has increased bilingual and dual immersion programs, which on average benefit English learners' academic, linguistic, social, and life outcomes

In November 2016, voters passed Proposition 58, which effectively overturned Proposition 227 (1998), a policy that restricted bilingual and multilingual programs and instruction. Proposition 58 affirms bilingualism and multilingualism as key assets and resources within California, and asserts bilingual instruction as a valid and desirable educational model.

A large body of research finds that bilingual education, on average, benefits EL students, resulting in improved outcomes in English proficiency, target language proficiency, reclassification, academic performance, and social outcomes. The effects of bilingual instruction vary due to the quality of such programs, therefore monitoring and support are necessary.

### A ROBUST BODY OF RESEARCH ON BILINGUALISM POINTS TO BENEFITS

These benefits include:

- the economic demand for workers who speak more than one language;
- the economic returns to being bilingual;
- a lower incidence of Alzheimer's disease; and
- more developed executive functioning skills.

Building on Proposition 58, the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction launched an initiative in May 2018 called *Global California 2030*, which identifies specific goals for California including a dramatic expansion of the number of California students in bilingual and dual immersion programs by 2030 (to reach 50% of California students), paired with parallel increases in the number of teachers with bilingual authorization and the number of dual immersion programs. Since 2012, the state has also awarded a Seal of Biliteracy to graduating high school students who demonstrate proficiency in both English and another language.

California faces a severe shortage of teachers with bilingual teaching authorizations, a shortage that limits the state's ability to achieve its goal of bilingual education expansion.

## Reclassification policies, which are highly consequential for students, are currently in flux in California

Federal and state law reflect the logical notion that students are to be classified as English learners while they are acquiring English proficiency and needing linguistic supports in school. After they reach an English proficiency level where they can learn in mainstream settings without specialized supports, the English learner status is removed.

Reclassification out of EL status generally triggers changes in students' instructional program, including access to curricula, peer composition, and teacher and course placement. As such, the assessments are highly consequential for students, having long-term repercussions for learning, high school graduation, and college enrollment. Although the logic for EL classification and reclassification is simple, decisions regarding whether and when a student needs linguistic services and when a student is ready to exit EL status are complicated.

ELs benefit from clear, consistent, and simplified reclassification policies and criteria. Yet, in California, the state's past reclassification policy required minimum criteria that included an English proficiency assessment, teacher evaluation, parental opinion and consultation, and a measure of performance on the state English language arts assessment. The state set these as minimum criteria (including some minimum thresholds) for reclassification, but allowed California districts to include additional criteria and/or set higher thresholds on the state-mandated criteria. With multiple criteria and districts' authority to adapt criteria further, there has been enormous variation across districts in both their reclassification criteria and thresholds. Under the federal Every Child Succeeds Act of 2015, each state needs to have one consistent procedure for reclassification. As such, California is revisiting its reclassification criteria, as described below.

States are moving toward including only measures of English language proficiency as reclassification criteria. Content area assessments, in particular, can be problematic as reclassification criteria because students' content area skills are, in part, a reflection of their access to content and instruction. This creates a catch-22 in the many settings where ELs' access to content is restricted. They cannot exit EL status and thus gain access to more content because their content area skills do not meet reclassification thresholds.

Finding the right threshold levels for English proficiency and deciding on additional criteria can be challenging:

- Making reclassification difficult to attain means that some students who are ready to learn and thrive in general education settings will be denied access to those settings.
- Making reclassification thresholds too easy to attain can result in students floundering in mainstream settings without needed supports.

In this sense, it is not solely the criteria and thresholds that matter, but rather the match between reclassification and services provided. The fuller access to content that EL status affords, the less problematic high reclassification thresholds become. The more integrated linguistic supports are in mainstream classes, the less problematic low reclassification thresholds become.

Today, California is developing new standardized statewide reclassification rules. State officials have actively engaged stakeholders in many aspects of the process. The final reclassification rules have not been decided, but the state has taken some important steps that include:

- Adoption and implementation of a new state English proficiency assessment system, the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC).
- Development of a statewide language-use evaluation protocol that will give teachers a standardized way to observe and measure students' English language use and may be included in reclassification decisions.

- Analysis to identify English proficiency thresholds for reclassification eligibility.
- Consideration of the removal of an academic criterion for reclassification (the state English language arts assessment).

## English learners are likely to be taught by early-career teachers whose preparation may not be sufficient

The underperformance of English learners on tests and lower high school graduation rates raise important questions about teacher preparation in California. ELs in the state are disproportionately more likely to be taught by novice or early-career teachers. For example, teachers on emergency permits are three times as likely to teach in California’s high-minority schools and twice as likely to teach in high-poverty schools as in more advantaged schools. These are precisely the schools that also teach the majority of English learners in the state.

A small, but growing body of evidence suggests that teachers of ELs need specialized knowledge, dispositions, and practices to effectively teach this population. In their study, Lucrecia Santibañez and Christine Snyder examine current preservice and in-service preparation for mainstream teachers to determine whether newly-minted teachers get sufficient training for high-quality teaching of ELs. The authors identify three domains, based on a broad base of research, that describe the specialized abilities needed when teaching English learners:

- **EL-specific scaffolds** mean that teachers use observable methods to make English language objectives explicit to ELs, modify some English materials for them, use students’ primary language, facilitate students’ use of English in class, and employ other “sheltered” instructional strategies.
- **EL-specific teacher expertise** includes:
  - teachers’ knowledge of linguistics;
  - content area teachers’ knowledge of language development pedagogy;
  - the ability to assess EL students’ abilities and adapt instruction accordingly;
  - the ability to analyze the language and knowledge demands inherent in textbooks and classroom tasks; and
  - the ability to adapt curriculum and assessments to fit ELs’ needs.
- **Orientations** refers to teachers’ strong commitment to equity for all students, including the belief that English learners have valuable skills and knowledge even if they are not yet proficient in English, and that working closely with these students’ families is of high value.

Overall, teaching ELs is strongly emphasized in the state’s expectations and requirements for a preliminary teaching credential. This emphasis is largely a result of the embedded credential model that California has adopted. At the preliminary credential phase, EL-specific scaffolds, teacher expertise, and orientations are developed and assessed through coursework, clinical practice, and Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs). It is up to teacher preparation programs (TPPs) to decide how they will address these multiple requirements.

Multiple mechanisms are in place for assessing teaching candidates’ proficiency in teaching ELs. The process is systematic, and teacher preparation programs must meet stringent requirements regarding fidelity to

these rules in order to maintain accreditation. Candidates must also pass the TPAs, which include the teaching of English learners. Preparation programs seek to place candidates in linguistically diverse field settings, but this may not always be possible. If the candidate's placement has no ELs, they may select a recently redesignated English fluent student or a student who needs language development support. Among the various assessments required of teaching candidates, only the TPAs contain EL-related benchmarks that are externally evaluated (i.e., not evaluated by the program itself). Passing the TPA may not, however, provide an accurate gauge of EL-teaching readiness because failure to pass any of the EL subsections of the assessment does not necessarily trigger overall failure of the TPA.

Proficiency in teaching English learners is infused into the preliminary credential requirements to such a degree that those who earn this credential automatically obtain their EL authorization. Nevertheless, the researchers find that teachers struggle to adequately translate the knowledge acquired during preparation into their teaching practice in their own classrooms.

After teachers have earned their preliminary credential, they have five years to “upgrade” to the clear (i.e., permanent) credential. Most teachers do this through induction, a two-year, job-embedded, highly individualized process that includes a “robust mentoring system” and professional development. Induction not only initiates teachers into the classroom, but is also meant to further their development, socialize them into their new role, and build confidence.

As a vehicle for teacher learning, induction is designed very differently from the preliminary credential phase and is less systematic in its emphasis on teaching ELs. The guiding document for induction is the Induction Preconditions and Program Standards, and in this four-page document, there is not a single reference to ELs. The California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) guides the induction process, but of the 38 major elements in the standards, only one explicitly references English learners.

Addressing how to teach ELs well was not always emphasized in the Individual Learning Plans that reflect the teacher's induction goals or in teacher-coach interactions. In interviews with a small sample of teachers, they reported struggling with several key aspects of teaching ELs including:

- addressing language objectives;
- providing instruction on language objectives;
- adapting instruction and language for ELs;
- providing primary language support; and
- organizing classroom instruction according to EL proficiency level.

These teachers also recognized the complexity of these tasks, and wished they could get more support or coaching on how to do them.

Moreover, Santibañez and Snyder found that some teachers had very little actionable information about their ELs. During the first few months of the school year, some teachers may not even have accurate information about the number of ELs in their classrooms. Without reliable data on their students' language proficiency levels, it is difficult to imagine teachers being able to use EL-specific scaffolds. After they have this basic information about ELs, teachers do not necessarily use data in a systematic way, and several expressed a need for further support regarding the use of data to inform classroom instruction.

## CALIFORNIA LAWS ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING RELATED TO ENGLISH LEARNERS

- Assembly Bill 1059 (1999) required that all California teacher programs infuse EL teacher preparation into their initial credentialing programs. Since that law went into effect, all teachers receiving their initial teaching license are authorized to teach ELs. More broadly, California law requires that all teachers who teach ELs have EL authorization.
- The Bilingual Authorization (formerly the Bilingual, Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development certificate or BCLAD) authorizes elementary and secondary teachers to provide to English learners: 1) Content instruction delivered in the students' primary language; 2) academic instruction delivered in English designed specifically for English learners; and 3) instruction for English language development.

### Mechanisms are weak for ensuring that funds targeted for English learners are reaching them and being used in effective ways

Many of the research-based services, resources, and supports that benefit EL outcomes—such as bilingual teacher preparation programs and providing sufficient instructional time for ELs to receive both English language instruction and content instruction—require funding.

It costs significantly more to provide an adequate and equitable education for ELs compared to non-ELs, but the research estimating how much more is limited and results are somewhat inconsistent. In a paper prepared for the original *Getting Down to Facts* project, Patricia Gándara and Russell Rumberger developed a comprehensive model for costing out an adequate education for ELs in the K-12 system. They identified four main types of resources: fiscal, material, human, and social. Examples of additional costs include:

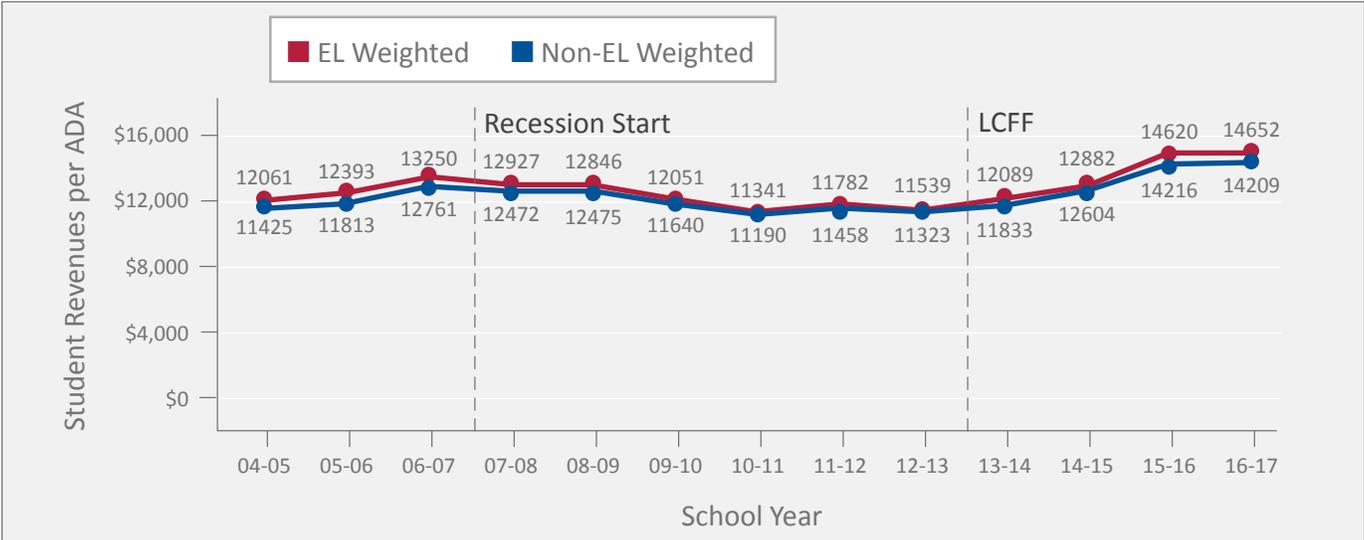
- teacher preparation to effectively teach ELs (both preservice and in-service);
- program development, specialized curriculum, and valid assessments;
- extra instructional time;
- high-quality early childhood education;
- family engagement and social-emotional support services;
- smaller class sizes; and
- appropriate adaptation of specialized services, including special education and gifted and talented education.

In 2014, California implemented the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) (described in detail in other studies that are part of the *Getting Down to Facts II* project). The LCFF is the state's system for distributing funding to school districts, and it allows for substantial local control over how funds are distributed and used. Funding levels for ELs are determined through base, supplemental, and concentration grant calculations. Base funds are determined by multiplying a per-pupil amount by a district's average daily attendance. Supplemental funds take the form of an additional 20% over and above the base amount, for each "targeted disadvantaged

pupil,” a group that includes ELs. Finally, school districts in which more than 55% of their students fall into one of the supplemental funds’ targeted groups receive an additional 50% of the adjusted base grant for each student over that 55% threshold. This is called a concentration grant.

Under the LCFF, school district Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) must identify educational goals for the EL subgroup, actions to accomplish those goals, and targeted expenditures. In addition to specific LCAP goals and actions for ELs, districts must also have an EL parent advisory committee that reviews the annual LCAP. These measures are designed primarily for accountability purposes.

**Figure 4: Per-Pupil Funding for the Average English Learner**



Consistent with the objectives of the LCFF, increases in district resource levels since 2013-14 appear to have occurred disproportionately in districts enrolling larger numbers of lower-income students or English learners.

In 2012-13, the “average” English learner was enrolled in a district receiving \$216 per average daily attendance (2%) more revenue than the “average” non-English learner. By 2016-17, that difference had grown to \$443 (3%). In both absolute and proportional terms, these are the largest that these differences have been in many years, suggesting that the LCFF is having at least some success in distributing educational resources in a more progressive manner, though the differences were similar or larger prior to the recession. (When Los Angeles Unified School District is excluded from these calculations, the revenue difference shrinks substantially.)

Data: California Department of Education, SACS reports.  
 Note: Student revenues per average daily attendance (ADA) are weighted by EL and non-EL enrollment. This graph covers California districts from 2004-05 through 2016-17, excluding districts that had ADAs lower than 250 during this time period. Funding is expressed in 2017 dollars.

Despite these measures, accountability for EL education spending under the LCFF is considered weaker than measures in most other states. Specifically, because funds are received as a lump sum at the district level and are not tied to specific expenditures, it has not been clear whether funds from supplemental and concentration grants must be spent on English learners and other targeted groups.

Two recent court cases in two separate California districts have ruled that supplemental and concentration funds must be used to support the education of targeted groups. Recent research finds variation across districts in this regard, with some districts focusing those funds on targeted groups and others using supplemental and concentration funds for general expenditures for all district students. One recent study found that 20% of LCAPs explicitly stated that supplemental and/or concentration funds were spent on general education expenditures. Researchers Julia Koppich and Daniel Humphrey in a *Getting Down to Facts II* study came to a similar conclusion, finding that some supplemental and concentration grant funds supplanted expenditures traditionally funded through base grant funds, such as infrastructure and summer school. Unfortunately, tracking the specific use of targeted expenditures is difficult, if not impossible, because of data limitations. The state is currently trying to tackle this challenge.

Umansky notes that a second major challenge under California's new funding policies is that districts may not be sufficiently or effectively identifying and planning for EL expenditures. Analysis finds that most LCAPs are weak in identifying specific EL goals, actions, and expenditures. Of particular concern were districts' plans to implement the new ELA/ELD framework, districts' abilities to engage EL parents, and their methods for increasing English learners' access to academic content and specialized programs (such as bilingual programs). With weak and underspecified goals, actions, and expenditures for English learners, it is unclear to what extent efforts are targeted toward effective supports based on research.

## Conclusion

By definition, the state's English learners are a diverse group. Many ELs progress steadily toward English proficiency, and when they do, their designation changes. Other students, identified as long-term English learners, spend more than six years in public school without being recognized as proficient in English. Meanwhile, newcomers enter the system each year at all grade levels. Tracking the progress of ELs is complicated because of this diversity.

New California policies related to educating ELs increasingly recognize this diversity and its implications, as reflected in the English Learner Roadmap. Of particular salience is the recommendation that ELs have simultaneous and equitable access to both English language development and academic content. This recommendation presents a number of challenges for local educators, and particularly for teachers who may complete their teacher preparation programs unprepared to provide such instruction. A lack of focus on EL instruction in the framework used for teacher induction is of particular concern, as teachers in schools with high populations of English learners are disproportionately those new to the profession. California is also in the midst of revising its approach to the reclassification of English learners, a transition that is highly consequential for the students themselves.

Developing educators' capacity to teach English learners effectively—and providing these students with the extra time and support they need—requires resources. California's LCFF reform has resulted in some additional funding for districts that serve English learners, but the monitoring of local expenditures does not reveal the extent to which services for ELs are improving. Beyond that, the state's overall education funding still falls short of what research shows would be adequate to meet California's educational goals, particularly for the one in five students who need to learn English along with the rest of the curriculum.

## Lead Author Biographies

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