The background of the cover features a row of classical stone columns, likely from a government building or university, receding into the distance. The lighting is soft, creating a sense of depth and grandeur.

Effects of the Implementation of Proposition 227 on the Education of English Learners, K-12

Findings from a Five-Year Evaluation

SUBMITTED TO:

California Department of Education

SUBMITTED BY:

American Institutes for Research
Prime Contractor

WestEd
Subcontractor



Effects of the Implementation of Proposition 227 on the Education of English Learners, K–12

Findings from a Five-Year Evaluation

Final Report for AB 56 and AB 1116

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January 24, 2006

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Acknowledgments

The study team for this project from the American Institutes for Research and WestEd extend our appreciation to the many individuals from the districts and schools that participated in the phone interview, written survey, and case study data collections conducted for this evaluation. These districts and schools were extremely helpful with all aspects of our data collection efforts, from scheduling to recruiting parents to responding to detailed interviews and surveys. Our findings on the implementation and impact of Proposition 227 in the field, as well as those related to effective practices, would not have been possible without their assistance.

We also wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of key project staff who contributed to this report by analyzing extant state data and providing research support integral to the writing of this report. These include study task leaders involved in earlier years of the study, including Marian Eaton, Beverly Farr, Jennifer Laird, Roger Levine, Deborah Montgomery-Parrish, and Heather Quick, as well as AIR and WestEd research staff: Anastacia Amabisca, Renee Almassizadeh, Priyanka Anand, Katie Bruna, Emily Campbell, Cassandra Chaney, Karl Dawson, Matt Gaertner, Cheryl Graczewski, Paul Gubbins, Hiro Hikawa, Freya Makris, Ben Martinez, Carmen Martinez-Sussmann, Megan Rice, Joe Robinson, James Stapleton, Carmella Schaecher, Abigail Stewart-Teitelbaum, Tricia Tulipano, Aida Walqui, Joyce Wang, Jean Wolman, and Bokhee Yoon.

Appreciation is also extended to the following AIR and WestEd staff who conducted case study site visits and interviews: Sofia Aburto, Margit Birge, Katie Bruna, Noelle Caskey, Karl Dawson, Matt Gaertner, Vanessa Girard, Jaime Gonzalez, Raquel Gonzalez, Paul Gubbins, Carmen Martinez-Sussmann, David Ogden, Tamaye Ota, Ursula Sexton, and Lori Van Houten.

We also thank Michelle Bullwinkle, Lee Carlson, Connie Conroy, Kyna Darko, Amy Davis, Diana Doyal, Kevin Neilson, and Sandra Smith for their contributions to the production of this report.

Last, we wish to acknowledge the guidance and input provided throughout the study by the State Work Group, particularly Patricia de Cos, Paul Warren, and Kathleen Chavira, who contributed invaluable suggestions to the study design and reports. We would also like to thank Veronica Aguila, Jan Mayer, Lilia Sanchez, Cathy George, and Judy Lambert, and other staff of the CDE; for their comments and extensive collaborative efforts, as well as project Senior Advisors (see Appendix A for a list of these Advisors).

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

In June of 1998, Proposition 227 was passed by 61 percent of the California electorate. The initiative was intended to significantly alter the ways in which the state's English learners (ELs) are taught. Proposition 227 requires that ELs be taught "overwhelmingly in English" through sheltered/structured English immersion (SEI) programs during "a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year," and then transferred to mainstream English-language classrooms.

In 2000, the California Department of Education contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and WestEd to conduct a five-year, legislatively mandated evaluation of the effects of Proposition 227 on the education of ELs. A combination of student achievement analyses, phone interviews, case study site visits, and written surveys was used to examine such questions as how the proposition was implemented, which EL services are most and least effective, and what unintended consequences resulted from Proposition 227's implementation.

Much has happened in regard to education policy in California since the passage of Proposition 227. In many ways, it is "old news." However, we believe the issues addressed by this evaluation remain vital and highly relevant to California's future. California has by far the most English learners (EL) of any state. Nearly one-third of the nation's 5 million ELs are in California. Proposition 227 was introduced following a ten-year period in which ELs had grown from less than 15 percent to nearly 25 percent of the state's K-12 population. Spanish is by far the most common primary language, accounting for 85 percent of the California EL population. The challenge of serving ELs effectively continues to grow in importance across the state.

Implementation and Impact of Proposition 227

Following the passage of Proposition 227, the proportion of ELs receiving primary language instruction with English language development (commonly referred to as bilingual instruction) dropped significantly (from 30 to 8 percent), and the proportion receiving specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) increased. In attempting to examine the effects of the proposition, it is important to note that it was implemented at the same time as other important education policy initiatives affecting ELs. Early in this study, study respondents identified the state's class size reduction program as the most influential factor in its effect on EL instructional services across the state, followed by the state's new English language development (ELD) standards, Proposition 227, and California's emerging accountability system. As time has passed, study respondents now tend to identify the federal and state accountability systems as having the greatest influence on EL instructional practice in the state.

Concerns with the proposition reported by respondents early in this study were based on perceptions that it overemphasizes an English-only philosophy, greatly restricts the use of primary language instruction, and diminishes the focus on student cultural

heritage. An ongoing concern is continued ambiguity—as an example, respondents’ interpretation of instruction “overwhelmingly in English” varied widely. Most districts responding to our Year 2 (2002) survey allowed the use of primary language on an occasional or even frequent basis, at least under certain conditions, in SEI settings. The regularity with which primary language use is reportedly acceptable in SEI settings somewhat blurs the distinction between SEI and bilingual instructional settings. These findings suggest considerable program model variation across the state. In addition, most respondents to the Year 2 survey stated that Proposition 227 had not helped substantially in regard to EL redesignation, integration, or student academic performance. By this last year of the study, respondents selected on the basis of exceptional EL performance in the post-Proposition 227 era tended to more favorably assess the impact of the proposition in general, although they emphasized the substantially increased attention the law has placed on ELs and EL academic performance more than the default instructional changes mandated by the law.

A number of barriers to the implementation of the proposition were also identified through this study. These barriers include: 1) the short timeline and insufficient guidance for implementing regulations in the law initially, 2) confusion over what the law requires and allows, and 3) the lack of clear operational definitions for the various instructional approaches to the education of English learners. In particular, we have found considerable evidence for concern over the past five years regarding uneven school and district understanding and implementation of alternative instructional program waivers. Under Proposition 227, parents can request instruction in an “alternative” (i.e., bilingual) instructional program for their child. However, it appears that parents’ understanding of their wavier rights and schools’ acceptance or rejection of waiver requests are often governed by prior practice and the predisposition of providers toward particular instructional programs.

Key EL Achievement Findings

Since the passage of Proposition 227, students across all language classifications in all grades have experienced performance gains on the SAT-9 and CST. However, since Proposition 227 was implemented alongside other reforms in a climate of increased accountability, it is not possible to attribute these gains to any one factor. ***While there has been a slight decrease in the performance gap between ELs and native English speakers, it has remained virtually constant in most subject areas for most grades.*** In addition, when former ELs (RFEPs) are included in the cohort of ELs, this pattern in the performance gap is very similar. The finding that these gaps have not widened is especially noteworthy given the substantial increase in the percentage of English learners participating in statewide assessments during the post-Proposition 227 period, as required by federal and state accountability provisions.

Limitations in statewide data make it impossible to definitively resolve the long-standing debate underlying Proposition 227 as to whether one instructional model is more efficacious for California’s ELs than another. The classifications associated with various instructional approaches for ELs in state data have shifted over the years. For example,

while data on percentage of ELs receiving various *instructional services* in each school has been collected for many years, with the introduction of Proposition 227, the state also began to collect school-level data on the *instructional settings* or programs in which ELs participate (e.g., bilingual, structured English immersion). Moreover, the state does not collect information at the student level on type of instructional program in which EL students participate. Instead, the state collects data on the instructional services each EL receives in the current year, with no history of prior instructional services. ELs can receive various services in any given instructional setting. Therefore, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the type of program ELs participate in solely on the basis of the instructional services they receive.

Several analyses of differences in EL performance by instructional model were conducted using available data. ***Across all analyses, little to no evidence of differences in EL performance by model of instruction was found.*** Although statewide data suggest a slight achievement advantage to students currently receiving SDAIE/ELD instructional services during 2003-04, we cannot conclude from these findings that one EL instructional service is more effective than another for two key reasons. First, there is selection bias—that is, students are not randomly assigned to various instructional services or settings—and therefore, the groups receiving the different types of instructional services are not directly comparable. For example, schools offering bilingual education are much more likely to have ELs who enter with substantially lower initial English proficiency. Second, state student-level data cannot be linked across years, making it impossible to measure student’s progress over time or to discern which services EL students received in prior years.

Using data from LAUSD, which enrolls about one-fifth of the state’s ELs, we were able to examine individual students’ performance linked over several years in relation to instructional services received. In addition, Proposition 227 forced the movement of large numbers of students from bilingual to immersion programs, which created a form of natural experiment that helps address the selection bias problem discussed above. Using these more refined data, our analyses show that bilingual instructional approaches were not statistically different from structured English immersion approaches in improving EL performance. ***Our overall conclusion, based on the data currently available, is that there is no clear evidence to support an argument of the superiority of one EL instructional approach over another.***

A last set of analyses regarding EL achievement relates to the redesignation prognosis for ELs. ***Using survival analysis, we estimate the probability of an EL being redesignated to fluent English proficient status after 10 years in California to be less than 40 percent.*** It is important to keep in mind that the odds vary widely across school districts. For example, among districts with a high population of ELs, the probability of redesignation ranges from an estimated low of 14 percent in one district to a high of 72 percent in another. Variations across school districts, across social economic status, ethnicity categories, and the grade in which students entered their respective district, underlie the overall state average. In addition, variations in local redesignation policies and practices, discussed below, contribute to these differences..

Promising Practices for ELs

Based on the conclusion above—that model of instruction is not the operative variable in differentiating academic success with ELs—we explored the premise that the best source for understanding what does lead to high-level academic performance for English learners (ELs) would be schools and districts that appear to be achieving this result. A model was developed for identifying high EL performance using a school selection tool that enables users to interactively control demographics and selection criteria. Within the context of relatively high and varied levels of EL concentration and the proportion of students receiving primary language instruction, we identified and interviewed administrators from 66 schools and 5 districts that are among the highest performers statewide relative to other schools and districts with comparable student characteristics. Given that the majority of ELs in California do not receive primary language instruction, most of the schools selected offer immersion programs, but some schools in this sample offer bilingual programs and several offer multiple options for EL instruction.

While findings suggest that there is no one path to academic excellence among ELs, administrators tended to pinpoint a few key features leading to success. School principals identified the following as most critical:

- 1) staff capacity to address EL needs;***
- 2) schoolwide focus on English Language Development and standards-based instruction;***
- 3) shared priorities and expectations in regard to educating ELs; and***
- 4) systematic, ongoing assessment and data-driven decision-making.***

Many of the common elements that our findings suggest are important contributors to excellence in EL education have been repeatedly shown to lead to success in all schools over the past decade. On the other hand, several of the factors respondents cited as most instrumental to their success are specifically focused on addressing the needs of ELs—that is, ensuring that teachers have knowledge and skills needed to support EL students, having in place systematic, carefully designed plans for provision of ELD instructional services, and deliberately fostering academic language and literacy development across the curriculum. District administrators also discussed strategies to support EL academic achievement such as sustained, on-site technical assistance and professional development; strategic resource allocation, and timely provision and careful use of data.

Understanding Redesignation of ELs to RFEP Status

Redesignation, the locally determined process using multiple criteria to reclassify English learner students to fluent English proficient (RFEP) status, remains confusing and controversial post-Proposition 227. Using survival analysis to look at EL enrollment and redesignation data reported to the state, we estimated the probability of an EL being redesignated to RFEP status after ten years in California as less than 40 percent. However, this pattern was also shown to vary dramatically across a set of selected districts enrolling large numbers of ELs. To better understand variations in local

redesignation policies and practices, we undertook a qualitative study of nine California school districts—four with relatively high redesignation rates, and five with relatively low redesignation rates compared to the state average—in order to identify how local and state policies and practices contribute to different EL reclassification outcomes, clarify extraneous factors that may influence this varying performance, and discern implications for educators and policymakers. *We found notable differences with respect to districts’ redesignation criteria and chosen cut points; procedures and systems in place to carry out redesignation; and the importance placed on redesignation in local accountability systems.* These differences explain much of the observed variation, and derive in part from current state policy regarding the redesignation of ELs.

Key issues in current state policy affecting local redesignation policies and practices include the following:

- 1) *ambiguous and possibly contradictory guidance on redesignation criteria and cut-points, especially as these relate to NCLB goals for ELs;*
- 2) *unrealistic reporting timelines out of sync with assessment and school-year calendars; and*
- 3) *arguably flawed redesignation-rate calculation methods that likely under-represent success and ignore English learners’ progress over time across the spectrum of linguistic and academic performance.*

Underscoring these concerns is the challenge of ensuring that redesignated students progress and succeed without further specialized services, while at the same time preventing students from remaining in EL status so long that it undermines their educational opportunities. Furthermore, redesignation is neither the whole story nor the end of the story for ELs. Additional indicators are needed statewide to monitor ELs’ linguistic and academic progress *before* and *after* redesignation.

Supporting English Acquisition in the Community

Proposition 227 included provisions to establish a Community-Based English Tutoring (CBET) program, which provides funds to local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide free or subsidized English instruction to parents and other community members. In turn, these individuals pledge to provide English language tutoring to English learners (ELs). Any LEA that enrolled at least one EL in the previous school year is eligible to apply for CBET funds. The funds available for this program are \$50 million per year for ten years, contingent on budget approval by the legislature and governor.

A required subcomponent of the larger Proposition 227 study was evaluation of CBET. Derived from a variety of research methods, syntheses of data over the five years of this evaluation uncovered several common themes. *A predominant theme is that ambiguous legislative language regarding the CBET’s goals has resulted in varying implementation at the local level.* Consequently, our primary recommendation is that state legislation should clarify the program’s primary purpose and goals.

As a required subcomponent of the larger Proposition 227 study, we also evaluated the English Language Acquisition Program (ELAP), which was established by Assembly Bill 1116 in 1999. ELAP allocates \$100 per EL in grades 4 through 8 to participating local education agencies. ELAP is not, strictly speaking, a program but a funding source that can be used by districts to support and supplement instruction for ELs in this grade span. To be eligible for the annual funding, a school district, county office of education, or charter school must have enrolled at least one EL in the previous school year and must evaluate the program's effectiveness in improving EL instruction and student outcomes. Approximately half of California districts receive ELAP funds.

Our evaluation of ELAP looked specifically at the implementation and impact of ELAP funds. Although participating districts are required to evaluate ELAP's impact, we found that this kind of program evaluation appears beyond the capacity of most school districts, especially as examples of evaluative models and methods are not provided. We therefore conducted statewide achievement analyses to evaluate the possible impact of ELAP funds. *A modest, statistically positive relationship between ELAP and selected student outcome measures was found.* As a result, our primary recommendation is that program implementation be enhanced to allow better tracking of the extent and ways in which the program is impacting the education received by the state's EL population.

Conclusions and Recommendations

While there appears to be some evidence of improved academic success with ELs in California, substantial gaps in achievement remain. Furthermore, it is not possible to unambiguously resolve the question of the relative superiority of immersion versus bilingual approaches given the inability to track individual student-level performance and instructional program participation over time, as well as the shifting definitions associated with various instructional approaches for ELs in state data over the years. Nevertheless, the best analyses we have been able to conduct given data limitations indicate that differences across models of instruction—holding constant such critical factors as student demographics—are minimal or nonexistent. Based on these findings, we conclude that Proposition 227 focused on the wrong issue. It does not appear to be the model of instruction employed, or at least not the name given to it, but rather other factors that are much more operative in distinguishing between failure and success with ELs. We describe the factors that do appear to be important in this report, and argue that the state should now focus its attention on further study of what makes a difference for ELs in varying contexts, and on providing support for their dissemination and replication.

However, our conclusion that some of the basic premises underlying Proposition 227 were flawed does not necessarily imply that the state's ELs would have been better off without it. Many of the educators we interviewed concluded that the overall effect of the proposition on their ELs had been positive—frequently emphasizing that it cast a spotlight on ELs as an important subpopulation and on the methods of instruction used for these students. Beyond the effects of Proposition 227, ELAP, which soon followed, also provided resources for the provision of supplementary EL services. In addition, the state legislature's mandate for ELD standards, and an annual ELD assessment, clearly

focused instructional attention on ELs. Beginning in 2002, implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act has also focused significant attention and resources statewide on EL students' English-language development and academic achievement. It is likely that all of these factors have made a significant contribution in bolstering EL academic performance across the state.

At the same time, it appears that the state is still far from attaining the goals specified by state and federal accountability standards regarding EL academic performance. A new paradigm, shifting away from the immersion/bilingual debate, is needed to focus more on the larger array of factors that make a difference for EL achievement. Our analyses show numerous examples of schools and districts demonstrating substantial success with ELs. Therefore, we consider it imperative for the state, counties, and districts to learn as much as possible from our vast experience with EL instruction statewide—to identify success, and to gain a better understanding of what drives it, to learn from it, and to disseminate it to others.

This new orientation would concern itself less with the labels associated with varying instructional methods, and focus more on bottom-line evidence that learning is occurring. While the basic provisions of Proposition 227 do not hinder the statewide changes needed to further bolster academic success with ELs, its underlying emphasis on the immersion/bilingual debate distracts from the work that needs to be done to allow the state to develop a more viable foundation for EL services. Given that ELs are such a large, growing, and vital component of California's future, embracing the challenge of learning how to be more successful with this large population of students is essential to our state and national well-being.

In light of our findings and conclusions from this study, we recommend the following:

1. The state should identify school sites and districts that are successfully educating ELs at all grade levels, and create opportunities for their educational peers to learn from them.
2. The state should take steps to standardize and clarify alternative instructional program waiver provisions of Proposition 227.
3. The state should focus monitoring efforts to ensure that language status does not impede full, comprehensible access to core curriculum.
4. Schools should limit prolonged separation of ELs from English-speaking students to cases of demonstrated efficacy.
5. While maintaining redesignation as a locally determined milestone, the state should specify clear performance standards for key statewide measures of EL student progress and achievement.

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6. The state and districts should foster data use to guide EL policy and instruction.
 7. District leaders need to ensure that their plan of instruction for ELs is carefully articulated across classes within grades, across grades within schools, and across schools within the district.
 8. The state and districts should allocate resources to support professional development in the skills necessary to promote English language and academic proficiency, ensure that fully certified teachers with these skills are assigned to the schools where they are most needed, and continue to support the development of systematic, carefully designed plans for provision of ELD services.
 9. The state and school districts should acknowledge the added learning expectations and demands placed on English learners by allocating additional resources that truly supplement equitable base funding.
 10. The legislature should clarify CBET goals, and continue funding with ongoing evaluation.
 11. The state should continue ELAP funding with added flexibility.

Chapter I. Introduction

Highlights

- Proposition 227 has been implemented within a climate of increased accountability and school reform. Other policies that have shaped English learner (EL) policy and practice in California include the state’s class size reform efforts, California’s Public Schools Accountability Act, the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and several new statewide student assessments.
- California has by far the most EL students of any state. In fact, 32 percent of the nation’s 5 million ELs are in California. Proposition 227 was introduced following a ten-year period in which ELs had grown from less than 15 percent to nearly 25 percent of the state’s K-12 population. Spanish is by far the most common primary language, accounting for 85 percent of the California EL population. The challenge of serving ELs effectively continues to grow in importance across the state.
- After the proposition was passed, the proportion of ELs receiving primary language instruction with English language development dropped significantly (from 30 to 8 percent), and the proportion receiving specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) increased.

Introduction

In June of 1998, Proposition 227 was passed by 61 percent of the California electorate. The initiative was intended to significantly alter the ways in which the state’s English learners (ELs) are taught. Proposition 227 requires that ELs be taught “overwhelmingly in English” through sheltered/structured English immersion (SEI) programs during a transition period and then transferred to mainstream English-language classrooms.

In 2000, the California Department of Education contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), assisted by WestEd, for a five-year evaluation of the *Effects of the Implementation of Proposition 227 on the Education of English Learners*. (The staffing and organization for this evaluation project appear in Appendix A.) This is the culminating report, synthesizing findings from research performed across all five years of the study. There is a particular focus in this report on the research conducted in Year 5.

The evaluation's research questions are as follows:¹

- How are various provisions of Proposition 227 and the English Language Acquisition Program (ELAP) being implemented in California schools and districts?
- Which programs and services being provided to ELs are most effective and least effective in ensuring equal access to the core academic curriculum, the achievement of state content and performance standards, and rapid acquisition of English?
- What are other program benefits (to parents, teachers, etc.) of the various programs and services?
- What unintended consequences, both positive and negative, have occurred as a result of Proposition 227 implementation?
- How have the implementation of Proposition 227 and ELAP provisions affected the academic achievement of ELs, as measured by STAR results, redesignation rates, dropout rates, high school graduation exam passing rates, and high school graduation rates?
- What have been the effects of the Community Based English Tutoring (CBET) programs on the participants and on ELs?
- What changes would strengthen Proposition 227 and ELAP implementation and impact?

In order to answer these research questions, the study is organized into five major components:

1. Implementation and effects of Proposition 227
2. Academic achievement and English proficiency of English learners (ELs) statewide
3. Elements associated with effectiveness among ELs in light of the provisions of Proposition 227
4. Implementation and effects of the English Language Acquisition Program (ELAP)
5. Implementation and effects of the Community Based English Tutoring (CBET) program

¹ The list of original research questions was altered by agreement between CDE and project staff. One question was dropped: "What impact have the Professional Development Institutes had on the staff of participating ELAP schools?" It was dropped because of the brief duration of the institutes, the difficulty of assessing their impact on staff at ELAP schools, and because they were evaluated under a separate contract. On a related note, the requirement to evaluate how the various provisions of the proposition were implemented at the University of California was dropped from the first question, as this pertained to the other dropped research question.

Reports previously submitted during this evaluation include the Year 1 Methodology Report, the final reports for Years 1, 2, and 3, a summary evaluation update (submitted in Year 2), and the English Language Acquisition Program Evaluation Report (submitted in Year 4).²

The research team used a mixed-methods approach to address the study's five components, including case studies, phone and written surveys, statistical analyses of existing student performance data (statewide and from Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)), stakeholder interviews, and document reviews. Activities conducted in each year of the study are discussed in detail in the prior reports from this study, as listed above. Additional detail regarding the initial design for the study can be found in the Year 1 Methodology Report.

Year 5 Activities

Research in Year 5 consisted of four primary activities. The first was an analysis of student achievement and English proficiency data statewide, and using more detailed student-level data provided by LAUSD.

A second Year 5 activity was an analysis of effective practices, which expanded on Year 3 work by attempting to better understand the relationship between unusually strong EL test performance at selected schools and local practice. In Year 3, we conducted extensive site visits to some of California's strongest schools regarding EL test performance. In Year 5, we followed up these site visits by conducting phone interviews with individuals at 66 schools and 5 school districts that demonstrated unusually high performance in terms of EL achievement on state standardized tests. In both activities, we sought to identify and understand the factors leading to these schools' success in educating EL students. A particular focus of this most recent year was on what the interviewees believed were the most compelling lessons that other schools and districts should know to successfully educate ELs.

Another primary activity in Year 5 was to explore redesignation (from English learner to fluent English proficient) as an achievement and accountability measure, and as a possible predictor of school/district success. In addition to considering the context for redesignation policy in California and analyzing redesignation rates across districts over time, we conducted phone interviews in nine districts to collect information about redesignation criteria and procedures.

The fourth major Year 5 activity was an evaluation of the Community-Based English Tutoring (CBET) program. We sought to uncover how CBET programs are being implemented, what the local programs' effects have been on adult participants and on school-aged EL students, what barriers and facilitating factors affect the successful implementation of CBET, and what changes are needed to strengthen statewide program implementation.

² The annual final reports can be found at http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx
The evaluation update can be found at <http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/701>

Purpose of this Report

This final report for the five-year evaluation describes Year 5 activities and presents findings and recommendations based on those activities. It also summarizes the research performed over the entire course of the study, and integrates the final year's work into that larger context.

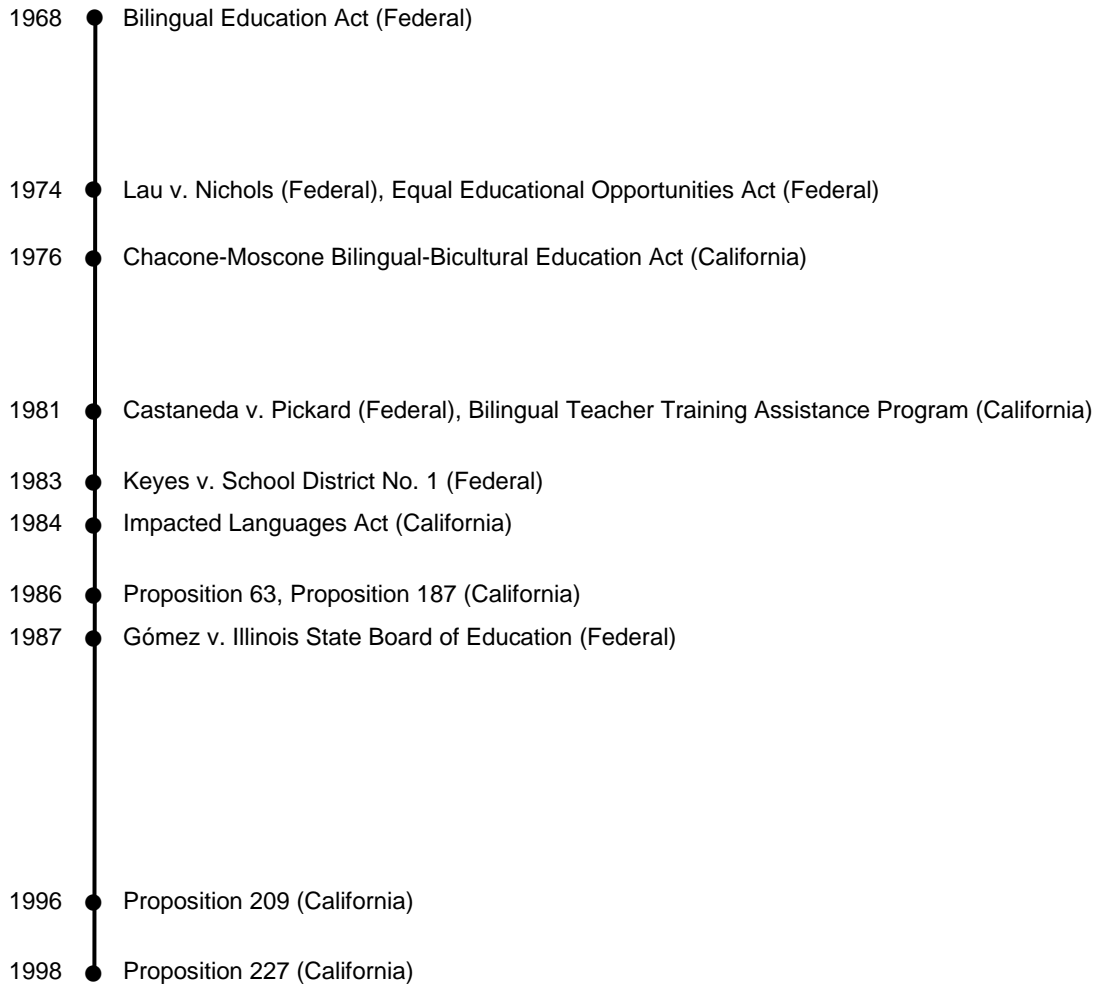
This first chapter of the report provides background about the context for Proposition 227 study, descriptive information about ELs across the state, and briefly describes other research germane to this effort. The second chapter discusses the implementation of Proposition 227 and the political and legal context in which the proposition exists. Chapter 3 presents analyses of student achievement data and English proficiency analyses and Chapter 4 focuses on effective practices within the field of English learner education. Chapter 5 discusses findings related to the redesignation of ELs as English proficient, and Chapter 6 discusses California's Community-Based English Tutoring (CBET) program. Chapter 7, the final chapter, looks to the future, providing recommendations on how best to educate ELs and on how the structures in place can be improved.

Background

Legal and Political Background

Exhibit I-1 shows a series of national- and state-level legal decisions and legislative acts over the last four decades that have created the context for English learner education in California today.

Exhibit I-1. Legal and Political Milestones Leading up to Proposition 227



On the national level, an early program specifically designed to address the needs of English learner students was the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (based on the 1964 Civil Rights Act), designed to create equal educational opportunity for ELs. The next milestone came in 1974, with the landmark US Supreme Court ruling in *Lau v. Nichols*. This was a class action suit filed on behalf of Chinese-speaking students against the San Francisco Unified School District. The issue was whether schools were providing equal educational opportunity by simply treating all students the same, or whether special help was required for students who did not understand English. In their unanimous ruling, the court concluded that the Chinese-speaking students were being discriminated against; they were being denied a “meaningful education” because they were not fully English proficient. The case led Congress to quickly pass the Equal Educational Opportunities Act in the same year. This act required school districts to provide English instruction for students who needed it, and required districts to take action to overcome language barriers to equal participation by those students.

At the state level, California enacted the Chacone-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act in 1976. This required school districts to offer services to all ELs in public schools. These services often took the form of primary language instruction, which became the most common instructional model for ELs until the passage of Proposition 227.

In 1981, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals made a ruling in *Castaneda v. Pickard* that expanded on the *Lau* decision by laying out guidelines for judging compliance with the Equal Educational Opportunities Act. The court ruled that English learner programs receiving federal funds must meet three criteria: (1) the program must be based on sound educational theory or principles, (2) it must effectively implement this theory, and (3) it must produce results indicating that it is working. Beyond these guidelines, the court stopped short of defining the specifics of an acceptable approach to compliance, calling for “appropriate action” rather than specific terminology such as bilingual education or sheltered English. It should be noted here (and will be reiterated later in this report) that given the findings of this five-year study, these criteria still seem to be among the most sensible and useful concepts, within the overarching policies we have seen, as a reasonable underlying foundation for EL instructional policy in California.

The *Castaneda* decision also influenced two other federal court decisions in the 1980s. In *Keyes v. School District No. 1* in 1983, the court found that Denver’s English learner programs failed the second *Castaneda* criterion by having teachers who did not have the bilingual skills necessary to communicate with their students. In *Gómez v. Illinois State Board of Education* in 1987, the court ruled that a state education agency could be sued for not taking the “appropriate action” required by the *Castaneda* decision.

In California, two laws were passed in the early 1980s to provide assistance to districts with large EL populations. 1981 brought the Bilingual Teacher Training Assistance Program, designed to provide training for teachers who have been granted bilingual teacher waivers. The Impacted Languages Act followed in 1984; it is designed to assist districts impacted by refugee and EL populations. The state’s political climate became increasingly charged around English learner education and immigration issues as a whole during this time. In 1986, the passage of Proposition 187 made it illegal for undocumented students to attend public schools (this was later overturned). Also in 1986, Proposition 63 passed, declaring English the “official language of California.” Proposition 209 passed in 1996, calling for an end to affirmative action policies in the state. Proposition 227, aimed at eliminating bilingual education, passed two years later (in 1998) with 61 percent of the vote.

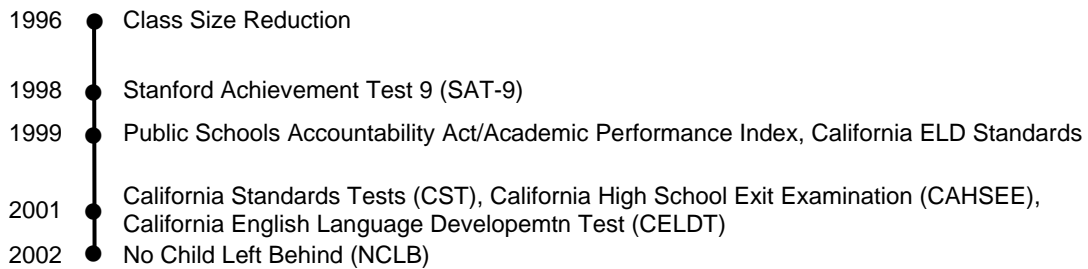
California is not the only state grappling with these issues. In 2000, Arizona’s voters passed Proposition 203, an even more restrictive prohibition of primary language instruction, and Massachusetts voters passed a similar initiative (Question 2) in 2002. Also in 2002, a Colorado anti-bilingual education initiative (Amendment 31) received enough signatures to get on the ballot, but was ultimately rejected by 55 percent of the

voters (the Colorado Supreme Court had blocked a similar effort from being put on the ballot in 2000 because of “deceptive” wording).³

Accountability and Reform Context

In addition to these legal and policy milestones that preceded Proposition 227, it is important to understand the accountability and school reform issues that have been the context for the proposition (see the timeline in Exhibit I-2). One important change occurring in California schools alongside Proposition 227 was the state’s class size reduction initiative. This 1996 legislation provided strong fiscal incentives for schools to quickly shrink the size of their kindergarten-through-third-grade classrooms to no more than 20 students, resulting in the hiring of over 28,000 teachers statewide in the first three years of implementation. The sheer scope of class size reduction involved a complex array of varying impacts on K-3 students statewide, including ELs.⁴

Exhibit I-2. Accountability and School Reform: Proposition 227’s Context



The Stanford Achievement Test 9 (SAT-9), a standardized test of student academic achievement, was first administered in the spring of 1998. The appearance of a uniform test taken by all California students laid an important foundation for increased school accountability. For the first time the performance of all schools across the state could be assessed. It was replaced by another test, the California Achievement Test, 6th Edition, or CAT/6, in 2003. Other significant standardized tests are the California Standards Tests (CST) and the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), which appeared in 2001, and the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), first appearing in May 2001. The CELDT is used to identify English learners, assess their level of English proficiency, and monitor their progress toward becoming fluent English proficient. Also first appearing in 1999 were California’s English Language Development (ELD) standards, which are guidelines that explain what skills ELs need to acquire to become proficient in English.

The introduction of the SAT-9 was followed in 1999 by California’s Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA). The act was designed to enhance and more clearly

³ See http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol27_no3/art1.pdf

⁴ Please see <http://www.classsize.org/techreport/techreport.pdf> for a full evaluation of class size reduction in California.

define school responsibility regarding the performance of their students on statewide tests (initially the SAT-9). The PSAA requires schools to demonstrate that their students are making academic progress, with the individual school as the primary unit of accountability.

The PSAA had three components. First, the Academic Performance Index (API) is a composite score of student performance for the school on several standardized tests. The second component was the Intermediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP),⁵ which provided funds to support low-performing schools. The third component was the Governor's Performance Award (GPA),⁶ which provided financial rewards to schools that meet API improvement targets and other performance goals.

The new assessments, policy reforms, and accountability measures listed above have directly affected EL instruction in California. Also, the school-based respondents to survey questions posed by this study reported their belief that initiatives such as class size reduction and the accountability movement affected EL education in California as much, if not more, than Proposition 227.⁷

In addition, while schools were still adapting to the PSAA, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law in 2002, creating national accountability standards. In addition to holding schools accountable, NCLB also makes districts and the state as a whole accountable for student performance. A significant provision of the act is the requirement of "adequate yearly progress" (AYP), which is an annual measure of student participation and achievement of statewide assessments and other academic indicators to which districts and schools are held accountable. Like PSAA, NCLB calls for public reporting of schools' student performance.

This landmark federal legislation also clearly accentuated the focus and substantively heightened attention on the academic performance of ELs. NCLB focuses on the performance of specific subgroups within a school, including English learners. Under NCLB's Title III, states are required to set specific goals, called annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs). English learners must make annual progress toward English proficiency, and an increasing percentage of a district's ELs must become proficient in English each year. California's AMAOs focus on the percentage of ELs moving up one level of proficiency on the CELDT, the percentage attaining English proficiency (as measured by the CELDT), and the percentage of ELs meeting AYP requirements at the school level.

School Resources: National Movement from Equity to Adequacy

The accountability movement reflects national attention on educational outcomes that has heightened during the Proposition 227 era. A national movement in relation to education funding has also occurred during this period.⁸ The seminal modern case raising

⁵ No new schools have been identified for II/USP since the 2001-02 school year.

⁶ No funds have been appropriated for awards since 2002.

⁷ See Chapter 2 for a full discussion of these issues.

⁸ An excellent description of the national adequacy movement is contained in Schrag (2003).

fundamental school funding issues was *Serrano v Priest*, which was heard before the California Supreme Court in 1971 and 1976. In this case the key issue was equity, with the Court ruling that inequities between rich and poor districts violated the equal protection clause under the state constitution and requiring the legislature to equalize the amount of funds spent on public education across school districts.

At least partly in accord with the accountability movement, however, education finance reform has moved away from equity issues toward a focus on the adequacy of educational offerings and the cost of providing them. In essence, the argument is that equal funding is not enough. Adequacy cases hinge on state constitutional provisions guaranteeing students the right to public education under such standards as “thorough and efficient.”⁹ As states increasingly establish clearly defined benchmarks of expected student achievement and incorporate strong language holding all districts, schools, and students accountable for reaching these targets, adequacy concerns have become more predominant. Thus, the current wave of school finance litigation sweeping the states pertains to determining the levels of resources needed to meet specified goals. Once this is determined, adequacy cases have argued that it is the state’s responsibility to ensure that these resources are available.

This movement is relevant to ELs in California and to this study in relation to two specific research questions. One question asks which programs and services are most effective in ensuring equal access for ELs to high standards of learning. Many of the adequacy cases throughout the country have determined that students attempting to learn a new language at the same time as mastering the same high learning standards as other children do not need equity or equal funding, but more. This line of reasoning also aligns with the comments of many of the respondents to this study—that they are stretched to meet the academic goals set for them with existing resources. Programs such as ELAP, enacted soon after Proposition 227, appear to respond to these needs by providing supplemental resources to ELs in grades 4 through 8. However, within the adequacy concept, there are questions about whether these funds are sufficient and why they are limited to ELs within this grade span. Questions also arise in regard to the resource base upon which such categorical supplements as ELAP are added. Indicators that the resource base may be lower in high-EL-population schools in California, raise additional questions about the adequacy of resources for ELs in the state.

For example, Exhibit I-3 displays data regarding certification of staff providing direct instruction to students by EL concentration. As shown, as the EL concentration in the schools increases, the percentage of fully credentialed teachers (defined as those who have completed a teacher preparation program and hold a preliminary, clear, professional clear, or life credential) decreases: about 95 percent of teachers in schools with less than 20 percent ELs are fully credentialed, in contrast to about 87 percent of teachers in schools with 61 percent or more ELs. When looking at teachers holding special authorizations to teach EL students, the proportion of teachers with BCC (Bilingual Certificate of Competence) credentials increases with the concentration of ELs. The

⁹ This language comes from the *Abbot II* case in New Jersey. For a description, see Schrag (2003), p 114.

proportion of teachers with ELD and SDAIE credentials is approximately the same in schools with more than 61 percent ELs and schools with less than 20 percent ELs.

Exhibit I-3. Teachers Credentials[†] by Schoolwide EL Concentration

	Schools with 61% ELs or More	Schools with 41% to 60% ELs	Schools with 21% to 40% ELs	Schools with Less than 20% ELs**	Overall
Percentage Teachers with:					
Full Credential*	86.9%	89.4%	92.2%	94.7%	92.5%
BCC Credential**	29.4%	19.3%	10.9%	6.0%	11.7%
ELD Credential**	25.8%	31.4%	33.6%	26.0%	28.5%
SDAIE Credential**	9.9%	10.4%	11.8%	9.3%	10.1%
Number of Teachers per 100 ELs with:					
BCC Credential**	3	2	2	7	
ELD Credential**	3	3	6	28	
SDAIE Credential**	1	1	2	12	

* Fully credentialed teachers are those who have completed a teacher preparation program and hold a preliminary, clear, professional clear, or life credential.

**Teachers holding these credentials are also fully credentialed teachers.

† Teachers may hold more than one credential.

Source: California Basic Educational Data Systems (CBEDS): Professional Assignment Information Form (PAIF), 2003

When looking at the ratio of teachers with specialized training in EL instruction, we observed a significantly higher ratio in schools with lesser concentrations of ELs. The disparity in teaching resources is even greater looking at ELD and SDAIE credentials. Schools with lower concentrations of ELs have about 28 ELD and 12 SDAIE credentialed teachers per 100 ELs, whereas schools with higher concentrations of ELs have about 3 ELD teachers and 1 SDAIE teacher per 100 ELs.

The study’s research question that pertains to unintended consequences associated with Proposition 227 is also relevant to the adequacy movement. Virtually all respondents for this study seemed to agree that Proposition 227 has cast a spotlight on California ELs and how to best educate them. This proposition, along with state and federal accountability measures, have also focused new attention on the gap between ELs and EOs in such areas as academic content knowledge and dropout and graduation rates. Although some progress appears to have been made, as will be outlined in this report, remaining disparities raise questions as to what resources are needed to adequately support EL academic achievement to specified standards.

California’s Evolving Demographics

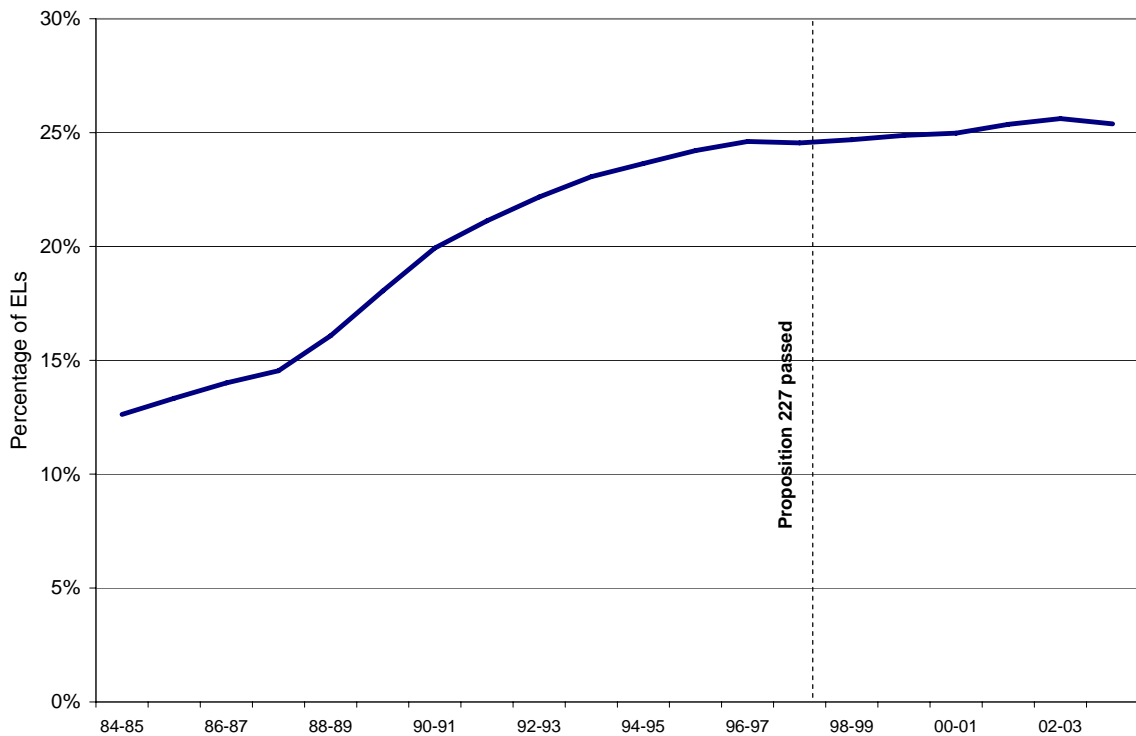
Important context for understanding the passage of Proposition 227 is the fact that the number of ELs in the US has grown considerably since the Bilingual Education Act. The National Center for Education Statistics puts the EL population at 5 million children (NCES, 2005). The Census Bureau estimates that more than two-thirds of these children

are in “linguistically isolated households,” where no one over the age of 14 speaks English very well (United States Census Bureau, 2002, 2003).¹⁰

California has by far the most English learners of any state, with roughly 32 percent of the nation’s 5 million ELs (NCES, 2005). In addition to children who have immigrated with their parents, this includes a large number of U.S.-born children of immigrants. State policies regarding EL education not only have a significant impact on EL students in California, but policy choices made here are also watched closely across the country, and have the potential to set important precedents.

California’s EL population, in addition to being a large percentage of the country’s total population of EL students, is also a large percentage of the state’s total student population. In Exhibit I-4, the dotted vertical line shows when Proposition 227 passed, in June of 1998. Overall, the exhibit shows that the proposition was introduced following a ten-year period in which ELs had grown from less than 15 percent to nearly 25 percent of the state’s K-12 population.

Exhibit I-4. English Learner Students as a Percentage of Total California Enrollment Over Time



Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and Language Census Data Files (R30-LC).

¹⁰ The 2000 Census asked whether individuals speak English “very well,” “well,” “not well,” or “not at all.” Language Use and English-Speaking Ability: 2000, Census 2000 Brief, U.S. Census Bureau, C2KBR-29, October 2003, and “Age by Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over,” Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3).

In June of 1998, Proposition 227 was enacted. In addition to the primary intent that ELs be taught primarily in English, the initiative included parental waiver exceptions allowing parents to request alternative programs for their children. Proposition 227 also included the Community Based English Tutoring (CBET) program. CBET was designed to “provide free or subsidized English-language instruction to parents or other members of the community who in turn pledge to provide English-language tutoring to California school children who are limited-English proficient.”

In addition, 13 months later, the California Legislature enacted the English Language Acquisition Program (ELAP) under AB 1116. ELAP is primarily a funding program designed to “improve the English proficiency of California pupils in grades 4 through 8 and to better prepare them to meet the state academic content and performance standards.”

EL Counts and Distribution

Exhibits I-5 through I-10 show the distribution of ELs across the state by grade, language, and region. (See the glossary for additional information regarding the terms used in these exhibits.)

Exhibit I-5 presents the number and percentage of students classified as either English learner (EL) or fluent English proficient (FEP) in the years 1997-98 and 2003-04. The FEP classification includes students whose primary language is not English and who have met district criteria for proficiency and literacy in English either upon entry into the school system (IFEP) or through the district’s redesignation process (RFEP). As shown, there is a consistently higher percentage of ELs in the lower grades than in the higher grades in both 1997-98 and 2003-04. Comparing each grade level across the two years, the percentage of ELs remains relatively stable, with the increasing student enrollment in several grades being matched by a proportional increase in EL enrollment. For all grades combined, ELs as a percentage of the total enrollment increased by less than one percentage point, from 24.6 percent to 25.4 percent. The largest increase was in grade 2, where ELs went from 32.7 percent to 36.8 percent of all students.¹¹ The number of FEP students increased somewhat overall, from 12.7 percent to 15.9 percent. Growth in the absolute number of students statewide, including ELs, was more than 12 percent during this six year span.

¹¹ A larger increase of 19.3 percent occurred for ungraded students, but this is a very small, catch-all category of students (who are not tested), and this group is not included in this report’s achievement analysis section.

Exhibit I-5. Total Students, EL Students, and FEP Students in California by Grade, 1997-98 and 2003-04

Grade	1997-98			2003-04			Change in Percentage of ELs and FEPs (1997-98 to 2003-04)	
	Total Enrollment	Percent EL	Percent FEP	Total Enrollment	Percent EL	Percent FEP	EL	FEP
	Kindergarten	463,684	35.9%	7.2%	456,968	36.4%	7.5%	0.5
Grade 1	488,429	34.6%	7.1%	481,049	37.2%	7.9%	2.6	0.8
Grade 2	489,070	32.7%	7.5%	482,633	36.8%	8.3%	4.1	0.8
Grade 3	463,034	30.6%	8.4%	489,652	32.9%	11.7%	2.3	3.3
Grade 4	451,069	28.7%	10.2%	493,425	30.6%	14.0%	1.9	3.8
Grade 5	434,280	26.3%	12.0%	492,472	26.6%	17.5%	0.3	5.5
Grade 6	426,302	23.0%	14.1%	490,284	23.2%	19.4%	0.2	5.3
Grade 7	426,245	20.7%	15.6%	500,412	21.5%	19.9%	0.8	4.3
Grade 8	412,604	19.5%	16.5%	500,368	19.1%	20.8%	-0.4	4.3
Grade 9	458,650	18.5%	16.5%	528,561	18.7%	19.5%	0.2	3.0
Grade 10	423,865	16.0%	17.5%	490,214	16.6%	20.1%	0.6	2.6
Grade 11	378,819	13.5%	18.3%	440,540	14.4%	20.5%	0.9	2.2
Grade 12	317,595	11.5%	19.7%	395,194	12.4%	20.9%	0.9	1.2
TOTAL	5,633,646	24.6%	12.7%	6,298,774	25.4%	15.9%	0.8	3.3

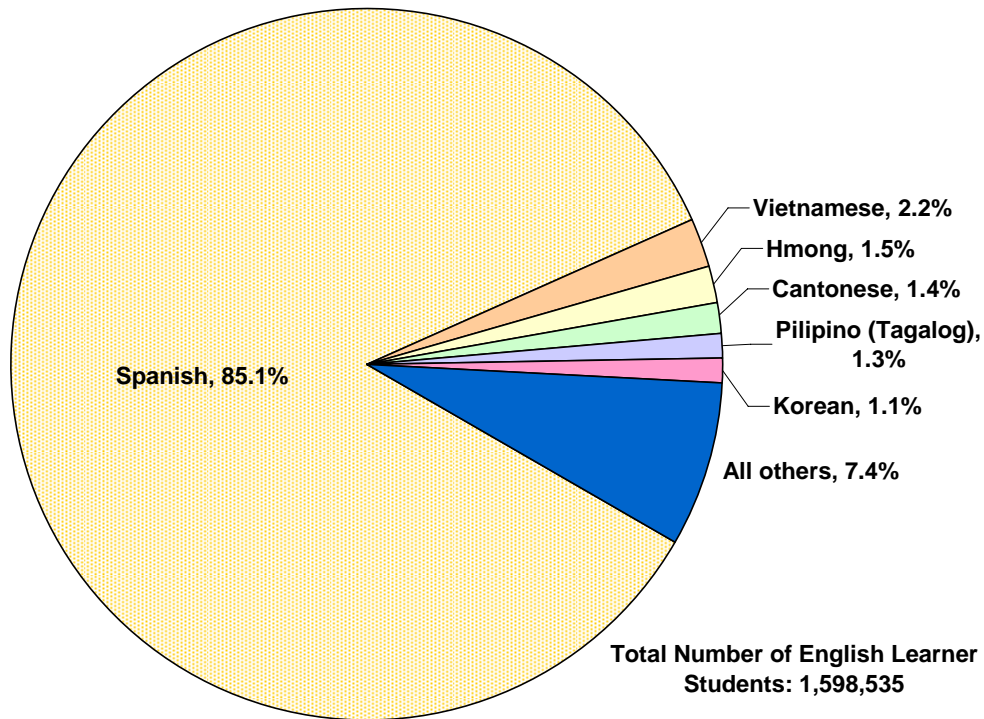
EL = English learner

FEP = Fully English Proficient. The available CBEDS data do not separate redesignated FEP students (RFEP) from students whose native language is not English but who were initially identified as FEP upon entry into the school system (IFEP).

Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and Language Census Data Files (R30-LC).

Exhibit I-6 shows the six most common primary languages among California ELs. Spanish is the most common by far, accounting for 85.1 percent of the EL population in California. Vietnamese is a distant second, representing 2.2 percent. Spanish is also the fastest growing language among California students. Because of this growth in the Spanish-speaking EL population, the relative percentages of other primary languages have decreased over the same time period—except for Korean, which has held constant. While not shown in the exhibit, the state classifies 85 percent of California’s ELs as ethnically Hispanic—the same percentage that the Language Census indicates speak Spanish as their primary language. The second largest ethnicity is white students, at 3 percent statewide. The majority of the EL students identified as white show Spanish as their primary language; this may reflect debate or lack of clarity about ethnicity labels.

Exhibit I-6. English Learner Students by Language, 2003-04



Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and Language Census Data Files (R30-LC).

Exhibit I-7 presents the numbers and percentages of ELs by region in the years 1997-98 and 2003-04.¹² The Los Angeles area has the highest density of ELs—these students are almost a third of the region’s total enrollment. This high concentration of ELs, in combination with the sheer number of students in the Los Angeles area, ensures that the region accounts for almost half of the state’s EL population. However, though the Los Angeles area saw the second-largest increase in the number of ELs, its rate of growth was less than 6 percent. The greatest increase in the number of ELs was in the Inland Empire. Their additional 52,000 students in 2003-04 constituted a remarkable 46.8 percent increase over the region’s 1997-98 EL count. ELs made up 17.4 percent of the

¹² The state has been divided into 11 regions as done in Tafoya (2002). The San Francisco Bay area region includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. The Central Coast includes Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz Counties. The San Joaquin Valley includes Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare Counties. The Inland Empire includes Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. The Los Angeles area includes Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura Counties. The Mountain area includes Inyo, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Plumas, Sierra, Siskiyou, Trinity, and Alpine Counties. The North Coast region includes Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties. The Sacramento area includes El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties. The Sacramento Valley includes Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Shasta, Sutter, Tehama, and Yuba Counties. The San Diego region includes San Diego and Imperial Counties. The Foothill region includes Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa, Nevada, and Tuolumne Counties.

region's population in 1997-98 and 20.8 percent in 2003-04, indicating that the total enrollment increased significantly too, if not at quite the same pace. While the three regions with the fewest ELs (the North Coast, Mountain, and Foothill regions) still did not have many ELs in 2003-04, the jumps in the percentages of ELs in these regions (45.6, 33.9, and 57.0 percent, respectively) are among the highest in the state. This further illustrates the extent to which EL education is a vitally important issue across the state—increasingly encompassing places that have thus far had relatively little experience in dealing with it.

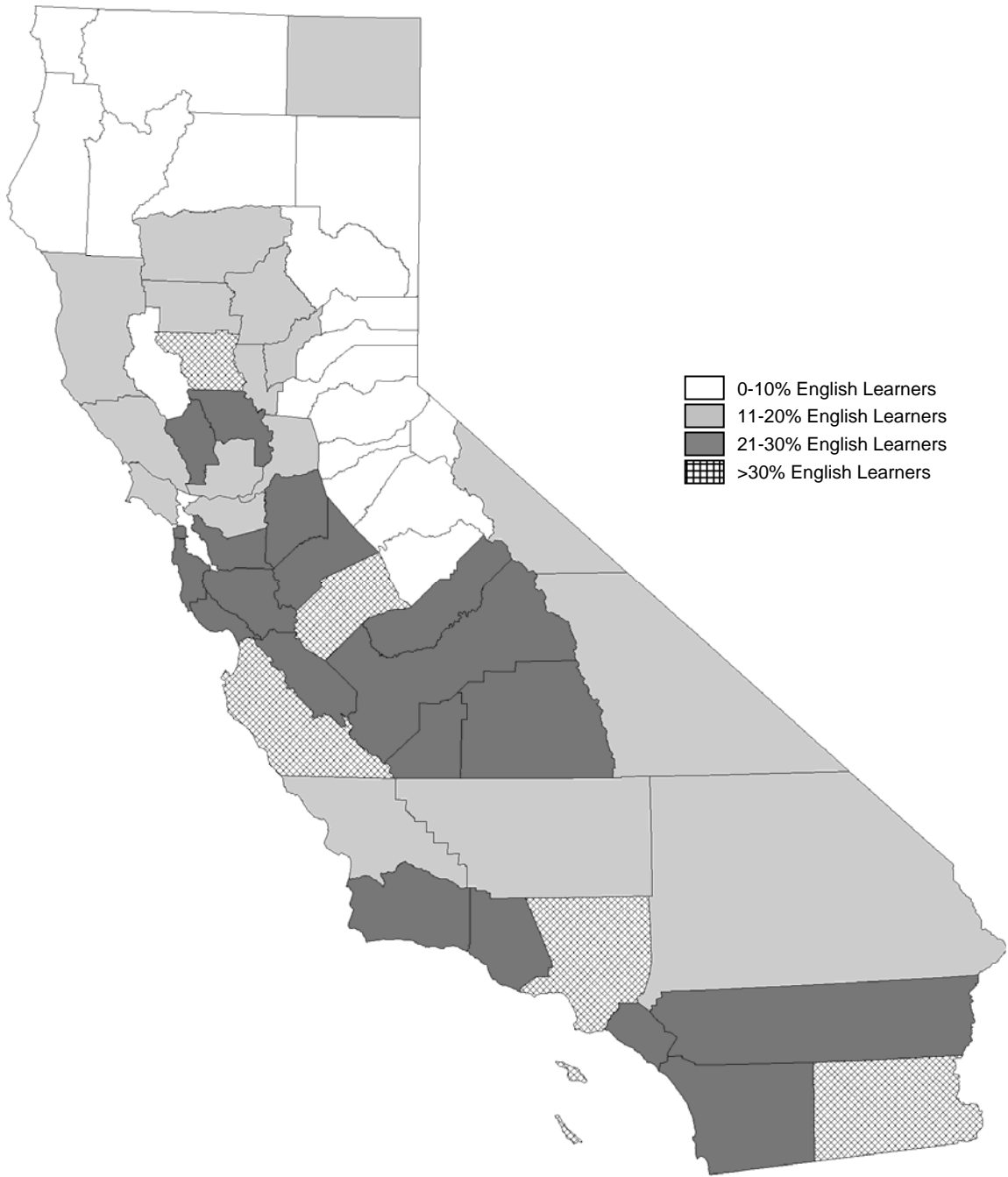
Exhibit I-7. Counts and Percentages of English Learners by Region

Region	1997-98			2003-04			% change in numbers of ELs (1997-98 to 2003-04)
	ELs	% EL of total enrollment in region	% of all ELs in state	ELs	% EL of total enrollment in region	% of all ELs in state	
Los Angeles area	726,161	33.5%	51.6%	767,049	31.9%	48.0%	5.6%
San Francisco Bay area	172,008	18.0%	12.2%	200,995	20.6%	12.6%	16.9%
San Joaquin Valley	161,124	23.0%	11.5%	191,502	24.4%	12.0%	18.9%
San Diego area	116,965	23.7%	8.3%	133,217	24.9%	8.3%	13.9%
Inland Empire	111,553	17.4%	7.9%	163,730	20.8%	10.2%	46.8%
Central Coast	56,198	25.8%	4.0%	64,357	28.1%	4.0%	14.5%
Sacramento	43,567	14.0%	3.1%	56,882	16.0%	3.6%	30.6%
Sacramento Valley	14,038	12.1%	1.0%	14,275	12.3%	0.9%	1.7%
North Coast	3,232	6.1%	0.2%	4,706	9.2%	0.3%	45.6%
Mountain	1,083	3.7%	0.1%	1,450	5.3%	0.1%	33.9%
Foothill	237	0.6%	0.0%	372	1.0%	0.0%	57.0%
Statewide	1,406,166	24.6%	100%	1,598,535	25.4%	100%	13.7%

Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and Language Census Data Files (R30-LC).

Exhibit I-8 shows the percentage of ELs in each county in California in 2003-04. ELs make up more than 30 percent of the county enrollment in five counties: Monterey, Merced, Imperial, Colusa, and Los Angeles. More than two-thirds of all counties in California enroll at least 10 percent ELs.

Exhibit I-8. Percentage of English Learners by County in California, 2003-04



Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and Language Census Data Files (R30-LC)

Exhibit I-9 presents the statewide counts by type of EL instructional service in the years 1997-98 and 2003-04. It shows a significant change over this period in the percentage of ELs in four of the five categories in which comparisons were possible. There was a 69.1 percent drop in the number of ELs assigned to English language development (ELD) with primary language instruction in the academic subjects (from 29.1 percent to 7.9 percent), a 76.4 percent drop in the number of ELs not assigned to any English learner services at all, and a large increase in the number of ELs assigned to ELD and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE). All three of the major changes are a likely result of the passage of Proposition 227.

Exhibit I-9. Statewide Assignment of EL Students to EL Services, 1997-98 and 2003-04

English Learner Service	1997-98		2003-04		% Change in Numbers of ELs (1997-98 to 2003-04)
	Number of ELs	Percentage of all ELs	Number of ELs	Percentage of all ELs	
English Language Development (ELD)	159,617	11.4%	176,028	11.0%	10.3%
ELD and Academic Subjects Through the Primary Language (L1)	409,879	29.1%	126,546	7.9%	-69.1%
ELD and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)	307,176	21.8%	767,369	48.0%	149.8%
ELD and SDAIE with Primary Language Support	305,764	21.7%	329,342	20.6%	7.7%
Other Instructional Services (category not used in 1998)	-	-	151,627	9.5%	-
Not Receiving any English Learner Services	201,844	14.4%	47,623	3.0%	-76.4%
Withdrawn from Services by Parents (category not used in 2004)	21,886	1.6%	-	-	-
Total	1,406,166	100.0%	1,598,535	100.0%	13.7%

Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and Language Census Data Files (R30-LC).

Exhibit I-10 shows assignment of ELs to instructional settings in 1999-2000 and 2003-04. These instructional settings provisions became law as a result of the passage of Proposition 227. Therefore, data were not collected prior to 1999-2000 and the categories are different from those shown in Exhibit I-9. Overall, there was a significant shift away from “alternative course of study” settings (a decrease of 26.6 percent between 1999-2000 and 2003-04), which include classes in which ELs are taught English and other subjects through bilingual education techniques, and toward structured English immersion (SEI) classroom settings, where instruction is nearly all in English, but the curriculum and presentation are designed for ELs. In addition, over this same period there has been an increase in the proportion of ELs assigned to “mainstream classroom” settings (i.e., classes in which ELs have met local criteria for having achieved “reasonable fluency” in English, as established by Proposition 227, and are provided with

additional services to meet their instructional needs).¹³ This shift is likely due to the introduction of the state’s standardized ELD assessment (the CELDT), which many districts have used to define “reasonable fluency” criteria.

Exhibit I-10. Statewide Assignment of EL Students to Instructional Settings, 1999-2000 and 2003-04

Instructional Setting	1999-2000		2003-04		% Change in Numbers of ELs (1999-2000 through 2003-04)
	Number of ELs	Percentage of all ELs	Number of ELs	Percentage of all ELs	
Alternative Course of Study ¹⁴	187,832	12.7%	137,902	8.6%	-26.6%
Structured (Sheltered) English Immersion	691,212	46.7%	765,388	47.9%	10.7%
English Language Mainstream Classroom – Students Meeting Criteria	450,424	30.4%	584,211	36.5%	29.7%
Mainstream Classroom – Parental Request	39,808	2.7%	35,543	2.2%	-10.7%
Other Instructional Setting	111,251	7.5%	75,491	4.7%	-32.1%
Total	1,480,527	100.0%	1,598,535	100.0%	8.0%

Source: California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and Language Census Data Files (R30-LC).

Statewide Redesignation Rates

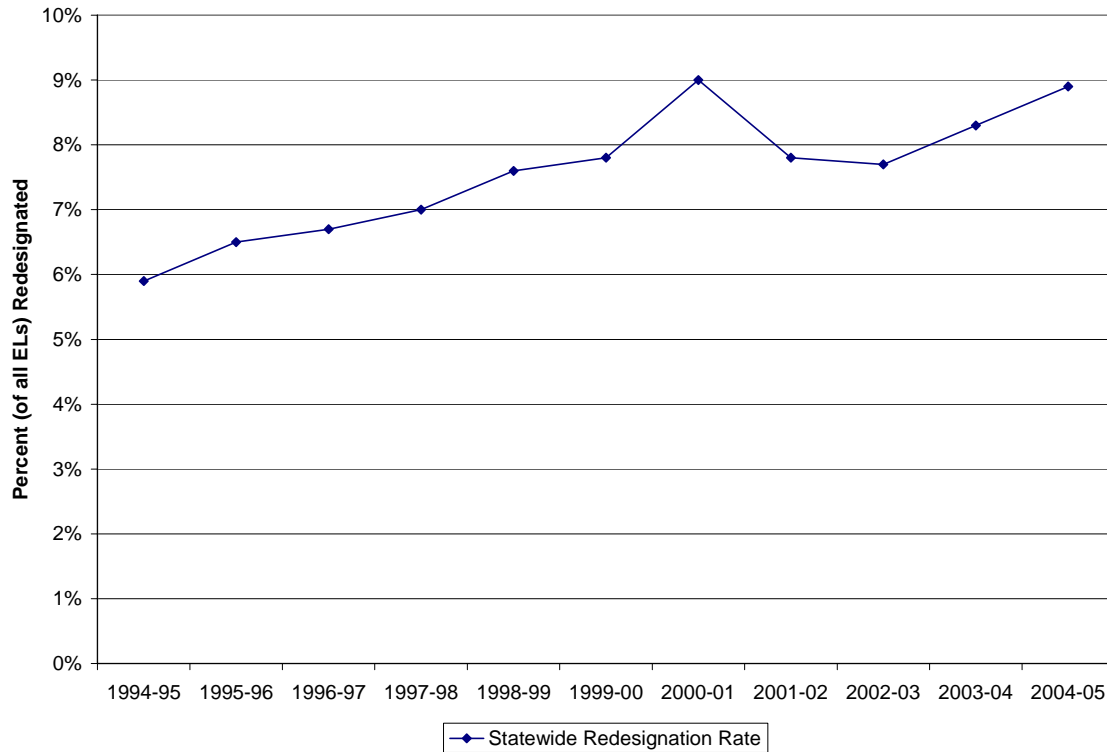
While classified as ELs, students must be provided with specialized instruction to help them attain English proficiency and to gain meaningful access to core academic curriculum; thus they are assigned to the various instructional settings and services shown above in Exhibits I-9 and I-10. Students are reclassified from “EL” to “fluent English proficient” (RFEP) status once they meet specific English proficiency, academic achievement, and other criteria. As conceptualized by the state, annual redesignation rates compare the number of students reclassified to RFEP status during the current year to the number of ELs enrolled in the prior year. The annual rate at which students move from EL to RFEP status was often cited as a key accountability indicator during the campaign for Proposition 227 and it remains a source of concern and confusion to this day. Exhibit I-11 displays statewide redesignation rates over the past decade, calculated using Language Census data.

¹³ Note that our case study site visits indicate that, frequently, more than one instructional setting is offered in a single classroom (e.g., within the same classroom, some students may be assigned to SEI while others who have met the reasonable fluency criteria are assigned to “mainstream” settings).

¹⁴ Under Section 3, Article 310 of Proposition 227, parents are allowed to request “alternative course of study” programs for their children “where they are taught English and other subjects through bilingual education techniques or other generally recognized educational methodologies permitted by law.”

If we look at the annual redesignation rates statewide, it is possible to observe that the overall redesignation rate has increased gradually over the past decade, from about 6 percent in 1994–95 to a peak of 9 percent in 2000–2001. Following this year, the overall rate dropped to about 8 percent, with the most recent data showing a rate of 8.9 percent for 2004–2005.

Exhibit I-11. Percentage of Students Redesignated, 1995-2005



Source: California Department of Education, Language Census Data Files (R30-LC).

While statewide rates show some change over time, examination of district-level redesignation data reveals redesignation rates that vary widely both across districts and over time.¹⁵ This should not be surprising, given that historically, districts (and, in some cases, schools) chose their own language assessment instruments and set their own reclassification criteria within guidelines established by the state. While greater standardization seems to have occurred with the California State Board of Education’s 2002 adoption of reclassification guidelines, which recommend specified performance levels on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and the California Standards Test of English Language Arts (CST-ELA), there is still evidence of significant district variation in redesignation criteria and procedures, discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

¹⁵ For example, among the top 50 EL-enrolling districts in 2003-04, rates varied from a low of 2.5 percent to a high of 23.6 percent. Looking over time at the rates of one of these districts, we see a fluctuation from 2.1 percent in 2000-01 to a high of 15.8 percent in 2002-03, and decreasing to 8.2 percent in 2003-04.

As discussed in prior reports, variation in redesignation rates is due in part to 1) additional local criteria utilized, 2) teachers' perceptions of the impact of redesignation status on course placement (particularly at the secondary level), 3) the relative importance placed on redesignation as a success indicator, and 4) differences in staff resources to conduct reviews on a regular basis. Additionally, anecdotal evidence gathered across the five years of this study suggest that state and federal policy (particularly the 1998 Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA), the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, enacted in 2002), and 2002 State Board redesignation guidelines, as well as Proposition 227) may also influence the emphasis districts and schools place on redesignation rates over time. Given the wide range of factors influencing redesignation, analysis of redesignation rates and interpretation of any patterns and changes must be undertaken with caution.

Other Relevant Research

This section provides a selective review of the literature on findings regarding the effectiveness of the various instructional programs serving ELs and services provided to ELs since the passage of Proposition 227. Additional areas of research, as relevant to specific study components, are highlighted within individual chapters.

Selected Findings on the Effectiveness of Instructional Programs Serving English Learners

In general, few studies of services for English learners in the United States are considered scientific (i.e., methodologically and statistically sound), and few provide conclusive information on which instructional programs serving English learners are effective (de Cos, 1999). The National Research Council (NRC), in its review of the research on programs serving English learners, acknowledged the limitations of the research conducted in the field (August & Hakuta, 1997). The NRC report discusses the difficulties involved in synthesizing results across studies, stating that this is partly due to the highly politicized character of the field and inconsistently applied program labels. Of particular concern were program evaluation studies that lacked appropriate comparison groups and random assignment of subjects or controls for pre-existing differences. The sample of studies below highlights findings as well as some of the issues associated with attempts to assess the effectiveness of bilingual education or other services for English learners.

A longitudinal study by Gersten and Woodward conducted between 1985 and 1997 in El Paso, Texas, compared the outcomes of English learners in “transitional bilingual” programs (i.e., those that provide initial instruction in the students' home language, with rapid transition into English exclusively) and “bilingual immersion” programs (i.e., those integrating English instruction with some maintenance of Spanish content and language instruction). Initial differences found in reading and language favoring the bilingual immersion program disappeared by the seventh grade. In fact, by seventh grade many English learners in both program models were not meeting grade-level achievement, as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, in either reading

comprehension or vocabulary. A follow-up at the high-school level indicated high attrition rates for students in both programs and comparable low achievement rates (in de Cos, 1999).

Ramírez and his colleagues (1991) conducted a national study to compare the effectiveness of three instructional methods for English learners: (1) “early-exit” bilingual programs, which contain some initial instruction in the child’s primary language that is phased out over the course of approximately two years, when the students are expected to transfer into English mainstream classrooms; (2) “late-exit” bilingual programs, in which students receive substantial instruction in their primary language until the 6th grade (when they are expected to transfer out); and (3) structured English immersion (SEI) programs, in which all instruction is in English (with occasional use of students’ primary language for purposes such as clarifying instructions) and in which students are expected to remain for two to three years before moving into English mainstream classes (Ramírez, Yeun, & Ramey, 1991). The study found that while early-exit students initially outperformed immersion students in mathematics and reading in English, by the end of the third grade their advantage had essentially disappeared and they obtained comparable results when tested in English. Due to the design of the study, the authors were unable to directly compare the late-exit programs with the early-exit and immersion programs, and they therefore relied on indirect comparisons which have since been questioned by the NRC (Meyer & Fienberg, 1992).

In 1992, Berman Weiler Associates released a study funded by the California Legislature intended to examine effective elements in a range of California English learner programs (Berman et al., 1992). The study identified five instructional models used across the state and concluded that each had unique advantages and limitations. For example, sheltered English programs offered more continuity than pull-out English as a Second Language programs, but tended to expose students to an overly simplified curriculum. Berman and his colleagues concluded that no single instructional model for English learners is appropriate for all schools. Parrish (1994) performed analyses of the programs in the Berman Weiler study and found the resources used for bilingual and sheltered immersion classes to be essentially equal in cost, but “pullout” programs to be substantially more expensive.

Rossell and Baker (1996) reviewed approximately 300 evaluation studies of programs serving English learners and conducted a meta-analysis of 75 evaluation studies. They found only 25 percent of the studies methodologically acceptable (having a treatment and control group and a statistical control for pre-treatment differences where groups were not randomly assigned). In examining studies that compared transitional bilingual education with structured immersion, the researchers found different effects across subject areas, based on a varying number of studies. For example, for reading, 12 studies were compared and the researchers found 2 studies that showed no difference between transitional bilingual and structured immersion, while 10 studies found structured immersion to achieve better results than transitional bilingual. However, the analysis has since been criticized for its overwhelming use of Canadian French “structured immersion” programs, which are different from U.S. English immersion

programs (de Cos, 1999). Green (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of the studies reviewed by Rossell and Baker, applying the same criteria and adding the additional criterion that effects had to be measured after a minimum of one academic year. The application of this additional criterion reduced the number of valid studies from 75 to 11, from which Green concluded that the scholarly literature moderately favors the use of primary language instruction.

Long-term research by Thomas and Collier between 1996 and 2001 highlights possible shortcomings of research examining the effectiveness of program models (Thomas & Collier, 2001). The authors maintain that examination of language minority students' achievement over a one- to four-year period is too short and leads to an inaccurate perception of actual long-term performance. Through their long-term approach to examining the English reading and math achievement of K-12 English learners, they found that when exiting ESL or bilingual services, students who had been immersed in the English mainstream perform better than those that received bilingual instruction. This trend reverses by the time students reach high school, with formerly bilingual students showing higher performance than English-instructed students.

A report issued by the New York City Board of Education (2000) on the progress of English learners in New York City Schools indicates that children who entered the city's schools when they were young (kindergarten and grade 1) exited EL programs faster and in larger cumulative percentages than those entering in the middle and higher grades. For students entering in kindergarten, 62 percent had reached the exit criterion in three years or less. The study also found that consistency of programmatic approach appeared to be a more important determinant of exit rate than the specific educational philosophy and methods of the bilingual/ESL programs. Relatively strong proficiency in English and the home language (for Spanish speakers) contributed to the students' ability to meet the program exit criterion within three years.

August and Hakuta (1997) and Genesee (1999) suggest that there is no one best model that will serve all students, and emphasize the importance of designing services for English learners that consider the community context, the needs of students who will be served, and the resources that are available for implementing the program.

Recent work by Gordon and Hoxby (2002) takes advantage of the change in California's education policy for ELs prompted by Proposition 227, using it as a natural experiment to measure the "treatment" effect of bilingual education. Using a regression discontinuity methodology, they analyze how changes in the percentage of English learners enrolled in bilingual education in a school (used as instrumental variable) affects the school's average academic performance for ELs and EOs.

Several aspects set this work apart from previous studies on the effect on bilingual education. First, it takes the problem of non-random assignment of students into bilingual education into account, and uses a strong instrument to identify the exogenous effect of this forced change in instructional approach. And second, it proposes a model of second language acquisition, which is used to identify the different channels through which this change in program resulting from Proposition 227 may have affected the academic

performance of ELs and EOs. Third, Gordon and Hoxby (2002) attempt to control for several potentially confounding effects in their model, such as change in the percentage of students receiving bilingual instruction, as well as California’s class size reduction initiative and what they term “habituation to the test” (i.e., students score better on tests that are familiar). With the exception of these controls, their methods are similar to those we use in our instructional model analysis in Chapter 3.¹⁶

Their preliminary findings are that the forced change from bilingual education seems to have: 1) slightly decreased average academic performance for ELs in grades 3 and 4; 2) not affected EL academic achievement in grades 5 through 8, except for a negative effect on math in grades 5 and 6; and 3) resulted in a positive effect for EOs in grades 3 through 7.

Selected Findings on Effects of the Passage of Proposition 227 on English Learners in California

As expected, Proposition 227 significantly shifted the proportion of ELs enrolled in various instructional models, with bilingual education programs enrolling approximately 400,000 students in 1997-98 to less than 138,000 EL students enrolled in an alternative course of study requiring parental waiver, and 126,000 EL students reported currently receiving some or most academic instruction in their primary language in 2003-04.¹⁷ Research since the passage of Proposition 227 highlights a range of issues affecting schools, particularly with regard to implementation and services.

A case-study analysis conducted in the first year of Proposition 227’s implementation by Garcia and Curry-Rodriguez (2000) found that districts tended to integrate their previous policies regarding the education of EL students into the new regulations dictated by the proposition. In light of this finding of district adherence to strategies for educating English learners that were in place prior to the passage of Proposition 227, the authors conclude that the law did not produce a large shift in programmatic practices for EL students. While initial response to the proposition created confusion regarding implementation, Garcia and Curry-Rodriguez note, it did not universally redirect California district or school policies and related practices regarding the language of instruction for English learners. Rather, the authors found that the districts they studied which had a history of opposing bilingual instruction tended to embrace all-English programs, while those that had supported it were able to continue offering native-language instruction through the proposition’s parental choice provisions.

The implementation of Proposition 227, combined with a concurrent policy mandate under the state’s Public Schools Accountability Act to test all students in academics using English regardless of language of instruction, also affected classroom instruction and professional development. Impacts that were reported to be observed by several researchers included literacy instructional practices stressing mechanics over

¹⁶ Note that it was not necessary to control for the change in the percent of students receiving bilingual education and class size reduction in our analysis given that we had access to student-level, as opposed to school-level, data.

¹⁷ See data available at <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

comprehension, and emphasizing oral English skills. Moreover, these researchers also found that many teachers expressed anxiety about being held legally liable for using EL students' primary language even minimally, and about the ability of EL students to perform on state-mandated, norm-referenced tests in English. Finally, researchers also cited continued shortages in teaching staff trained in educating ELs (Gándara et al., 2000; Gutierrez, Asato, & Baquedano-Lopez, 2000; Stritikus & Garcia, 2000; Palmer & Garcia, 2000).

Findings from a California Department of Education (1999) district survey assessing the types of technical assistance needed to implement Proposition 227 indicated that teacher training and adequate materials remained important issues in the state. While district administrators indicated that their teachers were well informed about the policy's requirements, they also noted that teachers had not received adequate staff development in the instructional strategies, curriculum, and materials needed to serve English learners through structured English immersion, an alternative course of study, or English mainstream classrooms. Other studies have also cited a lack of appropriate instructional materials (including primary language materials) as a significant challenge faced by teachers (Schirling, Contreras, & Ayala, 2000; Alamillo & Viramontes, 2000).

A study conducted by the Institute for Research in English Acquisition and Development (READ Institute) profiled five California school districts implementing Proposition 227 and identified common issues and challenges that were independent of district size, location, and demographics. The study suggests that as districts moved away from primary language instruction, they encountered challenges that made planning for English immersion difficult. These included undefined educational terminology, long-standing support for bilingual education, and a poor understanding of immersion methods (Clark, 1999).

Several studies highlight the issue of parent understanding of, and involvement with, Proposition 227. As Garcia (2000) notes, parent exception waivers provide a means for the continuation of bilingual education programs. However, significant differences in both the quality and content of the information provided to parents about placement options for their children exist, and may affect the percentage of parents choosing the bilingual education option (Garcia, 2000; Gutierrez et al., 2000; Maxwell-Jolly, 2000; Schirling et al., 2000).

A 2002 study by Rossell presents findings from interviews conducted during the spring of 1999 and fall of 2001 with 39 administrators and 66 teachers. She also reports on observations of 170 classrooms in 29 schools in California. Rossell found that implementation of structured English immersion programs varied across districts and schools. She reported that many district administrators assumed that as long as English learners were being instructed in English, the district was in compliance with Proposition 227. This led to many ELs being placed in mainstream classrooms rather than sheltered English immersion classrooms. Visits to school districts also revealed variation among parental waiver policies. Overall, Rossell concluded that parents have easy access to waivers.

Chapter II. Assessing Implementation and Impact of Proposition 227

Highlights

- Proposition 227 was implemented during a period of many other simultaneous educational policy initiatives affecting ELs. Early in this study, the state’s class size reduction program was reported by study respondents as most influential in its effect on EL instructional services across the state, with new ELD standards, Proposition 227, and the state’s emerging accountability system also seen as important.
- As time has passed, respondents now tend to identify the federal and state accountability systems having the greatest influence on EL instructional practice in the state.
- Proposition 227 has generally, but not uniformly, been regarded positively by school and district respondents to this study. This was more predominant in our interviews of principals in Year 5 (2005), but it should be noted that these were from schools showing exceptional EL academic performance. Favorable assessments of the proposition largely tended to emphasize the substantial increased attention the law has placed on ELs and EL academic performance, more than the default instructional changes mandated by the law
- Reported concerns with the proposition were based on perceptions that it over-emphasizes an English-only philosophy, greatly restricts the use of primary language instruction, and diminishes the focus on student cultural heritage. Another ongoing concern is continued ambiguity—as an example, respondents’ interpretation of instruction “overwhelmingly in English” varied widely. In addition, we have found considerable evidence for concern regarding uneven school and district understanding and implementation of parental waivers requesting “alternative” (i.e., bilingual) instruction for their children.
- Most respondents to the Year 2 survey (in 2002) felt that Proposition 227 had not helped substantially in regard to EL redesignation, integration, or student academic performance. In Year 5 (2005), respondents tended to be more favorable about the impact of the proposition in general, though these impressions were from leaders of schools that had realized considerable success during the post-Proposition 227 era.

Introduction

As described in Chapter 1, Proposition 227 was introduced during a time of increased attention to accountability and school reform efforts, with a number of programs and policies being implemented simultaneously, and with greater pressure placed on districts and schools to demonstrate improvements. This interaction, along with the highly politicized nature of the proposition, makes for a complex picture of implementation.

This chapter begins by setting the context for implementation of Proposition 227 and discussing its perceived impact. The chapter then addresses implementation of specific aspects of the law or related legislation, including parental waivers and the English Language Acquisition Program (ELAP), as well as barriers to successful implementation.¹ (All findings related to the Community-Based English Tutoring program are discussed separately in Chapter 3.) A discussion of district and school practices related to EL programs follows, including developing and implementing plans for EL programs and the persistence of EL tracking and segregation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of instructional practices under Proposition 227.

This chapter draws on the survey and stakeholder interview data collected during Year 2 (2002), the in-depth case studies performed in Year 3 (2003), and the Year 5 phone interviews conducted in 2005 with principals at schools where ELs showed higher achievement relative to schools with similar populations. The survey data from Year 2 have the advantage of having the largest pool of respondents and therefore providing a good overview. The Year 3 case studies allowed a more detailed exploration of the issues at hand. The “successful schools” phone interviews in Year 5 gave us a chance to gather retrospective impressions of the perceived impacts of Proposition 227 and the accountability movement. The chapter is also informed by the set of themes associated with the research questions that emerged from Year 1’s exploratory site visits to 24 schools in 8 case study districts in 2001. Throughout the chapter we specify which findings were derived from which data collection activities.

It is important to keep in mind that while we examined Proposition 227 over the full five years of the study, implementation issues were primarily emphasized during the first three years. In Year 4 of the study (2004), we focused on evaluating the English Language Acquisition Program in accordance with legislative requirements (see the previous chapter for our ELAP research). As described earlier, the two primary activities during Year 5 were examining EL achievement and effective practices within the context of Proposition 227.

¹ A full evaluation of ELAP was performed in Year 4. The English Language Acquisition Program Evaluation Report can be found at http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx

Proposition 227 in Context

Context for the Implementation of Proposition 227

This section explores the complexities of implementing Proposition 227. Specifically, it focuses on: 1) the presence of other factors affecting the education of English learners, 2) pressures on schools and districts from the state accountability system and its impact on ELs, and 3) district and school administrator attitudes about the legislation.

First, however, we feature the most recent set of responses to the perceived impacts of Proposition 227 as well as the overall education accountability movement from Year 5 (2005) phone interview respondents.² To what extent did respondents see the overall impact of these important events affecting the education of ELs statewide as positive or negative, and what comments did they provide in regard to these impressions? Prior to sharing these responses, it is important to note that they vary somewhat from some of the perspectives culled from prior data collection efforts from this study. Although the overall findings do not differ dramatically, with the bulk of respondents more often positively associating with these two events, exact responses reported in regard to these questions must be considered in the context of the time period of the inquiry and who was asked. As a five-year study, Proposition 227 is increasingly drifting from memory as a major change agent in the state, especially in relation to the overall accountability movement that has gradually become more predominant, well defined, and ubiquitous—epitomized by the coupling of state accountability with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) provisions.

In addition, the Year 5 telephone survey respondents were purposively selected, while earlier respondents were randomly chosen. In particular, our 2002 Year 2 survey respondents were as close to a statewide representative sample as we have in this study. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in Year 5 of this evaluation we are focusing on lessons that could be learned from schools (including those offering primary language as well as immersion instructional approaches) with relatively high percentages of Hispanic ELs that were clearly beating the odds in regard to schoolwide student achievement. Thus, the following is a somewhat biased response drawn primarily from principals in schools that have realized considerable success in educating ELs in the Post-227 era. Using varying strategies, they found ways to use the provisions of Proposition 227 and the overall accountability movement to enhance (or at least not impede) their progress in regard to academic progress for ELs.

It is also important to note that virtually all of these respondents were school principals, and not EL teachers or coordinators as were more predominantly featured in prior data collection efforts. One might fear that they are less sensitive or responsive to the needs of ELs, but it should be noted that all of these principals are from schools in which ELs appear to be flourishing.

² Note that administrators from 75 schools across the state in which ELs demonstrate high performance relative to schools with comparable characteristics were included in our phone interview sample.

The impact of Proposition 227

Among this group, nearly one-half (31) of the 63 respondents reported that they considered Proposition 227 to have had an overall positive impact on their schools. Only 3 respondents considered the overall impact to be negative. A much larger number of respondents (20) reported that the proposition was no longer relevant to them, or that it had no real impact. Interestingly, the primary reason for reporting “no impact” was that they were simply continuing what they had done before. Most of these respondents had never offered a bilingual program and, thus, believed they were unaffected by the legislation, but others had offered bilingual programs prior to the proposition and have continued to do so post-Proposition 227 through the waiver process.

The most predominant underlying rationale for the generally favorable impression of Proposition 227 from these respondents is that the renewed focus on English has helped EL students fare better within the state’s testing system. One principal reported that the increased focus on English has helped her school raise student achievement and that bilingual instruction keeps students from learning the English they need to succeed on “English tests.” Another principal at a school that had never had bilingual programs said that in their case the proposition had mainly helped focus attention on ELs. Another principal noted that the move away from bilingual education had been positive as it allowed ELs to move into the mainstream rather than being in segregated programs. “The exposure to English in regular classrooms helps students acquire English more rapidly.”

An opposing point of view was that removing bilingual education had adversely affected schools by limiting their ability to use primary language instruction to clarify academic content. Another principal expressed “a growing concern that students are losing out on primary language enrichment – we’re trying to fill the void with English, but it’s an empty experience.”

A more complex perspective was provided by a long-standing principal at a very successful school with 100 percent of its students in poverty and 83 percent EL. He does not agree with the English-only philosophy of Proposition 227 and indeed sets the goal within his school of not just primary language support for his students, but for full biliteracy. Ironically, he believes Proposition 227 has provided him the freedom to pursue this end. His school has long fostered the approach of introducing English literacy skills at the onset of schooling, while also focusing on primary language literacy. Prior to Proposition 227, he was often chastised for the early introduction of English. Now, through the parent waiver process, he can pursue biliteracy while still producing students who perform quite well within the state’s English-based accountability system.

The impact of accountability

Among this group at least, there was even more unanimity in their support for the accountability movement, with nearly two-thirds of respondents (43 out of 65) believing that the overall impact of these provisions on their school has been positive. Eight respondents considered the impact negative, eight were not sure, and five felt that the

movement had had no impact on them. However, some ambivalence is also expressed in these generally positive responses.

Starting with the most positive sentiments regarding accountability, one principal reported that it has affected her school by raising expectations, making everyone work harder, and providing the money and resources to meet new goals. Another principal said the new emphasis on schools facing substantial challenges has caused the district to allocate more fully credentialed teachers to her school.

In regard to subpopulations, such as ELs, a positive attribute was said to be to force more attention to their particular needs, to self-assess, and to continually improve teaching strategies for these students. “Accountability’s major effect with regard to ELs is to bring them back into the classroom,” as one principal put it.

Strong concerns were also expressed, however, in regard to the punitive side of these provisions. For example, some schools that are otherwise doing well can be characterized as “failing” overall due to subgroup performance. For example, one of the schools featured in this data collection, shown to be doing a very impressive job with its high EL and high poverty population, was labeled in need of program improvement because of the performance of the very large special education population at the school.

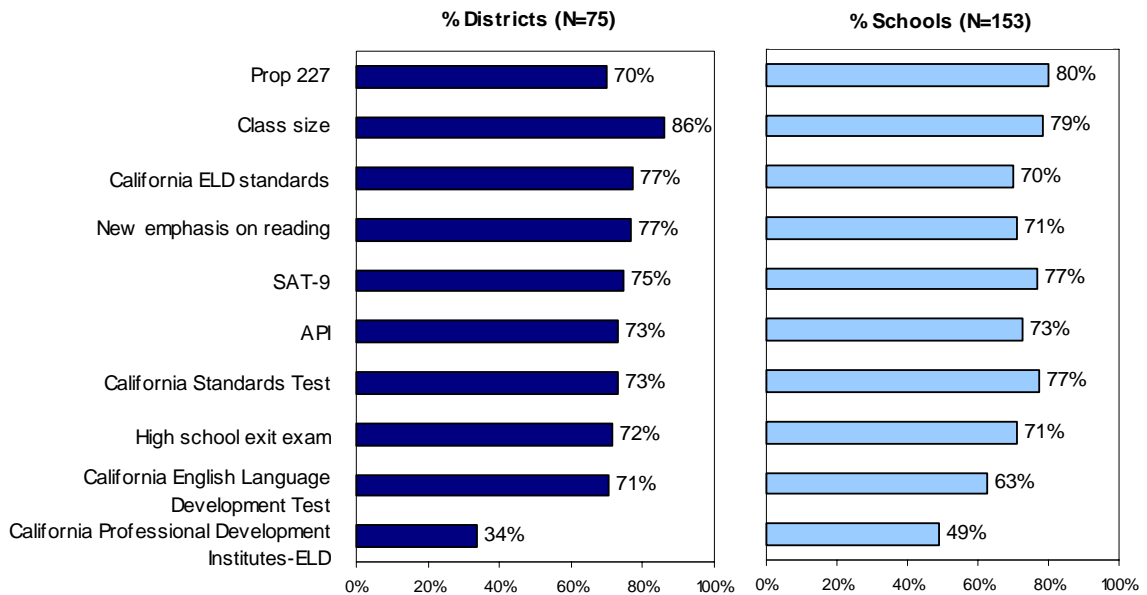
Another principal at a very successful school says that the accountability movement has “made a world of difference in providing clear expectations through standards about what should be taught and clear data about student progress.” At the same time, he says that the punitive side of the movement that labels students and teachers as low performing is wrong-headed and ineffective in bringing about change.

Significant changes and reforms impacting instruction of ELs

The responses above regarding Proposition 227 and the accountability movement should be tempered by the fact that many other important events were occurring statewide during Proposition 227 implementation. For example, respondents to the Year 2 district survey in 2002 did not rank Proposition 227 as the most critical factor affecting the education of ELs in their district (see Exhibit II-1). Although 70 percent of district respondents agreed that the proposition has had a moderate to large effect on EL education, a higher percentage (86 percent) felt that the state’s major class size reduction initiative also had a moderate to large impact. The two policies were more evenly ranked by school administrators, with 80 percent reporting that Proposition 227 had a moderate or large effect and 79 percent reporting this about class size reduction. While Proposition 227 was reported as having a moderate to large effect by more school respondents than any other program or policy, it showed up as somewhat less significant in the list of district-level responses. The high percentages for most of the items for both districts and schools suggests that many important things were happening at once, of which Proposition 227 was just one.³

³ See Chapter 1 for additional discussion of accountability and school reform issues contemporaneous with Proposition 227.

Exhibit II-1. Percentage of Districts and Schools Reporting that Various Programs and Policies have Affected the Education of English Learners to a Moderate or Large Extent⁴



Source: Year 2 survey, 2002

The California English Language Development (ELD) standards and the new emphasis on reading instruction (e.g., the Reading Excellence Act) were also cited in the 2002 Year 2 survey as important factors affecting EL education by district administrators, with more than three-quarters (77 percent) reporting that each of these has affected English learners to a moderate or large extent. One district administrator from a case study site explained, “The state standards and the ELD standards have influenced instruction more than Proposition 227....Educators are more cautious when looking at content, instruction, and assessment data to ensure that students are placed appropriately, and that there is monitoring. Because of the ELD standards, the focus has changed to helping students achieve skills and standards in English.” During the 2003 Year 3 site visits, several teachers and administrators lauded the statewide adoption of the High Point reading intervention curriculum for ELs in grades 4 through 8 as very important and positive, but several also lamented the absence of an explicit, structured ELD curriculum aligned to the state’s ELD standards. Some teachers and district EL coordinators noted that the ELD supplements found in state ELA adoptions (e.g., Open Court and Houghton-Mifflin) were helpful for “sheltering” early literacy instruction, but were inadequate to address the ELD needs of their students.

⁴ The number of survey respondents (N) included in analyses is noted in each exhibit in this chapter. Unless otherwise indicated, this N represents to the total number of potential respondents; missing responses to selected survey items mean that the actual N varies slightly from item to item.

In the Year 3 site visits, many schools and districts described the development and implementation of ELD standards-based lessons and assessments to monitor EL progress in ELD during the school year (e.g., trimester ELD benchmark standards and ELD report card supplements). In addition, several districts had begun scoring centrally or encouraging schools to score the CELDT at the school site to enable quicker student placement and redesignation decisions.

Pressure from the state’s accountability system

The state’s testing and accountability system was noted as central to many changes and pressures experienced by schools and districts. All eight case study districts noted in Year 1 (2001) that the state’s accountability system had affected services for ELs, specifically mentioning standards-based curricula, accountability, and high-stakes testing. For example, administrators from several Year 1 case study districts noted that the state’s accountability system was having a negative impact on their bilingual programs. These administrators indicated that they felt pressured to alter their bilingual program designs by introducing much more English-language instruction and test preparation at lower grades to ensure that EL students could perform (in English) on the SAT-9.

Administrators in all Year 1 case study districts mentioned substantial pressure to perform on the SAT-9 and to raise their Academic Performance Index (API) scores; this pressure may have some unintended negative consequences as well. Several districts expressed concerns about the fiscal penalties associated with ELs receiving waivers from the SAT-9 test, even when they do not speak English. Regarding the 15 percent limit on exemptions from SAT-9 testing set by the state, the EL coordinator in one district that exceeded this limit said, “We lost considerable money last year due to this. Next year we will have to push for SAT-9 testing for all students, regardless of program, proficiency level, or time in the district.”

Fears were reported that fiscal penalties might discourage the provision of appropriate testing exemptions. In Year 1 of the study, the superintendent in the district mentioned above said, “How can you walk away from \$200,000 per year per school to improve reading, when we know we are low achieving?” Year 2 survey results suggest that these fiscal disincentives influence teachers as well. Half (50 percent) of all surveyed teachers reported that their school administrators discouraged them from advising parents of the SAT-9 waiver option.

In the 2003 Year 3 site visits, the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) was cited in a few instances as “raising the anxiety level” at schools and districts, especially regarding its potentially disproportionate negative effect on EL graduation rates. While the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was seldom mentioned, the one NCLB provision that had been implemented at that point—regarding qualifications of teachers and instructional aides—was frequently cited as a new challenge.

Political reactions to the legislation

Another important contextual factor to consider when examining the implementation of Proposition 227 is the reaction of districts and schools to the legislation itself. For example, strong district or community support for Proposition 227 may facilitate its implementation. To understand the positions held by district and school administrators, Year 2 (2002) survey respondents were asked to report on their support for or opposition to each of the key provisions under Proposition 227, both at the time of the survey and prior to the passage of the law.

On the whole, district respondents expressed moderate opposition to Proposition 227, both prior to its passage and when surveyed, especially with regard to the requirement that students transition from SEI to mainstream settings after one year (75 percent opposed this prior to Proposition 227, and 64 percent opposed it at the time of the survey). On average, though, districts had also become more supportive of Proposition 227 over the four-year gap covered by the two questions. In particular, while only 23 percent of districts supported the requirement that EL students be placed in structured English immersion (SEI) prior to the passage of Proposition 227, 41 percent reported supporting this requirement when surveyed in Year 2 of this study (2002).

Responding school administrators expressed a similar pattern of support for the provisions of Proposition 227, with increased support reported for many of the law's provisions since its enactment. Like the district respondents, support for placing students in SEI classes increased between the passage of Proposition 227 and the 2001-02 school year, from 45 to 59 percent. Unlike the district survey respondents, though, the level of support for limiting instruction in SEI to a temporary transition period remained relatively unchanged (39 and 40 percent). On every component of the law, school respondents reported higher levels of support (both before and currently) than district respondents. This difference may, in part, be related to the experiences of the survey respondents. District respondents tended to be district EL coordinators, who may have a greater commitment to specific instructional programs for ELs, while school respondents tended to be principals, who may have a broader perspective.

In summary, the implementation and impact of Proposition 227 must be evaluated within a larger context. In addition to Proposition 227 itself, other educational programs and reforms such as class size reduction and the introduction of ELD standards have affected the education of EL students in the state. California's testing and accountability system has also affected services for ELs and has exerted complex pressures on educators, which affect implementation of 227. Implementation may be further affected by the attitudes of district and school administrators toward the various provisions of the law.

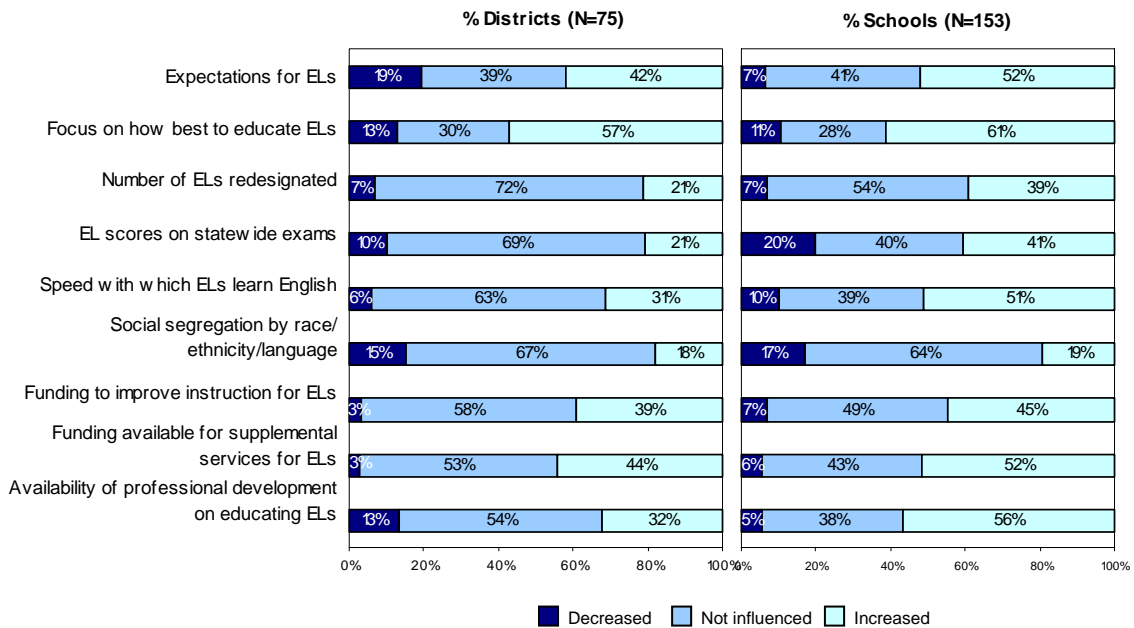
Educators' Perceived Impact of Proposition 227 Implementation

When asked how Proposition 227 has influenced a range of issues related to the education of English learners in 2002 on the Year 2 survey, districts generally reported neutral to positive effects (Exhibit II-2). The majority of district administrators indicated that many potential areas of impact have not been influenced by the implementation of

the legislation. Schools reported slightly more positive effects on the education of EL students than did districts.

These findings reinforce emerging themes from the 2001 Year 1 case studies, during which many educators said that they had not necessarily modified their instructional strategies due to Proposition 227, but had changed to respond to the needs created by new curricular standards and promotion requirements. They suggested that the main impact of Proposition 227 concerned the language they are legally allowed to use during instruction and the timelines specified by the law.

Exhibit II-2. Percentage of Districts and Schools Reporting a Positive or Negative Influence of Proposition 227 on a Variety of Factors



Source: Year 2 survey, 2002

More than half of all responding districts (57 percent) and schools (61 percent) reported that as a result of Proposition 227, there had been an increase in the focus on how best to educate EL students. Stakeholders interviewed in Year 2 further described this increased focus. One district superintendent noted that five years ago there was little program consistency among schools. He saw Proposition 227 as a catalyst that helped his district develop a specific vision for educating EL students. Similarly, another superintendent noted that the proposition gave his district the impetus to adopt an outcome-based approach to evaluating its EL program and to ask, “How are we deviating from the program we say we want to provide?”

Districts and school survey respondents reported somewhat mixed perceptions of the availability of increased funding since Proposition 227. Thirty-nine percent of districts and 45 percent of schools believed that the availability of funds to improve classroom instruction for EL students had increased. Slightly more districts (44 percent)

and schools (52 percent) believed that funds available to provide supplemental services for EL students had increased.

These mixed perceptions are perhaps attributed to the varied programmatic, political, and demographic contexts of the districts that have implemented Proposition 227. For instance, Year 1 case studies in 2001 indicated that in districts that lacked extensive bilingual programs prior to the initiative, the new requirements were not perceived as burdensome. One principal said, “There has been little effect on us because services remained very similar to what was already in place before the proposition’s passage...It’s hard to miss what you didn’t have.”

Proposition 227 Major Implementation Issues

Implementation Barriers

Through this evaluation, a number of barriers to the implementation of the proposition have been identified. This section specifically addresses three barriers: 1) the short timeline and insufficient guidance for implementing regulations in the law, 2) confusion over what the law requires and allows, and 3) the lack of clear operational definitions for the various instructional approaches to the education of English learners.

Short timeline and insufficient guidance

Proposition 227 was passed in June 1998, and districts were required to implement it at the beginning of the 1998-99 school year. As most schools were on summer break, many had only several weeks to create new programs, hire qualified teachers, notify parents, and complete other tasks associated with the proposition. In our 2001 Year 1 case study visits, districts mentioned that the short implementation timeline was the cause for much strain, and that it exacerbated confusion and fear about the legal ramifications of non-compliance with the law, particularly during the initial implementation period.

Proposition 227 states, “Any elected official, public school teacher or administrator, who willfully and repeatedly refuses to implement the terms of the law, may be held personally liable for fees and actual damages.” Across all of the case study districts, educators agreed that during the initial stages of implementation there was “an extremely politically charged environment.” This atmosphere seemed to especially affect those districts that historically had a strong commitment to providing bilingual education. One district administrator said it was “very challenging” to make decisions while dealing with “threats of lawsuits.” Another school district was sued by a group of parents because they felt the law was being implemented “too quickly.” These factors resulted in enormous pressure on schools and districts to change (in many cases, dramatically) their established policies and practices related to educating English learners.

During the site visits, administrators and teachers frequently cited inadequate guidance from the state regarding implementation of the law as a major stumbling block. One principal stated, “All of the explanations that are required across the many programs

have created problems for [the teachers]. Teachers just want the state and administrators to highlight the changes and clarify what is new and what needs to be done.” An English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) member in another district stated, “Proposition 227 doesn’t say anything about the materials the teachers have to use. The impact of Proposition 227 for the teachers was a lack of information and lack of clarity in the programs and content. The major challenge has been implementing a program without guidelines.”

In an effort to clarify the mandates of Proposition 227, the CDE provided guidance through state regulations (Title 5, Division 1, Chapter 11) and convened a taskforce to develop guidelines (California Department of Education, 1999). However, much of the interpretation was left up to school districts, which in turn had to provide a clear delineation of new educational models and pedagogical practices that would satisfy the requirements of the law.

Stakeholders interviewed in Year 2 (2002) echoed the concerns heard during the site visits. Several respondents felt that the state’s vagueness resulted in confusion. One suggested that while every district should not have to implement the law in the same way, the state should strongly encourage every district to design programs according to common core goals—assigning the highest priority to the acquisition of English and academic subjects. Several stakeholders also felt that the CDE had not been enforcing the law stringently enough. One district superintendent pointed out that while some flexibility is appreciated, if it is accompanied by a lack of attention to compliance with the law the result is confusion.

In addition to a lack of clarity from the state, insufficient guidance within districts was mentioned by district and school officials in seven of the eight case study districts visited during Year 1 of the study. The eighth district, which was reported to have provided adequate guidance, maintained a substantial bilingual program even while it established a large SEI program. Of the other seven districts, four held meetings about the proposition at the outset, but provided little or no training on how to actually implement the law in the classroom. An EL coordinator from one of these districts stated, “They had some good, solid guidelines and information for parents, but they were missing the strong instructional piece explaining what they were supposed to do in the classroom.” After Proposition 227, the teachers in one district were required to turn in their Spanish-language textbooks. After spending many years preparing to be bilingual teachers, one teacher said, “Overnight we were told to teach entirely in English without any training. Because many of these administrators and coordinators had not supported bilingual education in the first place they were unlikely to help staff align the old instructional approaches with the new.” The absence of clear guidance at the district level appears to have exacerbated this inherent barrier to change. A board of education member of one large district interviewed during a site visit stated, “The district has had to define what it wants [in terms of programs it makes available]—but due to the Proposition 227 threat about personal accountability, there have been many on-site interpretations that are not representative of district policy. There is still a lot of concern about uneven implementation.”

Across the state, the initial confusion may have diminished over the four years between passage of the proposition and the Year 2 survey. Three-quarters of all district (76 percent) and school (75 percent) respondents reported that the guidance currently available regarding the implementation of Proposition 227 was sufficient. Other data indicated that the effects of this early period of confusion during the first transition year (1998-99) had not yet been resolved and had had a lasting impact. For instance, one quarter of all responding districts and schools reported that the available guidance was at least somewhat inadequate.

Moreover, when asked in the Year 2 survey about whether additional guidance was needed on specific regulations of Proposition 227, district and school respondents reported a need for clarification on a wide range of issues. Determination of what constitutes “reasonable fluency” in English was the most commonly cited; 56 percent of districts and 58 percent of schools reported needing additional guidance on this provision of Proposition 227. Approximately half of responding districts (51 percent) and schools (48 percent) report needing additional guidance on instructional arrangements allowable under the proposition.

Confusion over what the law requires and allows

Districts and schools across the state have struggled to interpret many provisions of Proposition 227. In particular, confusion over what Proposition 227 regulations require and allow in terms of the amount of primary language instruction and ELD was one of the most commonly voiced themes that emerged from our 2001 Year 1 case studies—all eight districts noted confusion in this regard. Although this uncertainty varied in degree by district, it generally resulted in an enormous amount of fear among district and school staff. One EL coordinator stated, “There was a lot of confusion about how to comply with the law because it was not very specific. Everyone in the state was very confused about what the law meant, and this interfered with the decision-making process.” One stakeholder interviewee summed up this concern by stating, “It says what you can’t do, but it doesn’t say what you can do or should do.” Irrespective of their opinion regarding the most effective approach to educating ELs, almost all of the stakeholders interviewed in Year 2 (2002) agreed that a lack of guidance as to what educators may do resulted in uneven implementation, with districts and schools implementing the law’s provisions in different ways.

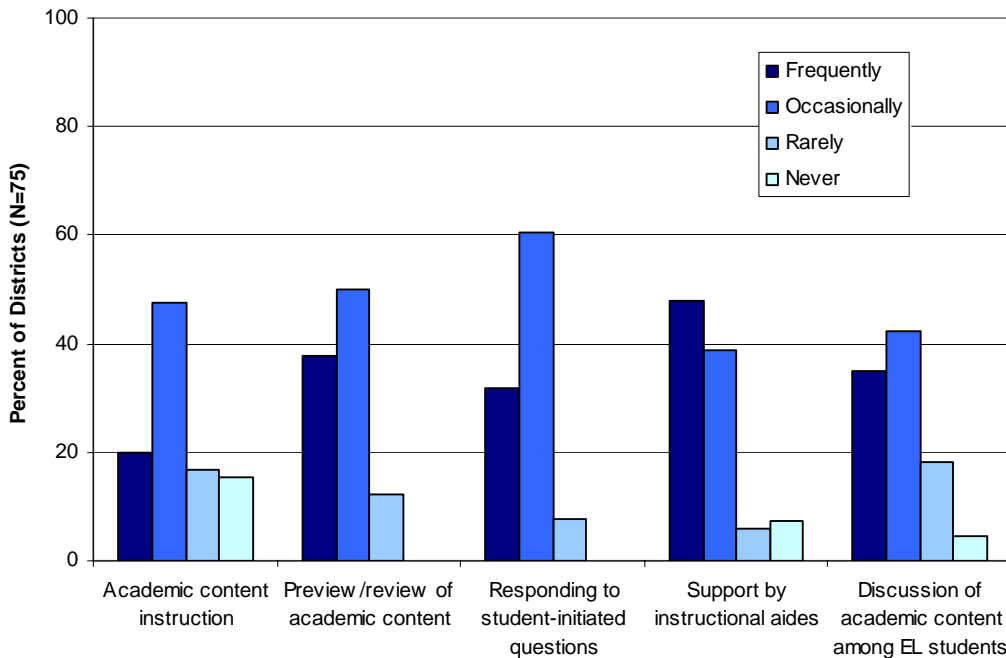
As noted previously, data from the case studies indicated that the fear of litigation seemed to further aggravate the confusion and, in some instances, lead to extreme reactions on the part of school and district administrators. In one district, according to a school board member, many principals forced their teachers to box up or discard Spanish-language materials. The district then had to “make a major effort to relax these types of fears, [which were] due to quick implementation.” In one extreme example, a teacher in another district stated, “There was a lot of confusion in the schools when the law first passed. To keep from being sued, the district gave teachers a directive of zero percent Spanish use.”

On the Year 2 survey, only about half of responding districts (51 percent) and schools (48 percent) specified the percentage of instruction that constitutes

“overwhelmingly in English.” Of the districts that did attempt to define this concept, less than one-quarter (24 percent) used a stringent definition requiring that no less than 90 percent of instruction be provided in English; 35 percent of school-level respondents reported using a definition this stringent.

Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of districts responding to the Year 2 survey indicated that they had a written policy describing the purposes for which primary language may be used in structured English immersion (SEI) settings. As shown in Exhibit II-3, most districts allowed the use of primary language on an occasional or even frequent basis, at least under certain conditions, in SEI settings. Proposition 227 defines SEI as a model with a curriculum and presentation designed for ELs in which “nearly all” classroom instruction is in English, but the circumstances under which surveyed districts allowed use of primary language in these settings varied widely. For example, Exhibit II-3 shows that more than two-thirds of responding districts allowed frequent or occasional use of primary language for academic content instruction (68 percent) and for preview or review of academic content (88 percent). Sixty-one percent of responding districts reported that occasional use of primary language by the teacher in response to student-initiated questions was also allowed. In addition, 48 percent of responding districts reported that frequent use of primary language by instructional aides was acceptable. The regularity with which primary language use is reportedly acceptable in SEI settings seems to at least somewhat blur their distinction from bilingual settings. These findings suggest considerable program model variation across the state.

Exhibit II-3. District Policies Regarding Use of Primary Language in Structured English Immersion Settings for Various Purposes



Source: Year 2 survey, 2002

Districts and schools have also struggled with the proposition’s requirement that ELs be placed in SEI for a temporary transition period “not normally intended to exceed one year.” Many respondents interviewed during Year 1 site visits identified this language as vague and suggested that transitioning students after one year is an unrealistic expectation. They expressed concern about the timeline established by the law for newcomers’ acquisition of English, some noting that academic English proficiency is acquired over a period of five to seven years.⁵ Frequently, instructional aides and teachers from the case study sites said that transferring ELs to mainstream classrooms in one year does not allow sufficient time to develop adequate English proficiency to succeed in school. In practice, it is clear from the Year 2 survey responses from school administrators that most students were not being transitioned from SEI to mainstream settings after one school year. Only 14 percent of schools reported that all or almost all of their EL students made this transition after one year.

Lack of clear operational definitions

The mandates of Proposition 227 have obvious implications for classroom practice; however, according to Year 1 (2001) case study interviewees the language used to describe instructional settings is vague. For example, a number of them said that it was difficult to operationally define the new instructional models. During site visits it was often reported that program definitions were unclear, even for educators within the same district. For example, one EL coordinator distinguished between the two models used for their district’s structured immersion program: “The first model of instruction relies on SDAIE [Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English] methods, while the second relies on English immersion with some use of the primary language for clarification.” The coordinator’s counterpart at another school gave the same definition but noted that the two models “sound different on paper, but in practice are basically the same.”

On the 2002 Year 2 survey, more than half of the surveyed teachers described their classroom settings as “English language mainstream” or “SEI/SDAIE.” Notably, however, 19 percent of the teachers described their classroom as a “mixed setting,” where ELs receive SEI within an English language mainstream classroom that includes English-only students (EOs). The fact that a significant minority of those surveyed described their classrooms in this way corroborates the finding that the labels assigned to various instructional settings may reflect a broad range of practices.

Parental Waivers

Alternative course of instruction

Proposition 227 stipulates the right of parents to choose their child’s educational program. However, the law also emphasizes the importance of teacher and principal input into the waiver decision and the role they must play in ultimate approval. This dynamic between parental rights and educator judgment has created a range of issues and responses in districts across the state.

⁵ This estimate is borne out by the analysis presented in chapter 3 of this report. Our analysis suggests that seven years is typical for redesignation.

It should be kept in mind that we conducted our most extensive data collection in regard to instructional program waivers through the Year 1 site visits in 2001, the Year 2 surveys administered in 2002, and the Year 3 site visits in 2003.⁶ This section synthesizes findings from those activities. It also should be noted that, in May 2002, the State Board of Education adopted English learner regulations with key provisions intended to clarify the state's parental waiver policy. Consequently, it is likely that some schools and districts have improved practices related to parental waivers since the data reported below were collected. Nevertheless, we did not observe evidence of substantial improvement during the Year 3 site visits nor through more recent informal communications with school and district administrators. Given the complexity of the concerns, it appears unlikely that the ambiguities described below in regard to parents' understanding of their waiver rights and schools' acceptance or rejection of waiver requests have been fully resolved.

Availability of waivers. Parent access to program waivers varies from district to district. The Year 3 site visits found that, in districts and schools where substantial primary language instruction is offered, schools consistently had a well-developed set of procedures to explain program waiver options to parents. Based on parent focus group interviews during those site visits, there was also evidence of clear support by the community for bilingual instruction. At districts and schools where alternative programs were few or not offered, waiver forms and processes tended to be less standardized and were reported as more vague by staff and parents. In nearly all of the districts we visited during Year 1, at least some of the parents we met were unaware of their waiver rights under Proposition 227. However, all but two districts (97 percent) responding to the Year 2 survey reported that they had at least developed a parental exception waiver to inform parents of the instructional program alternatives available for ELs (see Exhibit II-4). Most school administrators surveyed also reported that they have a waiver form that was developed either by the school or district (91 percent), though this left nearly 10 percent of schools without access to waivers, or at least knowledge of a district-developed waiver that might already exist.

⁶ Since that time we have not concentrated directly on waivers, as more recently, the focus of the study has been on the English Language Acquisition Program, effective practices for ELs within the context of Proposition 227 provisions, and continued exploration of statewide EL achievement and language proficiency.

Exhibit II-4. Percentage of Districts and Schools Reporting the Use and Distribution of Waivers to Parents

	Percent of Districts (N=75)	Percent of Schools (N=153)
Percent with district- or school-developed waivers	97.3%	90.7%
Percent with translated waivers (of the districts with waivers)	98.6%	97.1%
Of the districts (N=73) and schools (N=139) with waivers:		
Percent that distribute to all parents of EL students	33.3%	45.2%
Percent that distribute only to parents who request it	44.0%	45.9%
Percent that distribute only once upon enrollment	-	36.2%
Percent that distribute annually or more often	-	63.8%

Source: Year 2 survey, 2002

Translation of the waiver form into a language that the parent will understand is obviously a critical factor for making information about instructional alternatives accessible to parents. As shown in Exhibit II-4, nearly all districts and schools that reported having waivers in Year 2 have translated their waiver forms into at least one language (99 percent of districts and 97 percent of schools), and a few districts have translated their waivers into as many as four languages. However, given the language diversity throughout this state, it is inevitable that some parents will still be unable to read the waiver forms issued by their child’s district. One EL coordinator interviewed during our case study site visits in Year 1 told us that in her district, “The waivers only go to Spanish speakers. It is not translated into other languages.” As a result, for many parents in this district, the waiver forms were completely inaccessible. Similar concerns were reported in Year 3 case study interviews.

Strategies for disseminating information about waivers also vary, and using appropriate methods to do this is a concern in a number of districts. On the Year 2 survey, nearly half (47 percent) of all responding districts reported that more guidance on how to advise parents about the educational options available was needed. One third (32 percent) of responding schools also reported needing guidance in this area.

While more than a third (33 percent) of responding districts and 45 percent of responding schools surveyed in Year 2 reported that all parents of EL students receive a copy of the parental exception waiver form, 44 percent of district respondents and 46 percent of school respondents reported that they provided waivers only to parents who requested them. This means that in more than half of districts and schools, parents did not receive information about instructional alternatives for their children unless they knew enough about their options to request a waiver form. In the Year 3 site visit parent focus groups, several parents reported never receiving any information about a choice. School administrators explained this in several ways. For some, not offering waivers resulted from a lack of demand. As one school EL coordinator explained, “Parents don’t have a choice because there are not enough students to grant a Spanish-speaking class.” Another

explained that historical support eliminated any need for choice: “We have a history of teaching in English with primary language support. Parents see their children are learning. There are no waivers at all for this reason.” Teachers at a third school were very clear about the school’s implicit policy, with one summing up, “We don’t publicly announce to parents that there is an opportunity for them to have the bilingual program; they are informed about the English program.”

A similar concern is the number of teachers who feel pressure *not* to discuss waiver options. Approximately one-third (32 percent) of responding teachers in Year 2 felt that their school administration actually *discourages* them from advising parents on the waiver option for alternative instructional programs. This pressure, whether overt or implied, has the potential to severely limit parents’ access to information about instructional program options for their children.

In the Year 3 site visits, both teachers and parents continued to express frustration regarding Proposition 227’s 30-calendar day SEI enrollment requirement for those choosing an alternative instructional program for the first time. Teachers noted there was no educational reason to have a kindergartner in a program they will be removed from after 30 days, and argued that these students lose one month of grade-level instruction. Parents expressed frustration about placing a child in a program they had not chosen, where little or no comprehension occurs, and then removing the child from a room where he has made friends and begun to feel comfortable with the teacher.

Granting waivers. Under what circumstances waiver requests should be granted has also been a source of confusion across districts. In Year 2, 38 percent of responding districts and 28 percent of responding schools reported needing additional guidance on the requirements for offering and granting parental exception waivers. Most districts reported having a policy governing when the district or a school is required to provide an alternative instructional program in response to parental exception waiver requests. Sixty-four percent of responding districts reported that they follow a written waiver policy; 13 percent reported that although the district has a waiver policy, there is no formal document describing the policy. Nearly a quarter (24 percent) of responding districts reported not having an explicit policy on waivers at all. The fact that explicit policies were not initially in place may have contributed to the uneven use of waivers observed during the case study site visits.

Logistical constraints. Legal interpretations aside, there are a number of logistical factors that may limit schools’ ability to grant waiver requests. More than half of the school survey respondents in Year 2 (55 percent) cited the small number of students requesting a waiver as a limiting factor. If schools do not have enough students requesting a waiver within a similar grade span, offering an alternative program will be very difficult. Class size reduction provisions make providing alternative programs to students in the primary grades even more difficult, since class sizes must be limited to 20 students and the number of waivers received may exceed this number. In a Year 1 case study interview, one school EL coordinator said, “Instead of 32, you now have 20 slots. What do you do with the other 12 kids? They are in a combination class or in English,

systematically eliminating their bilingual option.” Having sufficient resources to cover additional classrooms is another constraining factor for schools. Responding schools reported that a lack of certified bilingual teachers (34 percent) and a lack of space (23 percent) were moderate to large constraints.

STAR test waivers

As with alternative instructional program waivers, our 2003 Year 3 site visit interviews and focus groups raised concerns that parents are not being fully informed of their rights and options regarding STAR test waivers. Unlike program waivers, the lack of communication regarding test waivers was more common across all schools, including those offering bilingual instruction.

Many teachers and administrators noted that they take a “passive role” in informing parents of test waiver options. One principal at a school offering bilingual instruction explained, “We don’t talk about [test] waivers to parents,” while another said, “Testing waivers we don’t encourage. We make no excuses – every child will learn. We had approximately 99 percent of the students take the [STAR] exam last year.”

Given the tension between schools’ legal obligation to inform parents of their options and the pressure to maximize the number of students taking the STAR tests (schools are penalized if their STAR participation rates fall below 95 percent), this was referred to as a “very political issue.” One teacher mentioned that telling parents who inquired about test waivers that “testing in English is very important for decisions such as redesignation and assignment to college prep classes.” Teachers at another school said that they do not encourage the use of waivers and that parents “have to find out about them from someone else.”

In a notable exception across all sites visited, a principal at a middle school (which also offered substantial primary language instruction) explained that the district’s clear policy of informing parents of their test waiver rights facilitated this task: “By the time students come to [our school], the parents are pretty familiar with the test waiver policy. The school provides information that is sent home to the parents and available in our school office. Waiver information is in Spanish and English.”

Given the overall context, it is not surprising that most parents in our focus groups said they were unaware of a test waiver option. Several nevertheless indicated that they would not seek a waiver since their child was being instructed in English. Acknowledging the timing of testing relative to their child’s English proficiency, other parents did express concern about English testing in academic subjects because their children were at more beginning levels of English. At least one parent with a child in an alternative program expressed frustration that her child is tested in English and Spanish (i.e., on both the SAT-9 and the SABE/2), but that only the English scores count.

District and School Practices

Developing and Implementing a Plan for EL Student Instruction

While most of the discussion around instructional programs for English learners focuses on the debate between bilingual versus English immersion instruction, findings from this study suggest that model type is not necessarily the most important factor to consider. We heard from our case study sites in Year 1 (2001) that a lack of articulation within and across schools in each district of a clear and well-defined plan for ELs is an especially important concern. Without clear goals and a plan for implementation, schools and districts cannot provide ELs with the direction they need, regardless of instructional model.

The majority of district respondents (92 percent) in Year 2 (2002) reported that they did indeed have a “clearly defined plan for providing instruction to EL students,” as did 90 percent of the school respondents. What may be more important than simply having a plan, however, is adequate implementation.

Articulation and implementation of the plan

Of the districts that reported having a plan, only 37 percent reported that teachers in their district were implementing this plan as intended to a large extent. Of our school respondents, about half (53 percent) of those reporting that they had a clear plan indicated that teachers of EL students in their school were implementing it to a large extent.

Inadequate articulation of EL instructional programs within and across grades in a school, and across feeder schools within and across districts, was noted as a problem during our case study analysis in Year 1 (2001). The 2002 Year 2 survey results were in agreement with this. For example, although most districts (83 percent) reported that their EL instructional plan was at least moderately aligned across schools in their district, only 56 percent of schools reported that the plan was coordinated with feeder and/or receiver schools in their district, suggesting some disagreement about this level of articulation. While it is true that feeder and receiver schools may cross districts, one might expect to see more similar responses on these two survey questions. In addition, whether crossing districts or not, articulation is clearly vital to the provision of consistent instruction to English learners.

In the case study sites, EL program articulation was cited as particularly problematic across school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high schools). A high school EL coordinator noted that he was unaware of the experiences that ELs had at the feeder middle schools and acknowledged that this led to uncoordinated programming for these students. A middle school principal from another district admitted that the standards for being exited from ELD courses were more rigorous than the standards held by the elementary schools. Thus, students who were not designated as ELs in elementary school were tested and identified as ELs once they entered the middle school. Students and parents were understandably most often upset by the new identification.

School and district goals for EL students

One element of a clear instructional plan is common goals. When asked on the 2002 Year 2 survey about various goals for the education of EL students, nearly all districts indicated that ensuring that all students have equal academic opportunities, meet academic performance standards, and become proficient in English are important. Developing bilingualism and biliteracy in the primary language and in English were less frequently reported as important district goals for English learners. However, despite Proposition 227's efforts to de-emphasize bilingual education, a significant minority of reporting districts maintained bilingualism (37 percent) and biliteracy (43 percent) as goals.

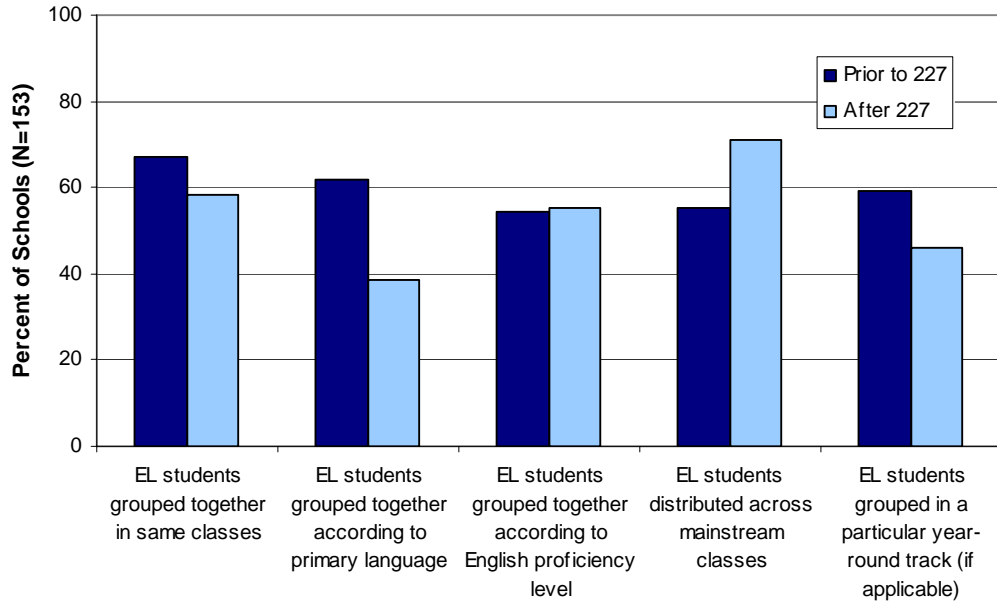
Though these may be important goals, shared by districts throughout the state, the average district did not claim to be meeting any of these goals for all of their ELs. On average, districts reported that 73 percent of EL students had the same academic opportunities as EO students, that half (50 percent) of all English learners were meeting academic performance standards, and that 63 percent of ELs eventually became proficient in English.

EL Tracking and Segregation

District and school staff from about half of the Year 1 case study districts noted that programmatic changes brought about in response to Proposition 227 have resulted in less segregation of ELs from English fluent students. Nevertheless, while segregation may have diminished somewhat, about half of the 2001 Year 1 case study districts also cited it as a continuing concern. Respondents noted that students from different language groups are often segregated both inside and outside of the classroom.

The Year 2 survey results from 2002 corroborated this observation. As shown earlier in Exhibit II-2, only 15 percent of responding districts and 17 percent of responding schools reported that Proposition 227 has helped to decrease the social segregation of students by racial, ethnic, or language groups. In addition, a slightly greater proportion (18 percent of districts and 19 percent of schools) reported that they believed this form of segregation has actually increased as a result of Proposition 227. Most, however, believe that this issue has not been influenced by the proposition.

Exhibit II-5. Percentage of Schools that Report Using Various Grouping Strategies for EL Students to a Moderate or Large Extent Before and After the Passage of Proposition 227⁷



Source: Year 2 survey, 2002

Looking at the strategies that schools reported on the Year 2 survey for grouping students (see Exhibit II-5), there appeared to be a shift toward greater integration of ELs and EOs after Proposition 227 went into effect. For example, the percentage of schools reporting that ELs were grouped together according to primary language dropped from 62 percent prior to Proposition 227 to 39 percent at the time of the Year 2 survey. In addition, 71 percent of schools reported that ELs were distributed across mainstream classes, up 15 percent from the number of schools reporting that they used this strategy prior to Proposition 227.

On the Year 2 survey, several elementary school respondents mentioned ongoing concerns with the constraints of the state’s class-size reduction provisions (a maximum of 20 students in grades K-3), which particularly affected English learners arriving at mid-year. These students “are placed wherever there is space available,” according to one school EL coordinator. “This is terribly inappropriate. There might be a student that came straight from Mexico and the only spot in the entire school is in an EO classroom, so that is where he goes.” A similar problem was also reported in schools trying to transition students meeting “reasonable fluency” criteria into mainstream classrooms. The EL coordinator at another school noted, “Although we test and assess [ELs] frequently, the real thing that determines when a student is ready to be transitioned up to another level is

⁷ Results for the option “EL students grouped in a particular year-round track” are based on 32-39 valid responses. Other respondents selected “not applicable” and were excluded from the calculation of a valid percent.

[whether] classes are full.” Depending upon the concentration of ELs at a school, explained a district EL coordinator, there may be a self-contained SEI classroom comprised exclusively of ELs, SEI and mainstream in one classroom, or even bilingual and SEI in the same classroom.

During the 2003 Year 3 site visits, we found elementary schools commonly placing ELs in programs based on their CELDT level. These levels were used to define SEI classrooms as well as transitional criteria to “mainstream” classrooms, when these were separate. Several schools mentioned rules to ensure that ELs were not entirely segregated from fluent English peers. In one district, for example, a proportional rule is applied to each SEI classroom, so that at least 25 percent of the class is composed of native English speakers. (There was some suggestion, however, that these may actually be the lowest performing EO students since it was noted that they, too, “benefit from ELD.”)

Concerns associated with the segregation and tracking of ELs into less challenging curriculum were voiced at many of the Year 1 case study districts. A mother in one district complained that her daughter was not able to take a full range of courses and was not “gaining a full education.” ELs from another district acknowledged that they felt they were tracked into the “dummy classes,” and others felt that the ELD program they were in was not preparing them for college.

Concerning tracking into post-secondary career paths, a variety of Year 2 survey respondents voiced concerns that EL high school students were neither expected nor given the proper guidance from counselors to attend college. One respondent indicated that ELs are sometimes guided into early employment to the detriment of their schooling. Similarly, an ELAC member said that the ELs in eleventh grade were “beginning to work instead of taking AP classes to get ahead.” A district-level EL coordinator echoed that counselors do not think that ELs are college-bound.

Instructional practices

During Year 1 case studies in 2001, teachers participating in focus group sessions indicated that it was difficult to determine the extent to which Proposition 227 was influencing their instructional practices because it was enacted in the midst of a very active period of education reform. However, most of them agreed that the convergence of the reform initiatives created a greater emphasis on promoting the ability of EL students to meet grade-level standards. At the same time, teachers suggested that Proposition 227 did influence their practice by restricting their use of primary language and by enforcing strict timelines for students to gain English proficiency. The following section includes Year 2 (2002) teacher survey and stakeholder responses exploring issues related to the quality of instruction, teacher preparation, and instructional resources.

Quality and Appropriateness of Instructional Approaches

The ELD standards, which were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1999, serve as a resource available to teachers around the state for use in instructional planning for ELs. Thus, the extent to which teachers are familiar with and using state-developed

ELD standards to plan and deliver instruction to ELs is of considerable interest. Of the teachers surveyed in Year 2 (2002), most (73 percent) indicated that they used the ELD standards to guide their day-to-day instructional practice to a moderate or large extent, while only 16 percent reported that they did not use them at all. Since it has been three years since our survey was administered, it is likely that the ELD standards have been even more widely utilized over time.

Lower expectations

During the 2001 Year 1 site visits, educators often spoke of the importance of providing students with the necessary academic and social supports to help them meet high academic standards. However, there were indications that many teachers had low expectations of their EL students, and that EL curriculum often lacked the degree of rigor necessary for long-term student success.

One question on the survey asked which strategies teachers used to develop EL students' English skills and to compare the strategies used with EL and EO students. Seventy-five percent of responding teachers reported using the same textbooks and curriculum for EL and EO students. Only 66 percent, though, reported covering content in the same depth, and fewer than half indicated that they use supplementary materials to a large extent for their English learners.

In addition, the Year 2 survey in 2002 provided strong evidence that teachers' expectations are lower for ELs. Nearly one-third of all teachers responding in Year 2 (32 percent) reported that many of their English learners were too far behind academically to catch up with their peers. Similarly, a significant minority of responding teachers (30 percent) indicated that EL students should be graded more easily since they must confront the dual challenge of learning the language in addition to the content. These findings corroborate the classroom observations from the Year 1 site visits: on multiple occasions it was noted that teachers made disparaging comments to ELs about their motivation and ability levels. For example, during a classroom observation for this study, a teacher told a predominantly EL classroom, "Why should I assign you homework? You won't do it anyway." In another instance, a teacher said, "I won't tell you to read the chapter, because we all know what will happen."

Rigor of curriculum and access to it

In general, teachers responding to the 2002 Year 2 survey reported using instructional practices considered effective for addressing the needs of English learners. Notably, however, less than half (48 percent) reported that they were able to cover as much material with ELs as with EOs, underlining concerns that EL curriculum is watered down and that teacher expectations for ELs are low.

Our 2001 Year 1 site visit interviews also suggested that in some cases there is, indeed, a lack of rigor in the curriculum for English learners. A group of high school teachers said they use English textbooks written at the fourth-grade level to teach their students. Others were of the opinion that, in bilingual programs, students have better access to grade-level appropriate materials. A district EL coordinator said that in some

schools, “English learners get the last of the last.” He reported being “shocked” by what he sees at some of the schools where he finds “watered-down programs.” He explained that at the secondary level, “Some schools don’t think ELs are college track.” Some argue that students are not getting the preparation they need to continue into college because advanced courses are not included in the ELD track. In addition, some students expressed anxiety about being in the ELD track because they felt they were falling too far behind in college preparation.

Differentiation of instruction to the unique learning needs of ELs

Interviewees in the 2001 Year 1 case study site visits viewed primary language literacy as a strong predictor of EL success in English-language classrooms. One district EL coordinator stated that an SEI program is most effective for students at an intermediate level of fluency, but that a traditional bilingual program provides significantly more meaningful instruction at lower levels of proficiency. This sentiment was reiterated by an EL coordinator who said, “We’ll get to a plateau [where] some will make it and some won’t because they don’t have the primary language skills.”

Three-quarters (75 percent) of the teacher survey respondents also indicated that they differentiate instruction on the basis on their English learners’ level of English proficiency to a moderate to large extent. However, almost half of the teachers participating in our survey reported that they differentiate instruction for ELs based on their prior formal schooling only to a small extent (26 percent) or not at all (22 percent).

Teacher Preparation and Instructional Resources

The quality and appropriateness of instruction is dependent on the degree to which teachers have been adequately prepared through effective professional development and the degree to which they have access to the necessary instructional materials and support.

Teacher preparation and professional development

In the 2001 Year 1 case study interviews, teachers overwhelmingly described limited professional development opportunities for programs associated with Proposition 227. Three out of eight case study districts provided some training for instructing ELs, but little or no training specific to Proposition 227. Teachers specifically cited a need for training on SDAIE strategies and methodologies and techniques for sheltered classes.

From the Year 1 case studies, we also found that in many instances, teachers do not participate in continuing professional development, even when they are aware of training opportunities such as in-service sessions and workshops in their district. A teacher commented, “It’s not so much that they need to have more professional development opportunities, but rather [it’s] finding ways of getting more teachers to participate in them... Some teachers are not receptive to this.”

In contrast to these findings, many teachers who responded to the Year 2 teacher survey in 2002 indicated that they had received training on a wide range of relevant

topics during the past two years. For instance, 77 percent reported that they had been trained on specific instructional strategies to help ELs advance their English proficiency during the last two years. 57 percent reported receiving training on specific instructional strategies for integrating ELD with language arts.

Also contrasting the findings of the Year 1 case studies, our Year 2 surveys indicated high levels of teacher satisfaction regarding the adequacy of the training they have received related to educating English learners. For example, the majority of teacher survey respondents (89 percent) reported that they have adequate knowledge about how second language acquisition occurs. A smaller, but still relatively high proportion of responding teachers (64 percent) also indicated that they have received adequate training on the use of ELD standards.

Comments from stakeholder interviews also supported Year 1 findings, emphasizing a continuing need for adequate teacher training. Many recognized a lack of training as a primary challenge to the implementation of Proposition 227. Patricia Gándara, associate director of the University of California Language Minority Research Institute Education Policy Center, stated, “The primary challenge is that these children are more likely than any other kids in any category in the state to be with a teacher who has no preparation whatsoever, either to be teaching at all or to be teaching them specifically.” See Chapter 1 for additional analysis of disparity in allocation of qualified teachers across the state.

Adequacy of resources

While teachers indicated relatively high levels of satisfaction with the training they received, they were far less enthusiastic about the adequacy of available instructional resources. For example, only one-third of teacher survey respondents (33 percent) reported that they have adequate time to effectively address the needs of English learners. Also, just under half of the teacher survey respondents indicated inadequacies in other areas: 1) assessments that are appropriate for ELs and that provide timely and useful information on their progress, 2) support from other personnel to address their needs, and 3) support services for ELs. Somewhat surprisingly, however, almost two-thirds (65 percent) of the responding teachers indicated that they currently have access to adequate curriculum and instructional materials to address the needs of English learners.

English Language Acquisition Program (ELAP)

ELAP, established in July of 1999 to provide funds to districts to be spent on English learner instruction, is an important focus of this study. Rather than a program or specific type of intervention, ELAP is a funding source that can be used to support a number of possible interventions. By the fourth year of the program, 98 percent of the state’s ELs were in districts receiving ELAP funds. The program distributed between \$51.8 and \$53.8 million to districts in each of its first four years. Districts’ uses of ELAP funds varied widely, with the most common being for English language development instructional programs.

ELAP was the major focus of this study in Year 4 (2004). One significant research activity designed to inform this analysis was a survey sent to all districts that had received ELAP funds. Another major activity was the analysis of state data in regard to ELAP. We attempted to assess which districts received how much ELAP funds, and whether there appeared to be any relationship between receiving funds and student achievement. Regression analyses were used to address this last question. These analyses suggested a positive and statistically significant relationship between ELAP and academic performance.⁸ The findings, although modest, were sufficiently compelling that we recommended program continuation, along with ongoing monitoring and evaluation. The Year 4 report also contained suggestions for enhancing program implementation to allow better tracking of the extent, and ways, in which the program is impacting the education received by the state's EL population.

⁸ A detailed discussion of the ELAP research and findings can be found in the Year 4 English Language Acquisition Program Evaluation Report from this study, available online at http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx

Chapter III. Analyzing EL Achievement

Highlights

- As a result of federal and state accountability measures, the percentage of English learners (ELs) participating in statewide assessments has increased substantially since the passage of Proposition 227, while the English only (EO) test-taking population has remained fairly constant. The additional EL students participating in statewide testing are likely to be those with the lowest English proficiency (and who would have the greatest difficulty displaying the skills being assessed using English). In spite of this, ELs as a group have improved in their academic performance since the proposition passed.
- Also during a period of substantially increased EL test participation, while there has been a slight decrease in the performance gap between ELs and EOs, it has remained virtually constant in most subject areas for most grades. When former ELs (RFEPs) are included in the cohort of ELs, performance of the combined cohort increases, but this pattern in the performance gap remains.
- California English Language Development Test (CELDT) scores show substantial gains in English proficiency for ELs from 2002 to 2004. However, several factors (e.g., changes in the distribution of ELs) make this finding subject to question.
- Limitations in statewide data make it impossible to definitively resolve the long-standing debate underlying Proposition 227 as to whether one instructional model (i.e., bilingual versus immersion) is more efficacious for California's ELs than another.
- Several analyses of differences in EL performance by instructional model were conducted using data available from the state and from the Los Angeles Unified School District. Across all analyses, little to no evidence of differences in EL performance by model of instruction was found.
- Using survival analysis, we estimate the current probability of an EL being redesignated to fluent English proficient status after 10 years in California to be less than 40 percent.

Introduction

This chapter presents analyses of the academic achievement and English proficiency of English learners (ELs) and former English learners (RFEPs) in comparison to the academic performance of English only students (EOs) in California. Our analyses are based on extant statewide student-level data from 1997-98 to 2003-04, as well as student-level linked data gathered in the Los Angeles Unified School District from 1997-98 to 2002-03. This chapter responds to the following mandated research questions:

- How have the implementation of Proposition 227 and ELAP provisions affected the academic achievement of EL students, (as measured by STAR results, redesignation rates, drop-out rates, high school graduation exam passing rates, and high school graduation rates)?
- Which programs and services being provided to English learners are most effective and least effective in ensuring equal access to the core academic curriculum, the achievement of state content and performance standards, and rapid acquisition of English?

As detailed in earlier chapters, Proposition 227 was implemented in conjunction with a number of other national and statewide reform efforts that have also influenced teaching practices for California's ELs during this time period. While we can observe trends in EL achievement pre- and post-Proposition 227, it is not possible to clearly attribute any of the observed changes solely to this Proposition given the complex, interacting effects of other policies and programs that occurred during the same period.

In addressing the broad research questions listed above, this chapter focuses on several specific questions regarding EL academic achievement since the passage of Proposition 227:

- Has the academic achievement of ELs improved?
- Has the English proficiency of ELs improved?
- How has the learning gap between EOs and ELs changed?
- How do alternative models of instruction (e.g., bilingual versus immersion) compare in regard to EL academic achievement?
- How long does it take to get redesignated as fluent English proficient in California?
- How do ELs fare in the context of other outcome measures (e.g., high school completion indicators)?

This chapter examines performance gains for the EL, EO, and RFEP subgroups before and after the passage of Proposition 227, including initial and annual California English Language Development Test (CELDT) results to measure gains in English

language proficiency. It also measures performance gaps between EO, EL, RFEP, and EL/RFEPs pre- and post-Proposition 227. It considers EL achievement in the context of school instructional programs, including analysis of performance patterns within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The chapter examines trends in the redesignation of ELs to RFEPs. The chapter also summarizes EL achievement in the context of statewide high school completion indicators.

We begin by reviewing a number of key analytic decisions underlying the design of our analyses and examining important considerations for interpreting the results. We then address the research questions using several methodological approaches.

Analysis Strategy

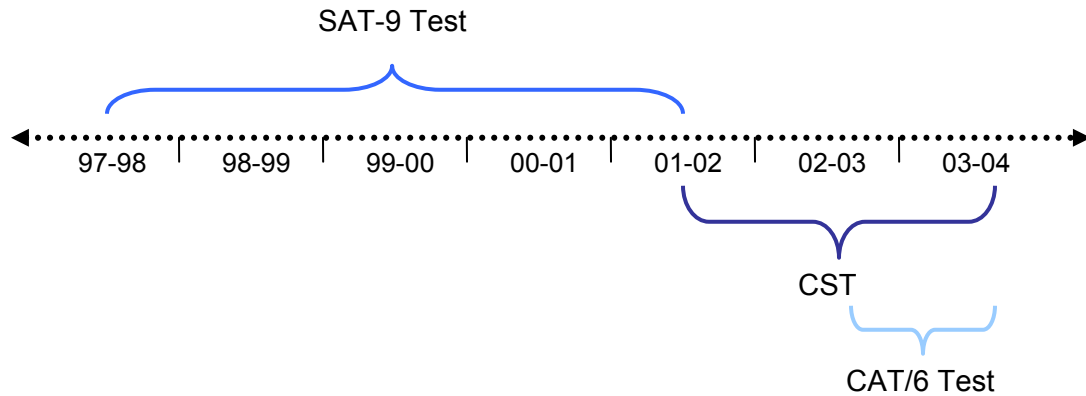
The analysis of academic achievement pre- and post-Proposition 227 was complicated by changes in the statewide test used to assess students in California; an increase in EL participation in statewide assessments between 1998 and 2004; and changes in the composition of the RFEP student population possibly related to new redesignation guidelines introduced by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 2002, in conjunction with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability provisions.

Change in the STAR Norm-Referenced Test

California reports data on student and school demographics, instructional services, and student achievement data. The Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR)¹ program contains statewide student-level demographic and achievement test data for second through eleventh grade students. A major obstacle for the analyses presented in this report was created when the norm-referenced test used for the STAR changed from the Stanford Achievement Test Ninth Edition (SAT-9) to the California Achievement Test Sixth Edition (CAT/6) in 2003. The latter was developed by another publisher and differs from the SAT-9 in terms of test format, content emphasis, difficulty level, and number of items. Additionally, the California Standards Test (CST) was introduced as a stand-alone, standards-based assessment in 2002. These changes substantially complicated attempts to gauge student progress in California over this time period. Exhibit III-1 displays the achievement tests included in the STAR: SAT-9 scores for 1997-98 to 2001-02, CST scores for 2001-02 to 2003-04, and CAT/6 scores for 2002-03 to 2003-04.

¹ The STAR program was introduced following the passage of SB 376, and began during the 1997-98 school year .

Exhibit III-1. Timeline for Statewide Assessments, 1997-98 to 2003-04



To fully address the study’s research questions, it is important to measure student academic progress pre- and post-Proposition 227. However, since no single test spans the entire 1997-98 through 2003-04 period, we cannot apply the methodology of using mean scale scores² to analyze student achievement and performance gaps over time that was used in prior analyses for this study.³ To overcome these difficulties, it was necessary to express the difference between the observed academic performance of subgroups of students with a “metric-free” measure (Ho & Haertel, 2005).

Participation in Large Scale Assessments over Time

The California Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999, introduced following passage of SB1X, and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 both emphasize accountability for all students enrolled in California's public schools. The most visible manifestation of this emphasis is the increased importance given to standardized tests and widespread reporting of test results. A significant component of PSAA and NCLB is the requirement that all students in grades 2-11 participate in standardized tests, including students with disabilities and English learners, and that the performance of these subgroups be separately reported. In order to meet the “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) requirements of NCLB, schools and districts must demonstrate that at least 95 percent of students in each identified subgroup (one of which is ELs), as well as 95 percent of all enrolled students, participated in a state’s annual assessment of achievement.⁴

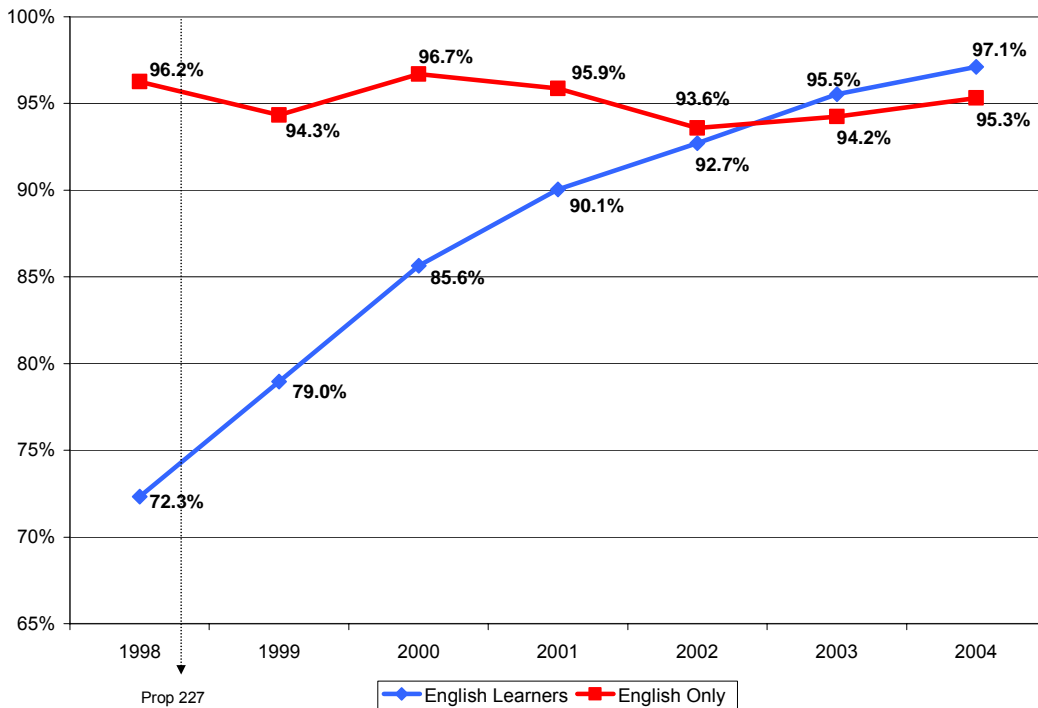
² Mean scale scores by grade, subject, and English language fluency are available in the Appendix B (Exhibit 3 to 26) for the SAT-9, CAT/6, and CST.

³ While the California Department of Education issued a linking study proposing a methodology to link the SAT-9 and the CAT/6 percentile ranks (NPRs) at the school and district level, the study does not allow linking scaled scores for subpopulations of students. See California Department of Education (2003), Stanford 9 – CAT/6 Linking Study at http://www.startest.org/pdfs/SAT9-CAT6_linkstudy1.pdf

⁴ EL students are required to participate in the English language proficiency and mathematics assessments (with appropriate accommodations). In calculating AYP, states may—but are not necessarily required to—include results from reading/language arts and mathematics state assessments for EL students in their first year of enrollment. Also, high schools have a lower inclusion requirement—90 percent of their enrolled students. Retrieved November 1, 2005, from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/apiaypelements04.asp>

Exhibit III-2 displays EL participation rates (the number of ELs tested in English language arts divided by the total population of ELs for each grade level) for the SAT-9 from 1997-98 to 2001-02, and for the CAT/6 for 2002-03 and 2003-04.⁵ EL participation rates increased from about 72 percent in 1997-98 to 97 percent in 2003-04. In contrast, EO participation rates have been virtually constant over time, with a participation rate of 96 percent in 1997-98 and 95 percent in 2003-04. These differences in participation rates are vital to understanding the relative performance of ELs and EOs over this time period because of the likelihood that the EL students excluded in the earlier years are those with the lowest English proficiency (and who would have the greatest difficulty displaying the skills being assessed).

Exhibit III-2. Participation in SAT-9/CAT/6 English Language Arts



Source: Language Census and STAR data, 1997-98 through 2003-04

Change in the Composition of the RFEP Population

The State Board of Education (SBE) adopted new redesignation guidelines in two phases from fall 2001 to fall 2002. These new guidelines influenced how districts reclassified students from “EL” to “RFEP” (fluent English proficient) status. First, in October 2001, the SBE established a specific performance standard in English-language

⁵ Participation rates were also calculated using CST test results for the school years 2001-02 through 2003-04, but they differed little from the trends reported using SAT-9 or CAT/6.

proficiency using CELDT. Prior to this, districts chose a commercial language proficiency assessment from a state-approved list, and followed the guidelines for determining English proficiency set by the test publisher. Regarding academic achievement criteria, in September 2002, the SBE established a range of performance in basic English language arts skills on CST-ELA which it recommended (but did not require) districts to use in determining whether ELs were ready to be reclassified.⁶ Prior to this, at the state's recommendation, districts set their own academic achievement criteria using norm-referenced tests (NRTs) such as CAT/5 and SAT-9, typically setting performance standards at the 36th percentile on one or more subtests (e.g., reading, language arts, and math), as well as other local measures.

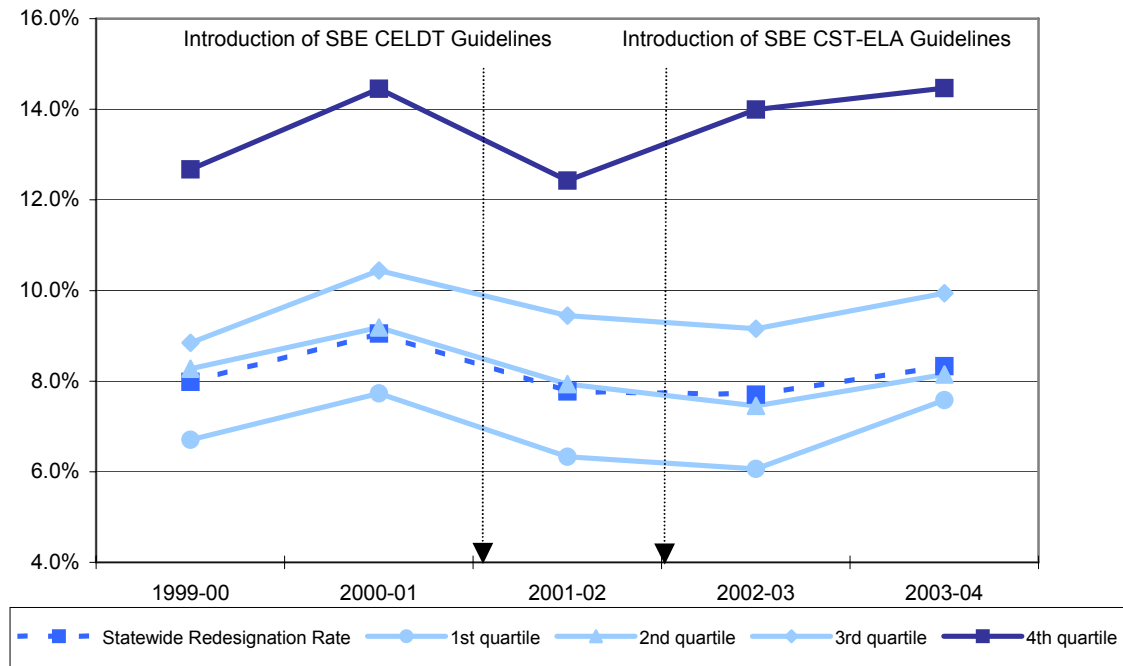
As shown in Exhibit I-11 in Chapter 1, between 2000-01 and 2003-04, the statewide redesignation rate decreased slightly (from 9 percent in 2000-01 to 8.3 percent in 2003-04). However, when we look at redesignation rates broken out by school performance (Exhibit III-3),⁷ we observe a wide variation across schools, as well as over time. High-performing schools show, on average, a higher redesignation rate (above 12 percent for the time period under analysis). Low-performing schools are about one percentage point below the statewide average.

An interesting phenomenon is the increase in the average redesignation rate in high-performing schools in 2002-03 while low-performing schools show an average decrease in rate. This divergence in the direction of the redesignation rates in high- versus low-performing schools may be due to the introduction of the CST-ELA redesignation performance standard, which could have effected a change in the *composition* of the redesignated student population, and therefore in the population remaining EL. While RFEP students in high-performing schools made up 17.7 percent of the total RFEP population in 2002, they constituted 20.5 percent of the total RFEP population in 2003. During the same time period, percentages for lower performing schools stayed the same or fell. This change in the composition of the RFEP students provides important contextual information for analyzing EL academic performance during the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years. As we show in the following sections, RFEPs made considerable test score gains, and outperform EOs during this time period.

⁶ District variance from SBE-recommended guidelines for performance standards in ELD and academic achievement is discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.

⁷ Schools were categorized in quartiles according to their CST performance in 2003-04.

Exhibit III-3. EL Redesignation Rates by Schoolwide EL Academic Performance, 1999-2004



Source: Language Census and STAR, 1999-00 through 2003-04

Has Academic Achievement Improved?

All subgroups demonstrated improvement in academic achievement over the period from 1997-98 to 2003-04, with the exception of EOs in grades 3 and 11 for the period from 2002 through 2004. EL performance gains exceed EO gains for all grades except 9 to 11 as measured by the SAT-9, and grades 5 and 6 on the CST. Particularly notable are the academic gains of RFEPs, which are higher than EOs’ gains across all grades for the period from 2002 to 2004. However, the academic improvements across all three subgroups are relatively small in size.

Changes in participation levels on the large scale assessments discussed in the previous section (Exhibit III-2) should be taken into account when considering the relative academic achievement improvements. As shown, EO participation rates have been constant over time, whereas EL participation rates have increased by about 25 percent from 1997 to 2004. We would expect the estimated achievement performance of the former excluded EL students to be lower than the average achievement of non-excluded EL students (Pérez, Harr, McLaughlin, & Blankenship, 2005).⁸ In light of this

⁸ The authors estimated the achievement performance of the former excluded ELs using NAEP scores. They demonstrated that the estimated achievement of the excluded ELs is lower than the average achievement of non-excluded EL students.

disproportionate increase in the ELs tested, a small gain for the EL subgroup further emphasizes progress made by these students over this time period.

Methodology

Academic achievement improvement was calculated using the SAT-9 (1997-98 through 2001-02) and CST (2001-02 and 2003-04) from before Proposition 227 through the present.⁹ To overcome the challenge of having different tests with different scales we used a “metric-free” measure (Ed Haertel, personal communication, May 12, 2005) to gauge gains over time. This procedure involved estimating the difference between each student-level scale score in the final year of each test for each grade level (the 2002 scale score for the SAT-9 and 2004 scale scores for the CST) and the subgroup average scale score (EL, EO, and RFEP overall performance) for the initial year of each test for each grade level (1998 for the SAT-9 and 2002 for the CST).¹⁰ This difference was then divided by the standard deviation for the pool of all students in California in 1998. This procedure allows us to measure annual performance gain in standard deviations, which can then be compared across grades, years, and language fluency subgroups.¹¹

Annual Academic Achievement Gain, 1997-98 through 2001-02

Exhibit III-4 shows the average annual gain for the period from 1997-98 through 2001-02 measured by SAT-9 English language arts scores, by grade level and language fluency subgroup. Annual gains were calculated for each grade level and subgroup, dividing the total academic achievement gain by the number of years the SAT-9 was in place.

As seen in this exhibit, all subgroups demonstrate performance gains over this period. However, all of these gains have low “effect sizes.” A change’s effect size is a measure of its significance. In analyses that include the entire population, the concept of effect size is useful because all results are statistically significant by definition. Therefore, effect size provides a measure of importance that statistical significance cannot. The effect size is measured in standard deviations: .25 standard deviations or lower indicates a small effect size, between .25 and .40 is a medium effect size, and .40 standard deviations or above is a large effect size. The educational research literature considers medium or large effect sizes “educationally significant,” indicating that meaningful numbers of students are affected (e.g., see Cohen, 1969, pp. 278-279).

ELs show the largest annual gain in academic achievement for grades 2 through 4, and maintain this advantage over EOs until grade 7. Also noteworthy is that RFEPs equal or outpace EOs at every level except in grades 3 and 4. Academic improvement across all three subgroups is highest in elementary school grades (notably grade 3) and lowest in the high school grades. This general pattern of highest EL gain in lower grades and

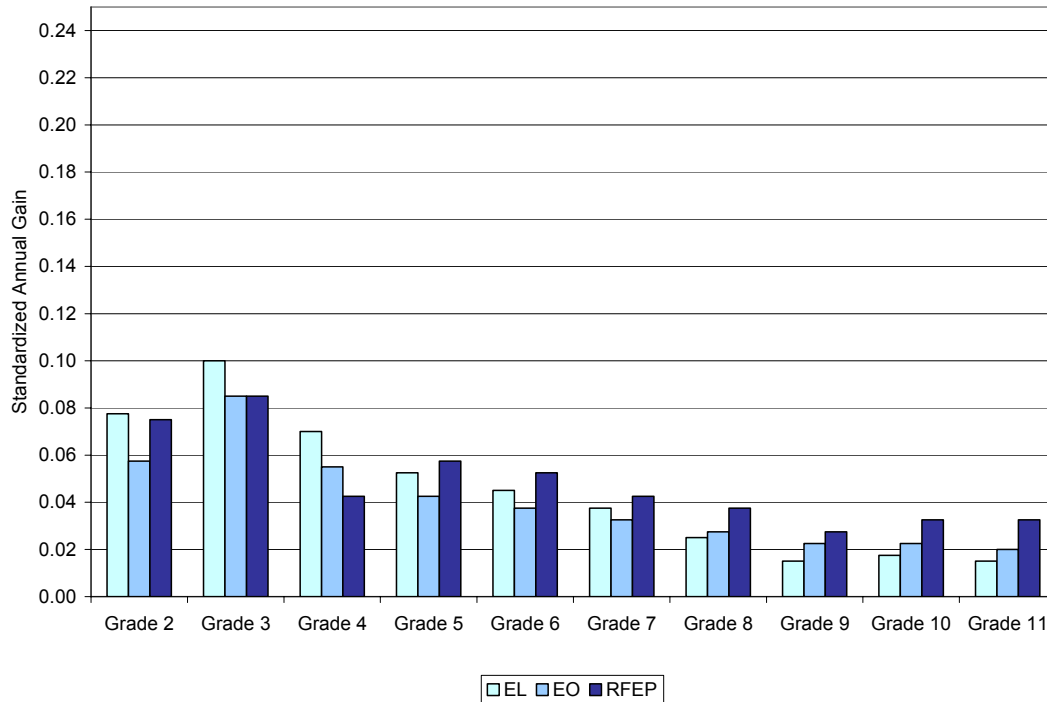
⁹ The CAT/6 was not used to measure the academic achievement improvement given that only two years of data are available (i.e., 2002-03 and 2003-04).

¹⁰ We did not use student-level scores for the initial year because there was no student-linked data that would allow us to link student performance over time.

¹¹ See Methodological Note 1 in the Appendix B for a complete description of the estimation procedure used.

higher RFEP gain across grades is also observed in SAT-9 reading and math (see Appendix B, Exhibit 27).

Exhibit III-4. Annual Academic Achievement Gain, Measured by SAT-9 English Language Arts, Grades 2-11 (1998-02)



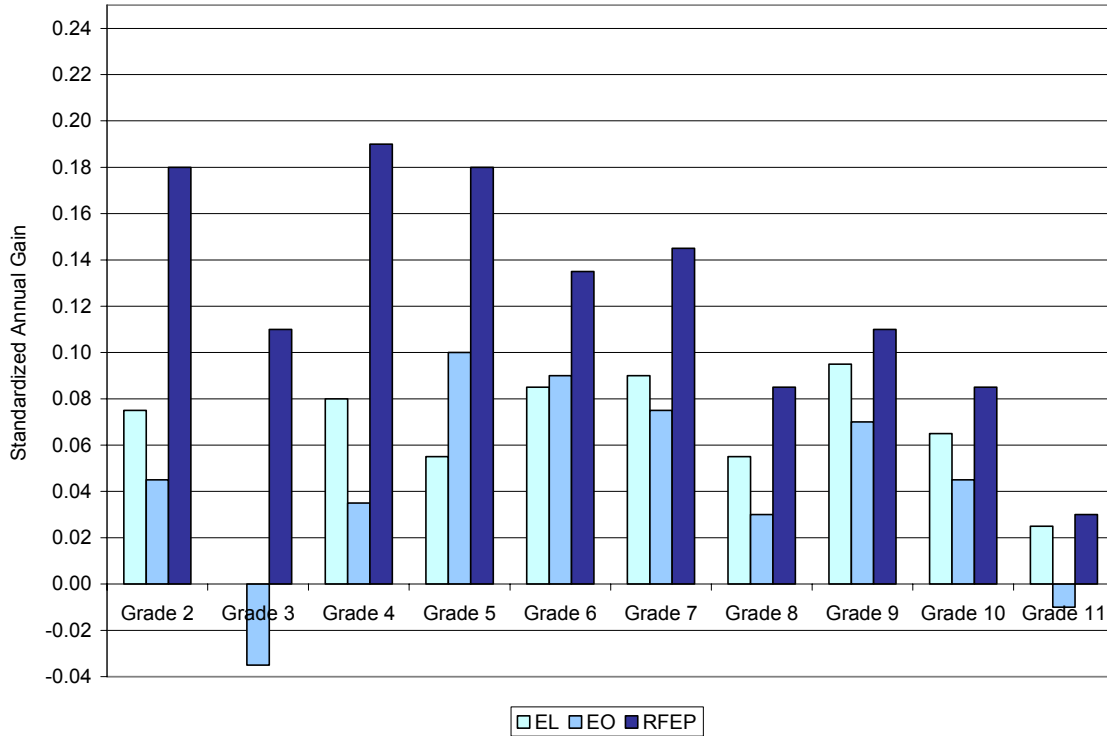
Source: STAR, 1997-98 and 2001-02

Annual Academic Achievement Gain, 2001-02 through 2003-04

Exhibit III-5 shows the average annual gain in English language arts for the CST by grade level for ELs, EOs, and RFEPs. All subgroups demonstrate higher annual CST gains in the earlier grades—a pattern similar to that seen for the SAT-9. EL performance gains exceed EOs for all grades except 5 and 6. EO academic achievement actually drops over this time period in grades 3 and 11, which is quite different from the pattern observed for the period from 1997-98 through 2001-02 using the SAT-9. Particularly notable are the academic gains for RFEPs, which are higher than EOs’ gains across all grades for this period. This may reflect the change in the *composition* of the RFEP population discussed in the Analysis Strategy section, which noted that since the adoption of the SBE redesignation guidelines, students reaching the RFEP status were likely to have met more rigorous English language proficiency requirements as measured by CELDT, and were also more likely to have met higher academic achievement criteria as measured by CST-ELA than the redesignated students before them.

As noted above and discussed in Chapter V, NCLB accountability provisions—which specifically measure the adequate yearly progress of the EL subgroup—may also have caused local districts to set higher academic achievement performance standards for redesignating students. Also, NCLB’s emphasis on accountability for the EL subgroup may have contributed to the increased gains in the CST in comparison to the SAT-9.

Exhibit III-5. Annual Academic Achievement Gain, Measured by CST English Language Arts, Grades 2-11 (2002-04)¹²



Source: STAR, 2001-02 and 2003-04

¹² The exhibit does not show a bar for ELs in Grade 3 because they had zero gain during this time period.

Has English Proficiency of ELs Improved?

The percentages of EL students performing at the early advanced and advanced proficiency levels on the annual CELDT have increased since 2001-02. However, half of the EL student population is still performing below the early advanced level. Several considerations that need to be kept in mind when analyzing improvement in English proficiency, such as the year-to-year change in the CELDT test, and the composition of the population taking it, are discussed below.

Background

The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) is an English language proficiency measure aligned with the State Board of Education's English Language Development standards. This test evaluates linguistic-minority students' initial English proficiency level and, if identified as EL, their subsequent annual progress across four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The test results are divided into five levels (beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced).¹³ This test serves as an English language proficiency test for all K-12 EL students and as the assessment used to measure Title III's annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs).¹⁴

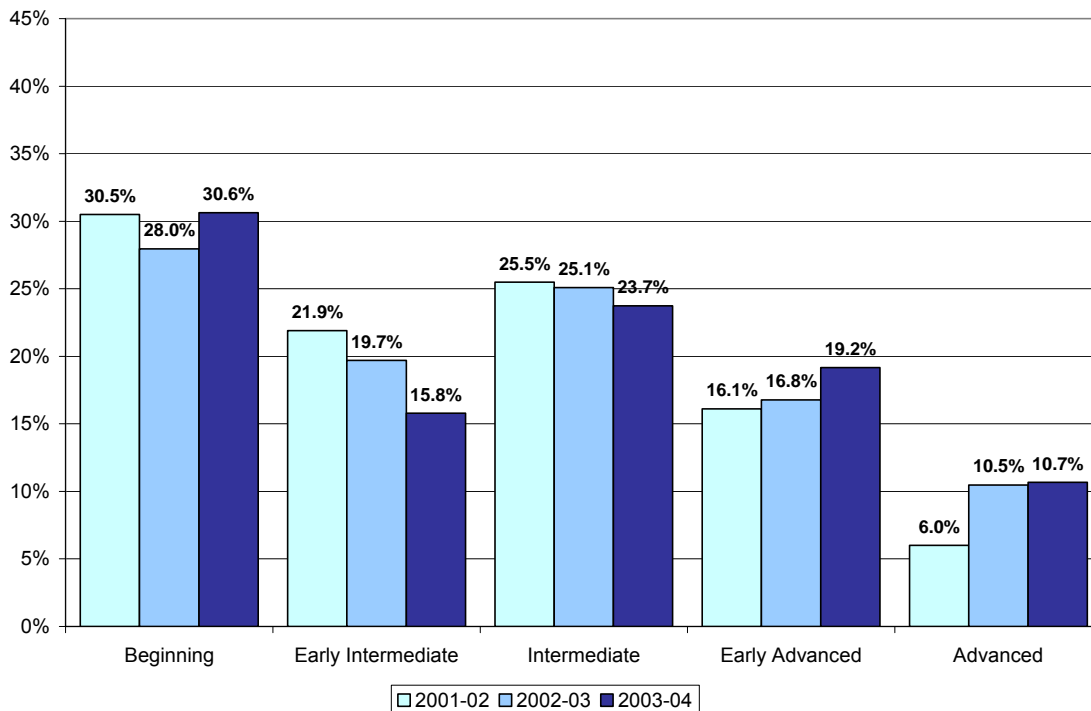
Initial CELDT

California school districts administer the CELDT to all incoming students reporting a home language other than or in addition to English within 30 days of enrollment in a California public school. This is referred to as the Initial CELDT, and it is administered throughout the year as students new to California are enrolled. These results are used to classify students as English learner or initial fluent English proficient (IFEP). Below, Exhibit III-6 displays the results of the Initial CELDT in terms of the percentage of all test-takers at each proficiency level from 2001-02 to 2003-04.

¹³ Further information about the ELD standards established by the State Board of Education in 1999 and CELDT proficiency levels is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/documents/eldgrd.pdf>

¹⁴ The CELDT was instituted through Assembly Bill 748 (Escutia, Chapter 636/1997). Senate Bill 638 (Alpert, Chapter 678/1999) further expanded the use of CELDT as an accountability provision. CELDT requirements are specified in Education Code sections 313, 60810, and 60812. For further information about the CELDT, as provided to school districts for the 2004-05 academic year, please refer to <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/documents/section204.pdf>. Information about California's Title III AMAOs may be found at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/t3/documents/04-05amao.doc>

Exhibit III-6. Percentage of Students at Different Proficiency Levels on Initial CELDT, All Grades Combined (K-12), 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04



Source: Initial CELDT, 2001-02 through 2003-04

As can be observed in Exhibit III-6, the percentage of students scoring at early intermediate level has decreased over time, from almost 22 percent of students in 2001-02 to about 16 percent in 2003-04. Over the same time period, the percentage of students scoring at the advanced level has almost doubled (from 6 percent in 2001-02 to almost 11 percent in 2003-04). Given that the initial CELDT is administered only to incoming students (i.e., the same student would not take the initial test twice), changes in the distribution of the scores may reflect changes in the test-taking population. Unfortunately, the CELDT does not collect demographic information such as parent education or free and reduced price lunch eligibility, which limits our ability to explore changes in this population over time (Legislative Analyst’s Office, 2004).

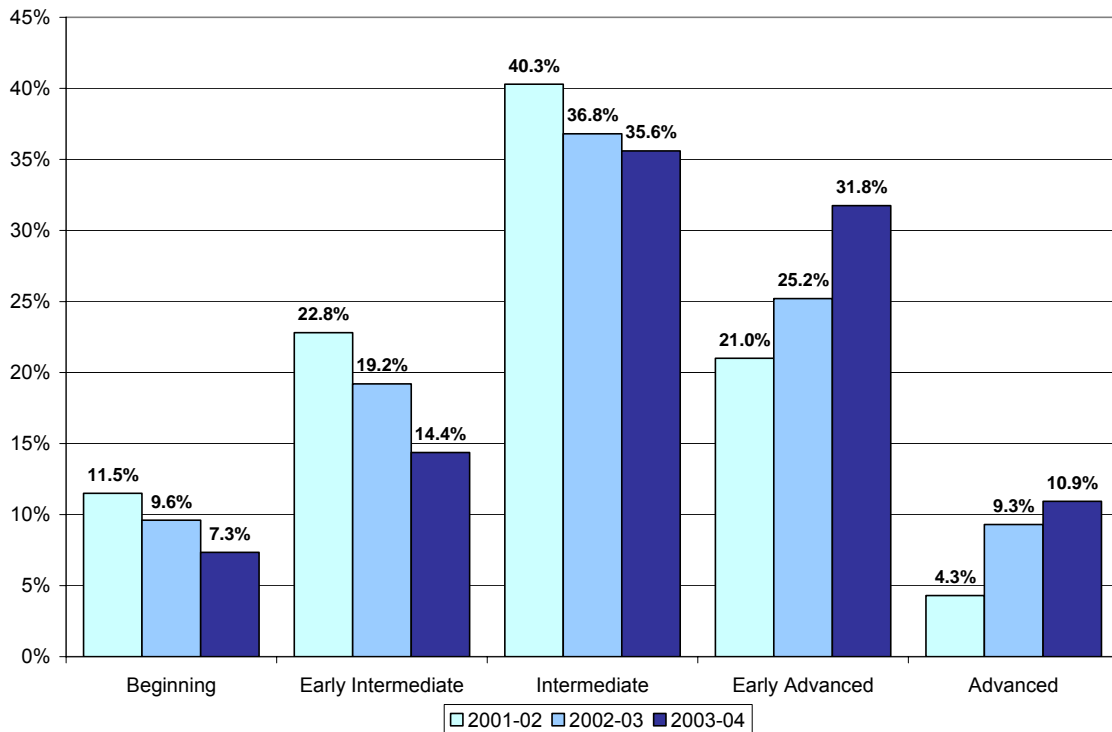
Due to administrative difficulties encountered during the first year of the CELDT administration, CDE has cautioned about using the 2001-02 year as a baseline for comparison. Lack of familiarity with the test and training in its first administration may have created irregularities that affected the 2001-02 test results. If we compare only 2002-03 to 2003-04 data, instead, there do not seem to be important differences in the distribution of scores. One reason could be improved district administrative capacity in obtaining data about ELs that move from one district to another, which helps to ensure that the appropriate version of the test (initial or annual) is administered to students. Looking at the numbers of students taking the initial test, we see that the total number of

takers has fallen over time, from 511,317 students in 2001-02 to 432,664 students in 2003-04. Additional years of data are needed to better understand possible trends in the initial English language fluency of ELs over time.

Annual CELDT

ELs take the CELDT every year until they are redesignated.¹⁵ The Annual CELDT test is given between July 1 and October 31 of each year. Exhibit III-7 displays the results of the annual CELDT by proficiency level for ELs in 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04.

Exhibit III-7. Percentage of Students at Different Proficiency Levels on Annual CELDT, All Grades Combined (K-12), 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04



Source: Annual CELDT, 2001-02 through 2003-04

Comparing proficiency levels across years, we see that the percentages of students performing at the early advanced level or above on the annual CELDT have increased

¹⁵ State law requires the use of CELDT results as part of the information used to determine whether a student should be reclassified as fluent.

substantially since 2001-02.¹⁶ However, half of the population of EL students is still performing below the early advanced level.

However, when analyzing the CELDT results it is important to keep in mind what proficiency in English, as measured by this test, really means for EL students. Based on the SBE guidelines for redesignation, proficiency in the CELDT alone is not sufficient for an EL to be redesignated. SBE redesignation guidelines also recommend a cut score range of low-basic to mid-basic on the CST-ELA test as a measure of students' basic English language arts skills. Given this, a group of ELs may reach English language proficiency but not satisfy the academic achievement requirement.¹⁷ This group of ELs re-takes the CELDT year after year until redesignated fluent English proficient (RFEP).

Although, as shown in the introductory chapter, redesignation rates have gradually increased statewide across all schools, they have decreased for low-performing schools in the state, as shown in the Analysis Strategy section at the beginning of this chapter. The decreased redesignation rates may be generating a bottleneck in the redesignation of students in those schools. These EL students may be reaching proficiency in English, increasing over time the percentage of students in these schools at the early advanced or advanced levels on the CELDT. In other words, part of the changes in the distribution of CELDT scores may just be an artifact of students not becoming RFEPs, because they have not yet attained academic achievement criteria. It is worth mentioning that about 27 percent of EOs in the state do not meet the recommended minimum academic achievement criterion needed to "become RFEPs" (i.e., they perform below basic in the CST-ELA). Results from another study (Gershberg, Danenberg, & Sánchez, 2004) show a number of principals reporting that many of their native English speakers would not be able to meet the English-language proficiency criterion for redesignation if they took the CELDT.

In addition to this, other important factors should be considered when assessing how quickly ELs are attaining proficiency in English. As mentioned by Rumberger and Gándara (2005), the past three years have seen an increase in the number of older students taking the test, who tend to score higher. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of first grade ELs taking the CELDT declined by 3 percent, while the number of twelfth grade ELs increased by 22 percent. Moreover, the largest CELDT test grade span is 9-12. Since students tend to have better results under repeated testing, all of these factors might be affecting CELDT results.

¹⁶ The columns showing the percentage of ELs combined the scores for all four skill areas covered on the CELDT (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) into one overall proficiency level for all grades tested (K-12).

¹⁷ Since CELDT data are not linked to STAR data, we cannot examine the academic achievement of ELs who have reached proficiency in English. Notwithstanding, Rumberger and Gándara (2005) point out that while 46 percent of ELs attained English-language proficiency on CELDT (scoring at the early-advanced or advanced levels in the annual CELDT 2004), only 10 percent of ELs attained the proficient performance level in English language arts as measured by CST-ELA in 2004. The percentage of students proficient in English reported by Rumberger and Gándara differs from ours in that they only include grades 3 through 12 in their analysis of CELDT results.

How Has the Learning Gap between EOs and ELs Changed?

In this analysis we find that the learning gap between EOs and ELs has changed very little over the past 7 years. Because ELs who reach high levels of English language proficiency and academic achievement are redesignated as fluent English proficient (RFEP), we would not expect this gap to close. However, we consider it useful to examine the gap between EL and EO performance as a basis for comparing the state's progress with ELs in relation to all other students. Because there has been an increase in the percentage of ELs participating in statewide testing in the past few years, the gap between EOs and ELs might even be expected to increase. However, between 1998 and 2004, there is evidence of a slight decrease, as described in the following section.

Methodology

This section analyzes the academic performance gaps between EO, EL, and RFEP students (and the EL/RFEP combined subgroup). The STAR data do not allow tracking of individual EL student performance over time, which creates a challenge because ELs attaining required levels of English language and academic proficiency become reclassified (RFEPs). Combining ELs and RFEP students into one group avoids the bias and distortion caused by “skimming” the best-performing ELs out of the EL category when they are redesignated as RFEPs. In addition to the EL/RFEP combined subgroup, we are reporting ELs and RFEPs separately. Our goal in presenting these data in two ways is to convey progress made by all students “ever EL” (including those former ELs who have been reclassified) and to highlight the performance of RFEPs as a subgroup.

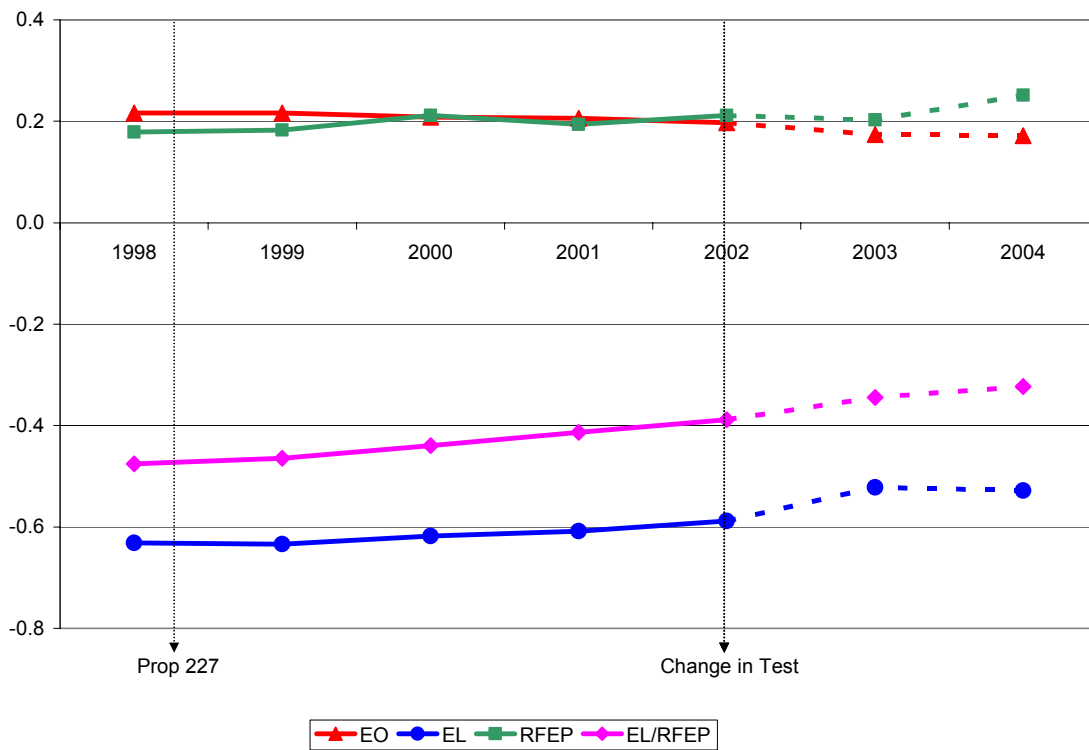
To explore how the learning gap between the different subgroups of students (i.e., ELs, EOs, RFEPs, and EL/RFEPs) has changed over time, we “standardized” SAT-9, CAT/6, and CST student-level scale scores (Ho & Haertel, 2005). This procedure allowed us to quantify the distance (measured in standard deviations) between the mean of a subgroup of students (ELs, for example) from the average performance of the state. The primary advantage of this approach is that it allows us to compare the relative performance of subgroups over time. It is important to bear in mind that although standardization allows valid comparisons against a specific benchmark (e.g., the average performance of the state), it does not allow measuring absolute growth since the average performance of the state is set to zero every year.¹⁸

Trends in Performance Gap

As mentioned before, in reviewing these changes in performance gaps between EOs and ELs, it is important to keep in mind the substantial increase in EL participation in the large scale assessments over time. Exhibit III-8 displays the performance gap from 1997-98 to 2003-04, with dotted lines indicating the change in test from SAT-9 to CAT/6. This exhibit illustrates the performance gap relative to the statewide average in each year and does not measure academic growth over time.

¹⁸ See Appendix B Methodological Note 2 for a complete explanation of the methodology used to calculate standardized averages for each subgroup of students.

Exhibit III-8. Performance Gaps across all Grade Levels, English Language Arts, Based on Results from SAT-9 and CAT/6, 1998 to 2004¹⁹



Source: STAR, 1997-98 through 2003-04

The exhibit shows that the gap between EO and EL students decreased slightly from 1998 to 2002 (changing from .85 to .70 standard deviations difference between the two groups). Most of the gap decrease happened in 2003, where the gap changed from .79 to .70 standard deviations. This year was the first administration of the CAT/6 (represented by the dashed lines), which suggests that the slight gap closure may be at least partially attributable to the change in the test. There are several ways the change from the SAT-9 to the CAT/6 could cause this decrease. First, as will be shown below, when the achievement gap is measured with the CST scores, the results do not reveal the same narrowing of the gap. It is possible that the CAT/6 is less reliable than the SAT-9 due to its shorter testing time. A shorter testing time may result in a narrower range of test scores (i.e., a smaller standard deviation). When standardized gap measures are performed with a smaller range of scores, the estimated gap between populations is smaller. Other explanations include content differences and format differences between the two tests that could result in a narrower range of scores for the population being tested.

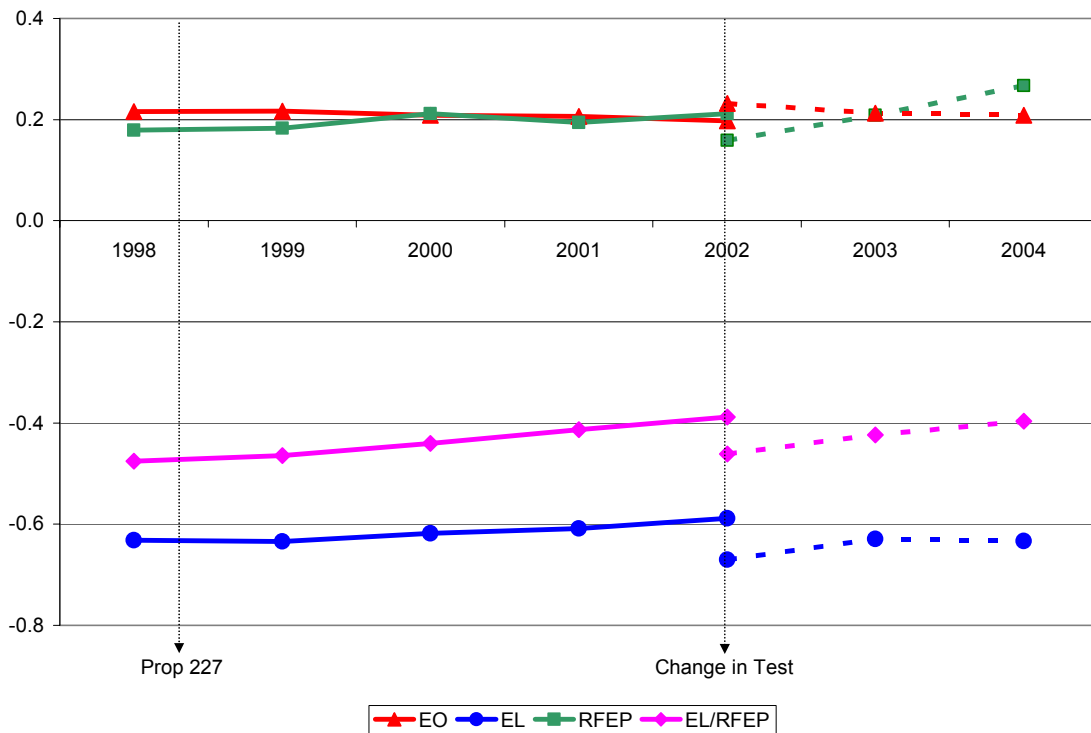
To further explore the gap closure during the year in which the test changed to the CAT/6, we analyzed the CST performance data. Since its first administration was in

¹⁹ The change in the test indicated by the dotted line reflects the change in the statewide norm reference test from SAT-9 to CAT/6 that occurred in 2002.

2002, the last year of the SAT-9, it can be used as a point of comparison for the gap change between 2002 and 2003. Exhibit III-9 shows the same gap comparison as Exhibit III-8, except that the continuing trend (the dashed line) in the later years of this comparison is based on the CST, rather than CAT/6 results.²⁰ CST performance shows a small gap decrease from 2002 to 2003 (from .90 standard deviations in 2002 to 0.84 in 2003). Given that the gap reduction in the CST is smaller than in the CAT/6, it seems likely that at least some of the gap decrease observed in conjunction with the introduction of the CAT/6, is an artifact of the change in test.

The gap decrease between EOs and ELs from 1998 to 2004 has a small effect size in English language arts and in math, using both the CST and the CAT/6 test measures (see Appendix B, Exhibit 29 and 30 for detailed performance gap results including math and reading). The gap decrease observed in reading is considered medium in size, which is “educationally significant.” Unfortunately, the CST does not have a reading section that would allow a parallel comparison.

Exhibit III-9. Performance Gaps across all Grade Levels, English Language Arts, Based on results from SAT-9 and CST, 1998 to 2004²¹



Source: STAR, 1997-98 through 2003-04

²⁰ As shown in Exhibit III-1, the CST was first administered statewide in 2001-02, in conjunction with the SAT-9. This explains why in this school year we can observe two measures of academic performance for all students.

²¹ The change in the test referred by one of the dotted line reflects the change in the statewide norm reference test, or in other words, the change from SAT-9 to CAT/6 that occurred in 2002.

These two exhibits also show RFEP student performance alone and combined in the EL/RFEP group. The exhibits show that combining the two groups together does little to change the general trend in each group until the year 2002. Beginning in 2002, RFEPs have outperformed EO students on the SAT-9, a phenomenon obscured when RFEPs and ELs are reported together. RFEPs outperformed EOs in reading on the CAT/6 in 2004, and since 1997-98 across all three tests in math. These recent improvements in RFEP performance relative to EOs again suggest that redesignation guidelines introduced by the State Board of Education, along with local RFEP criteria decisions influenced by NCLB accountability provisions, may have effected a change in the *composition* of the RFEP population (see Analysis Strategy section at the beginning of this chapter).

An additional analysis was performed to measure the learning gap between EOs and ELs. While the analysis presented in this section focuses on the average performance by language fluency subgroups, the analysis presented in Appendix B, Exhibits 31 and 32, expands the comparison to the entire distribution of EO, EL, and RFEP percentile rankings. In short, we found that the gap between subgroups varies depending on the students' level of performance. At lower percentiles (i.e., lower levels of student performance) RFEPs score significantly higher than EOs, while the gap narrows in higher percentiles (i.e., higher performance students). In the case of ELs and EOs, low-performing EOs and ELs have similar performance levels. The gap slowly widens in the higher percentiles.

A second set of analyses is also shown in Appendix B, Exhibits 33 through 36. We calculated the number of students within subgroups (ELs and RFEPs, in this case) with test scores higher than the EO 50th percentile score. The results show that in 2004, more than half of RFEPs scored above the EO 50th percentile in grades 2 through 5 and grade 7, and performed roughly the same in grade 6 (which is aligned with the change in the *composition* of RFEPs discussed in the Analysis Strategy section of this Chapter). The gap between EL and EO students is pronounced across all grades and years. Second grade shows the highest EL performance in 2004, with 22 percent of ELs scoring above the EO 50th percentile on the CST English language arts for 2004. Similar results were found in the years 2002 and 2003.

How Do Alternative Models of Instruction Compare in Regard to EL Academic Achievement?

This section discusses findings from our analyses of the effects of different instructional models on student achievement. It explores the research question, "Which programs and services being provided to English learners are most effective and least effective in ensuring equal access to the core academic curriculum, the achievement of state content and performance standards, and rapid acquisition of English?" Several approaches were used to analyze differences in EL performance by instructional model, such as classifying schools by the percent of ELs receiving primary language instruction pre- and post-227, a cross-sectional analysis of statewide student-level data, and a hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analysis of student-level, longitudinally-linked data from Los Angeles Unified School District, which enrolls more than 20 percent of the

state’s ELs. After controlling for the socioeconomic status of the school populations served, the results of these analyses do not clearly favor one EL instructional model (i.e., bilingual, immersion) over another.

In order to conduct these analyses, we relied on official designations of the different instructional services English learners receive. Specifically, we used Language Census data to categorize schools by their predominant approach to EL instruction, STAR student-level data on current instructional service classification, and LAUSD classification of English learners' instructional settings. One limitation of these classifications is that they may not accurately reflect actual instructional services provided in classrooms. In particular, various combinations of the different instructional approaches (including ELD, SDAIE, primary language instruction, and primary language support) may occur in classrooms labeled as “bilingual” or “immersion.” Moreover, in two instances we collapsed similar instructional service codes into broader classifications in order to increase statistical power and focus the analysis.²² Therefore, it is important to recognize that the various instructional settings and services do not constitute “pure” models of instruction, as indeed they seldom do in practice.

Methodologies

We use three sets of analyses to explore how alternative models of EL instruction (i.e., bilingual versus immersion) compare in regard to academic achievement. Each progressive analysis in this section of the chapter draws upon increased refinements in the data available to examine this complex question, thereby allowing the use of increasingly rigorous methods.

We begin with a broad approach comparing schoolwide performance over time (pre- and post-Proposition 227) based on categorizing schools by type of instructional model. This is a continuation of the primary approach used in Years 2 and 3 of this study. As a second approach we conduct a cross-sectional analysis of individual student performance in 2004 in relation to demographic and EL instructional model data. These first two analyses use statewide STAR data to assess instructional model effectiveness. Our final analysis uses data from Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to track the performance of individual students by instructional model over time. While we cannot generalize findings from this latter analysis to the state as a whole, this type of approach most closely approximates the “gold standard” of randomized controlled trials, which cannot currently be conducted using statewide data.

Approach I: School-level instructional model analysis pre- and post- Proposition 227

Because student-level data with reliable information about the model of instruction were not available until 2002-03, we attempted to answer the research questions above, using Language Census data to broadly categorize schools in relation to

²² These instances of instructional service code consolidation are discussed below.

their predominant approach to EL instruction over time.²³ Although instructional services at the student level are now consistent with the Language Census reporting, we have continued to update this school-level analysis to provide continuity with our earlier analyses and findings on this question. This analysis includes three categories of schools:

1. **Continuing bilingual** (*substantial L1* → *substantial L1*): Schools providing primary language (L1) instruction to more than 50 percent of their ELs in 1997-98 and 2003-04.
2. **Transitioning from bilingual** (*substantial L1* → *not substantial L1*): Schools providing primary language instruction to more than 50 percent of their ELs in 1997-98, but significantly reducing or removing primary language instruction by 2003-04.
3. **Never bilingual** (*not substantial L1* → *not substantial L1*): Schools not offering primary language instruction to more than 50 percent of their ELs in 1997-98 or 2003-04.

For this analysis, a 50 percent cut-point was used as the standard for “substantial,” as this represents a majority of EL students receiving primary language instruction. A major limitation of this approach is the lack of precision in the school categorization criteria. For example, a school is labeled as continuing bilingual even when nearly one-half of the students are not receiving bilingual instructional services. In Year 3, we conducted sensitivity analyses to explore the implications of changing the cut-point of what is considered a “sizable percentage” of ELs receiving primary language instruction. In addition to the 50 percent cut-point, we considered 25 percent and 75 percent, and the results did not yield significant differences.²⁴ Moreover, if we restrict our categorization to schools with higher percentages of ELs receiving bilingual services, the number of schools becomes inadequate for reliable comparative analysis.

Another limitation of this analysis is the fact that the assignment of students to these different schools is not random. As a group, students receiving bilingual education are different from EL students that have never received bilingual education in ways that are known to be correlated with testing performance. For example, as we reported in earlier years, EL students in schools categorized as never bilingual are more likely than their counterparts in other categories to have a higher initial English language proficiency upon entry, and to attend schools with lower levels of poverty and greater percentages of credentialed teachers. Given this selection bias, great care must be taken when comparing the performance of EL students across the different school types without controlling for as many of these factors as possible, as this may lead to unreasonable comparisons and indefensible conclusions.

²³ The instructional services variable in the STAR database before 2002-03 had missing values for a considerable number of ELs. Furthermore, on the data header sheet that respondents used to classify which instructional services each EL student was receiving, it was possible for respondents to indicate multiple services, when, in fact, the services are meant to be mutually exclusive. Therefore, we were unable to use this information in our previous reports and relied on the school-level Language Census data to categorize schools by type.

²⁴ For further details, see Year 3 report at <http://www.air.org/publications/publications-set.htm>

Exhibit III-10 indicates the number and percentage of schools in each school category. Three percent of California schools are shown to be continuing bilingual, 12 percent are transitioning from bilingual, and 85 percent are never bilingual. As compared to our Year 3 findings,²⁵ this categorization shows a 1 percent decrease in continuing-bilingual schools and a 1 percent increase in transitioning-from-bilingual schools. The percentage of schools never offering substantial primary language instruction remains constant.

Exhibit III-10. Number and Percentage of Schools across Instructional Models²⁶

Instructional Model: Pre- and Post-Proposition 227 (1997-98 and 2003-04)	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools
Continuing bilingual (Substantial L ₁ →Substantial L ₁)	184	3%
Transitioning from bilingual (Substantial L ₁ →Not Substantial L ₁)	861	12%
Never bilingual (Not Substantial L ₁ →Not Substantial L ₁)	6,120	85%
Total number of schools with EL students	7,165	100%

Substantial L₁: Primary language instruction offered to more than 50 percent or more EL students

Not Substantial L₁: Primary language instruction offered to 50 percent or less EL students in the school

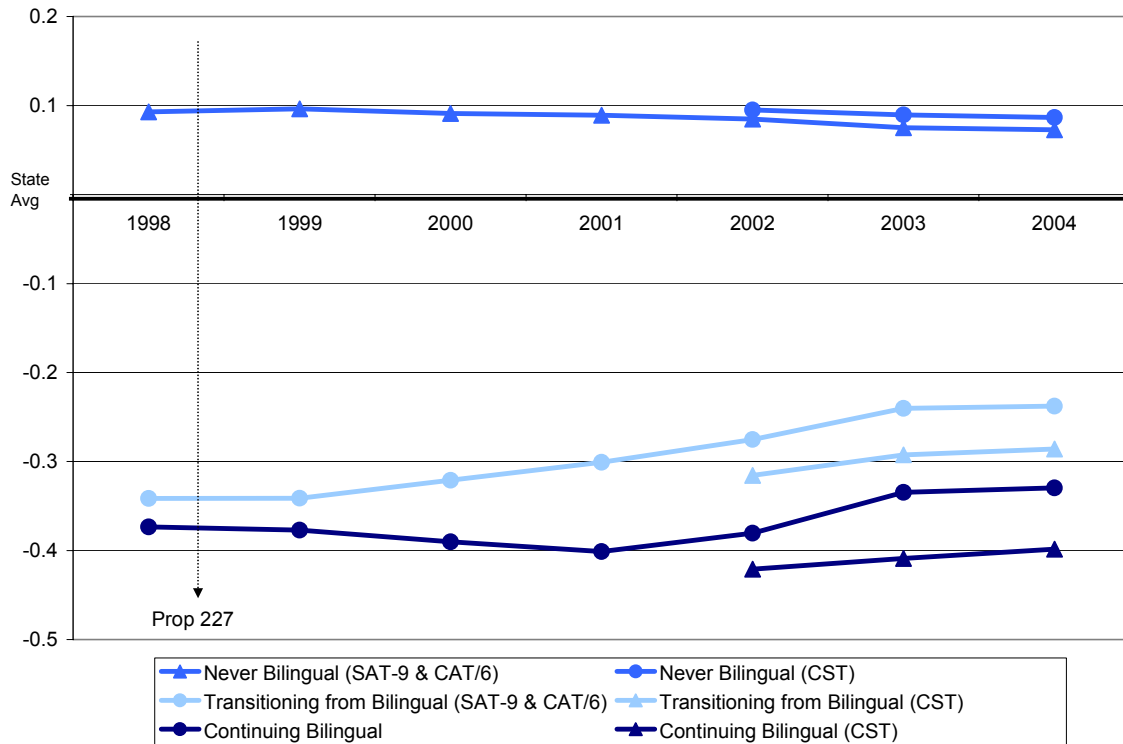
Source: Language Census Data, 1997-98 and 2003-04

Exhibit III-11 shows the performance of all students (not just ELs) in these three types of schools as measured by the SAT-9, CAT/6, and CST standardized scale scores (on the subject language arts). The exhibit shows that student performance varies considerably across these three types of schools. Looking at average student performance by this school typology, never-bilingual schools tend to perform above the state average, while transitioning-from-bilingual and continuing-bilingual schools tend to perform below the state average. This pattern is observed across all tests and subject areas (Appendix B, Exhibit 37).

²⁵ The Year 3 report is available at <http://www.air.org/publications/publications-set.htm>

²⁶ 2,267 schools are not included in the instructional model achievement analyses. The excluded schools consist of 37 schools identified as having a fourth model (Not Substantial L₁→Substantial L₁). Additionally, schools with missing information or minimal EL populations could not be classified (2,036 schools for 1997-98 and 194 schools for 2003-04).

Exhibit III-11. Relative Performance Over Time on SAT-9, CAT/6 and CST Language Arts, Grade 2-6.²⁷ All Students in Never Bilingual, Transitioning from Bilingual, and Continuing Bilingual Schools—Without Controlling for Student Characteristics.



Source: Language Census Data, and STAR program from 1997-98 to 2003-04

The difference in performance between these types of schools is substantial. However, as mentioned before, students assigned to these different schools differ in important ways that are known to be highly correlated with test performance. For example, continuing-bilingual and transitioning-from-bilingual schools have a much higher percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch (a proxy for poverty) than never-bilingual schools (see Exhibit III-12). These schools also have a higher concentration of ELs as well as a higher percentage of students with lower parental education. Another important difference across these school types is that continuing-bilingual schools have almost 45 percent of ELs entering the school with only a beginning level of English proficiency, compared to the only 29 percent of ELs entering never-bilingual schools with this level of English. Moreover, never-bilingual schools also show a much higher percentage of initial CELDT test takers scoring proficient in English (i.e., scoring at the early advanced or advanced level). While never-bilingual schools

²⁷ Given the small number of schools categorized as continuing-bilingual from grades 7 to 11, we restricted the analysis to grades 2 through 6. Also, Proposition 227 largely addresses instructional programs serving EL students in the elementary grades.

have 32 percent of their initial CELDT test takers performing at these levels, continuing-bilingual schools only have about 17 percent.

Exhibit III-12. Students' Demographic Characteristics and Initial English Proficiency by Instructional Model

	Never Bilingual	Transitioning from Bilingual	Continuing Bilingual
Percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch	46.9%	75.1%	76.6%
Percentage of English learners	22.5%	47.0%	55.3%
Percent Spanish speakers of the English learner population	70.5%	91.9%	91.4%
Percentage of students with parents with college or graduate education levels	24.2%	11.1%	10.1%
Percentage of students with parents who did not complete high school	14.6%	27.7%	29.4%
Percentage of students at the beginning level on the Initial CELDT	29.0%	36.8%	44.9%
Percentage of students at the early advanced or advanced level on the Initial CELDT	32.4%	19.3%	16.5%

Source: STAR and Initial CELDT, 2004

Given these substantial differences in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, we analyzed the learning gap between EOs and ELs²⁸ within each school type in an attempt to keep school-level characteristics constant. Exhibit III-13 displays the gap size (in standard deviations) and the gap change between 1997-98 and 2003-04 measured by the SAT-9 and CAT/6 for English language arts, math, and reading. The gap is also measured by the SAT-9 and CST for English language arts and math.²⁹ The exhibit shows that the performance gap between EOs and ELs is similar in transitioning-from-bilingual and continuing-bilingual schools across subjects and tests. Never-bilingual schools show the largest gap between EOs and ELs, despite higher overall performance levels than either continuing-bilingual or transitioning-from-bilingual schools.

All three school types reduced the performance gap between 1997-98 and 2003-04, with the single exception of a gap increase in English language arts as measured by the CST for continuing-bilingual schools. The gap decrease is most pronounced in transitioning-from-bilingual schools, followed by never-bilingual and continuing-bilingual schools. Keep in mind, however, that the magnitude of the decrease is small in terms of educational significance for all subjects but reading.³⁰ Reading shows a medium-sized decrease in the gap, but this may be an artifact of the change from SAT-9 to

²⁸ Using the same methodology described in the analysis of performance gaps earlier in this chapter.

²⁹ The California Standards Test (CST) does not provide a discrete scale score result for reading.

³⁰ A gap change of .25 standard deviations or less is considered small. See Cohen (1969).

CAT/6.³¹ Similar patterns are observed when former ELs (RFEPs) are included in the cohort of ELs (see Appendix B, Exhibit 38).

Exhibit III-13. Gap Size and Gap Decrease Between EOs and ELs by School Types (in SD units)

	Never Bilingual			Transitioning from Bilingual			Continuing Bilingual		
	Gap size 1998	Gap size 2004	Gap change	Gap size 1998	Gap size 2004	Gap change	Gap size 1998	Gap size 2004	Gap change
ELA									
SAT-9-CAT/6	0.80	0.66	-0.14	0.68	0.50	-0.18	0.67	0.58	-0.08
SAT-9-CST	0.80	0.79	-0.01	0.68	0.66	-0.02	0.67	0.77	0.10
Math									
SAT-9-CAT/6	0.66	0.54	-0.12	0.51	0.37	-0.13	0.49	0.40	-0.08
SAT-9-CST	0.66	0.56	-0.10	0.51	0.40	-0.11	0.49	0.45	-0.03
Reading									
SAT-9-CAT/6	0.96	0.71	-0.25	0.85	0.54	-0.31	0.84	0.61	-0.23

Source: Language Census and STAR from 1997-98 to 2003-04

While this approach provides some insight into performance gaps over time, it is critical to remember its limitations. It does not control for important demographic differences among EL students or for the selection bias associated with the distribution of EL students across the different school types. In addition, schools were categorized on the basis of an arbitrary cut-point (i.e., 50 percent EL participation in bilingual programs). In the next section, we use a methodology that controls for demographic characteristics and uses student-level instructional service data.

Approach II: Student-level statewide regression analysis

Statewide individual student data on instructional services, which are largely consistent with the state's Language Census data on instructional services, are collected as part of STAR demographic information beginning in 2002-03.³² With these new data, we conducted a multivariate regression analysis to examine EL student performance in relation to their current instructional services as shown in students' 2003-04 STAR records. The instructional services listed include English Language Development (ELD) services, ELD and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)³³ with or without primary language support, and ELD and academic subjects through primary

³¹ For a discussion of the implications of the changes in test, see the analysis of performance gaps earlier in this chapter.

³² Methodological note 3 in the Appendix B shows a comparative analysis of EL instructional services data from the STAR and the Language Census Data in 2002-03.

³³ SDAIE is an approach to teaching academic content using English that is scaffolded to facilitate comprehension by EL students. Students who are receiving SDAIE instruction alone or in combination with primary language support (additional help in the student's primary language) are placed in the ELD & SDAIE category for this analysis.

language.³⁴ This regression analysis was performed by school level (elementary, middle, and high school), and it controls for some student, school, and district characteristics (see regression outputs in Appendix B, Exhibits 40-48 for a complete listing of characteristics used).

While this approach overcomes some of the limitations found in the previous approach (e.g., it controls for individual student characteristics), it remains limited for several reasons.

First, EL students are not randomly assigned to ELD-only, ELD & SDAIE, or ELD & bilingual instructional services. In fact, students receiving bilingual instructional services start with the lowest levels of initial English proficiency (as measured by the Initial CELDT) compared to the other instructional service categories (see Appendix B, Exhibit 39). We were able to control for this only at the school level. (We were also able to control by the time each EL has been in U.S. schools as an attempt to control for initial level of English proficiency.)

Second, the type of analysis that can be performed with statewide data is cross-sectional analysis (i.e., single-year), and there are no longitudinal data on the history of instructional services individual students have received. ELs currently receiving ELD-only or ELD & SDAIE services may have received bilingual instructional services in the prior years. For example, a general characteristic of the transitional bilingual education model (perhaps the most common bilingual instructional model in California) is that those ELs meeting expected linguistic and academic progress under “bilingual” services are transitioned to instructional services like ELD-only or ELD & SDAIE. Since we are unable to control for individuals’ previous instructional services and test scores in this analysis, we cannot directly attribute observed differences in current performance to the current instructional services students receive.³⁵

Third, many of the factors known to be correlated with student performance are unobservable or poorly measured. In their examination of this very question in California, Gordon and Hoxby (2002) note that EL students receiving bilingual instructional services are more likely to have parents who are poor, under-educated, less connected to American job networks, and less familiar with the U.S. educational system.

³⁴ The relationship between EL instructional services and settings is complex, as instructional services do not map neatly onto instructional settings. For example, students receiving “ELD & SDAIE” services may be in “structured English immersion” or “mainstream class meeting [reasonable fluency] criteria” settings. These students may have already received primary language instruction and met the reasonable fluency requirements to be transitioned to all English instructional services. For more information the reader should refer to CDE’s presentation to the State Board of Education *Educating English Learners in California*: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr04/documents/sep04item03.pdf>

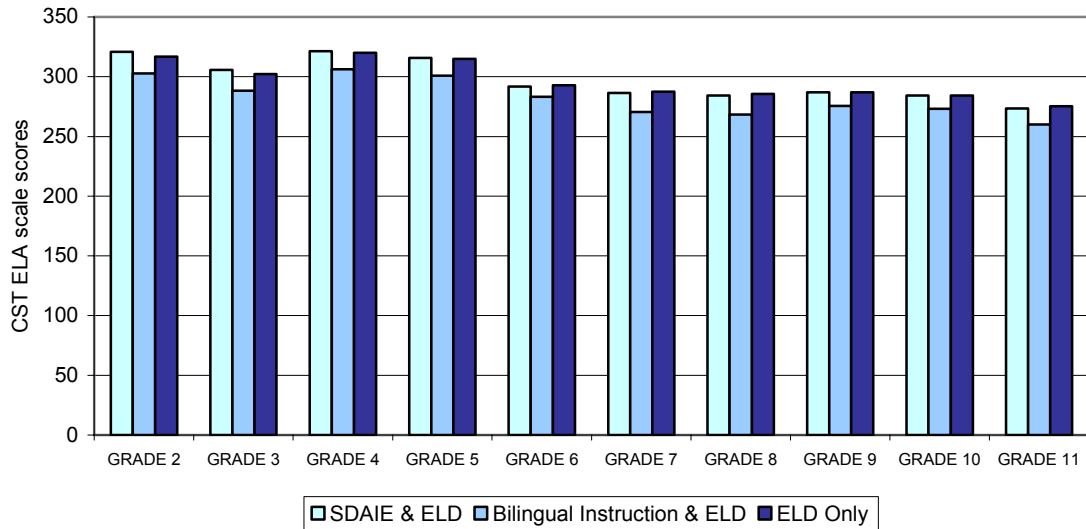
³⁵ A similar conclusion is presented in Greene (1998). In addition, as possible bias in non-random assignments cannot be fully eliminated, randomized field testing of different treatments is considered to be the “gold standard” in quantitative educational research. While conducting an experimental study of different instructional settings and services was not possible within the resources available for this study, we do overcome the problem of selection bias to some degree in Approach III, as discussed further below.

All of these factors significantly limit this analytic approach, and highlight the need for statewide, student-level, longitudinally linked data that capture the history of instructional services provided. As such, this analysis can only provide information on statewide EL students' performance in relation to the instructional services they are currently receiving.

Exhibit III-14 shows regression results based on student-level scale scores from the English language arts section of the 2003-04 CST. It shows that ELs currently receiving ELD & SDAIE or ELD-only services tend to perform higher than ELs currently receiving ELD & bilingual instructional services, controlling by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (proxy for poverty), time in U.S. schools, and other student, school and district level characteristics. While these differences are statistically significant, their magnitudes or effect sizes vary substantially, with no discernable pattern across grade levels (see effect sizes by grade in Appendix B, Exhibit 49). The largest difference between students currently receiving ELD & SDAIE and ELD & bilingual instructional services is observed in grade 2, with a magnitude (or effect size) of .36 standard deviations (a difference of 18 scale score points). The largest difference between ELD-only and ELD & bilingual instructional services is in grade 8, with an effect size of .41 standard deviations (a difference of 17 scale score points). Once again, careful interpretation is necessary in light of the above-detailed limitations. For example, students receiving ELD & bilingual instructional services are more likely to have started with lower levels of initial English proficiency than students receiving ELD & SDAIE services. Students receiving ELD-only and ELD & SDAIE services show similar scores across all grades.³⁶

³⁶ To create Exhibits III-14 and III-15, a “reference student” was constructed. This hypothetical student is a Hispanic male in Southern California who is in second, seventh, or ninth grade. He is receiving SDAIE and ELD instruction, his parents' highest educational level is high school, he is not receiving free or reduced price lunch, and he is not receiving special education or Title I services. If different characteristics were used for this reference student, the total scale scores would be different, but the marginal score differences being measured between instructional models would not change.

Exhibit III-14. Conditional Student Level CST ELA Scores, by Current Instructional Services and Grade Level³⁷

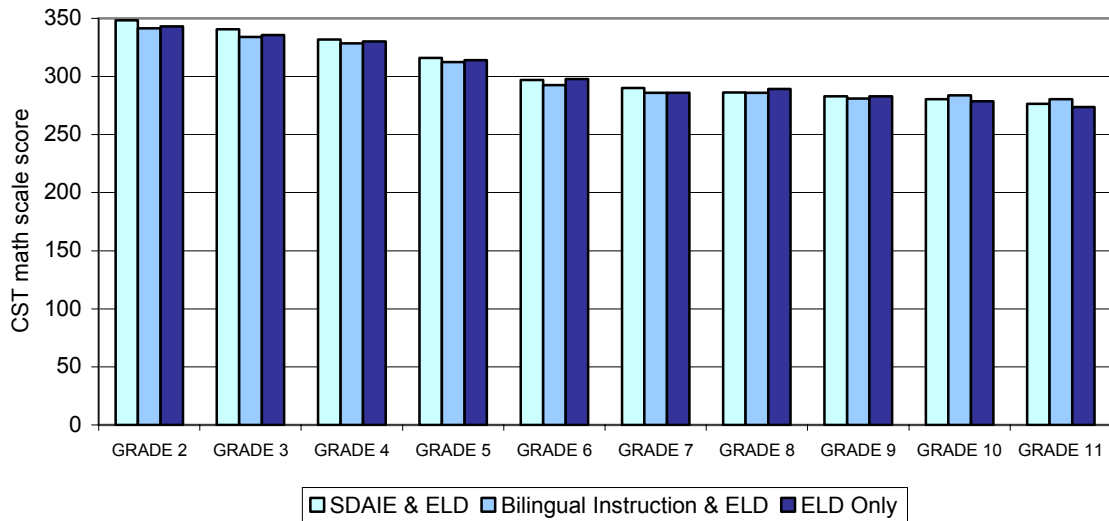


Source: STAR, 2003-04

While EL performance varies depending on current instructional services and grade level in English language arts, EL performance in math is roughly the same across instructional services. Exhibit III-15 shows the regression results for 2003-04 CST math scale scores. In earlier grades, students receiving ELD & SDAIE and ELD-only services have slightly higher scores on average than students receiving ELD & bilingual instructional services. This pattern reverses in higher grades, where ELs receiving ELD & bilingual instructional services score about 4 points higher on average than those receiving ELD & SDAIE, and 6 points more than those receiving ELD services only. These differences in scale scores are negligible in their magnitude (an effect size of .1 standard deviations or lower—Appendix B, Exhibit 49). Regression models using the CAT/6 tests render results similar to those obtained using the CST. Effect sizes vary from small to large in English Language Arts and Reading depending on grade level, and are small for Math (Appendix B, Exhibit 49).

³⁷ Notice that CST scores are not vertically equated, which explains why students in the lower grade levels seem to perform above the students in the higher grade levels.

Exhibit III-15. Conditional Student Level CST Math Scores, by Current Instructional Services and Grade Level



Source: STAR, 2003-04

This approach provides information about EL performance in relation to current instructional services when controlling for some student, school, and district-level characteristics, and represents the extent to which statewide student-level data currently can be used for this type of analysis. However, we cannot conclude from these findings that one EL instructional model or set of services is more effective than another. Our next approach uses longitudinally linked student data from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The use of these more comprehensive, longitudinal data, while not available statewide, allows us to overcome most of the limitations associated with the analysis presented above.

Approach III: Regression analysis of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)

The Los Angeles Unified School District enrolls about 20 percent of the English learners in California and has a rich student-level dataset that can be linked over time, which largely allows us to overcome the limitations of the preceding statewide analysis. As mentioned earlier, the ability to control for prior test scores using the LAUSD data at least partially addresses the issue of non-random assignment to programs. In addition, by changing the default instructional program for ELs to structured English immersion, Proposition 227 created a form of natural experiment that forced many children out of the instructional programs to which they had been assigned.³⁸

The LAUSD data allowed us to link annual reading test scores of 287,210 English learners in grades 5 and below over the years 1997 to 2003 (this represents about 94

³⁸ Gordon and Hoxby (2002) also sought to use Proposition 227 as an opportunity for quasi-experimental analysis of EL instructional models in their recent study of this issue.

percent of the tested ELs in grades 5 and below in LAUSD in 2002-03).³⁹ Although these data contain student-level free or reduced price lunch eligibility as a measure of poverty, they lack additional information such as parent education and family income which would allow us to more fully control for socioeconomic status. In addition, although LAUSD enrolls one-fifth of the state's EL population, a clear disadvantage of these analyses is that the findings cannot be generalized to the state as a whole. However, they represent a strong basis for estimating prospective model differences using a large database of California students that overcomes a number of serious limitations of currently available statewide data.

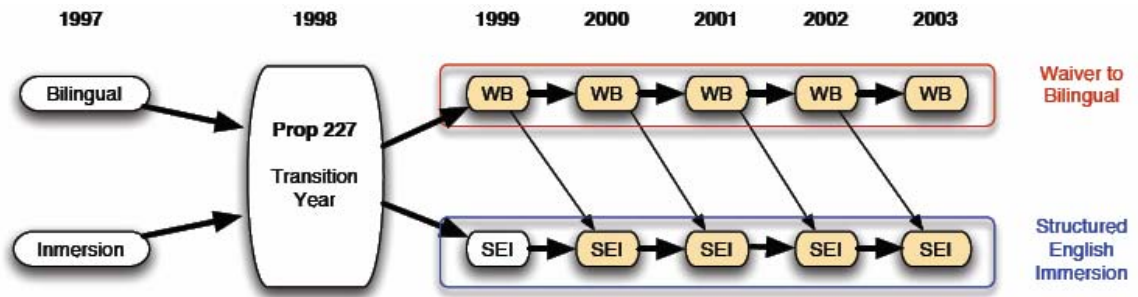
Exhibit III-16 presents a simplified diagram of the movement of English learners in LAUSD through the different instructional services. For the purposes of this analysis, several instructional model categories that LAUSD uses to classify various instructional alternatives for ELs were collapsed into the categories, “bilingual” and “immersion,” pre-227 and the categories, “waiver to bilingual”⁴⁰ and “structured English immersion,” post-227.⁴¹ About 8 percent of English learners in grades 5 and below in LAUSD were enrolled each year in a bilingual instructional setting after the implementation of Proposition 227, and 141 schools maintained a bilingual program in grades 5 and below as of 2003. About 70 percent of ELs in LAUSD receive structured English immersion after Proposition 227, which contrasts with only 25 percent of students receiving immersion before Proposition 227. In this analysis, we follow those students enrolled in a bilingual program in 1999 as they either remained in the bilingual program or moved to an immersion program (shaded boxes in Exhibit III-16). Even though this approach cannot completely eliminate selection bias, it diminishes this problem and allows us to estimate the performance contribution of subsequent years spent in a bilingual or an immersion setting.

³⁹ The LAUSD database contains information about English learners and former English learners in grades 1 through 12. We restricted the analysis to grades 1 through 5 because test scores in these grades are reported as norm curve equivalent scores (NCEs) and have limited missing data. A high proportion of the upper grade level test scores are missing or reported in mixed formats (e.g., scale scores, NCEs). Grades 5 and below represent about 95 percent of the observations with available test scores data in the LAUSD database.

⁴⁰ “Waiver to basic” is the official denotation used in LAUSD for post-227 bilingual programs, in which students receive an alternative program “waiver” and are instructed bilingually until reaching a “basic” level of English proficiency and academic achievement justifying their transition. However, through discussions with LAUSD district staff, we agreed to use the term “waiver to bilingual” for the purposes of this report, as this more clearly indicates that students in these settings receive bilingual instruction.

⁴¹ See Appendix B, Exhibits 51 to 59, for a full discussion of the various instructional options LAUSD has offered over time and for explanation of how these were collapsed into the categories used in this analysis.

Exhibit III-16. English Learners Main Transition Patterns in LAUSD



To estimate the impact on student performance of additional years in each of these instructional programs, we used a hierarchical linear model (HLM) regression, which allows us to examine changes across two different dimensions or hierarchies. The first dimension is *within-student*, looking at test score changes over time for each student. The second dimension is *between-student*, analyzing how *within-student* test score trajectories vary across students.⁴²

As shown in Exhibit III-17, for the students enrolled in a bilingual program in 1999, each additional year in bilingual or immersion programs increased their reading test scores 2.16 percentile points (0.16 standard deviations). Results indicate that the contribution to performance of an additional year in a bilingual setting (Bilingual (γ_1)) is not statistically different (even at the 10 percent significance level) from an additional year in an immersion program.

⁴² It is possible to define the *within-student* level test score trajectory in the following way:

$$Score_{ij} = \beta_{0i} + \beta_{1i} Time_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

where $Score_{ij}$ represents 1999 through 2003 reading test scores of student i in year j of those English learners enrolled in a bilingual program in 1999, and $Time_{ij}$ represents time (i.e., takes values equal to 1999, 2000, ..., 2003). The coefficient β_{1i} indicates the annual test score rate of growth over time of each student. The second level equation takes this growth coefficient as its dependent variable and analyzes whether this annual growth rate is, on average, higher in a bilingual or immersion program if we control for socioeconomic status. In other words, this second equation can be written as

$$\beta_{1i} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 Bilingual_i + \gamma_2 Poor_i + v_i \quad (2)$$

where β_{1i} is the growth coefficient of Equation 1, $Bilingual_i$ indicates whether student i is enrolled in a bilingual or immersion program, and $Poor_i$ indicates whether the student is eligible for free or reduced price lunch (as a proxy for SES).

Exhibit III-17. Estimated Impact per Year of EL Instruction on Reading Test for Student in Grades 1 through 5 in LAUSD (1998-99 through 2002-03)

Fixed Effects		Estimate
Growth Rate (β_{1i}) ⁽¹⁾	Intercept (γ_0)	2.16** (0.193)
	Bilingual (γ_1)	-0.095 (0.203)
	Poor (γ_2)	0.040 (0.178)
Variance Components		
Level 1	Within-Person	53.12** (1.604)
Level 2	Growth Rate	8.515** (0.960)
Score Observations	6,824	
Students	3,264	
AIC (Akaike information criterion)	53,048.3	

** p < 0.05

Standard Errors in parenthesis.

(1) See footnote 39 for interpretation of parameters in the HLM equations.

These longitudinal test score analyses, minimizing the non-random selection of students into different educational settings, show no difference in student outcomes for one approach to EL instruction over another. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that these results are valid only for English learners in LAUSD enrolled in grades 5 and below.

Redesignation Analysis

One of the research questions for this study asks about the impact of Proposition 227 on EL redesignation. In exploring this question, this section analyzes how long it takes ELs to attain state and local criteria in English language proficiency and academic achievement which constitute redesignation in California, and which factors appear to influence the rate of redesignation.⁴³ Addressing this question is not entirely straightforward. Through the state’s STAR database for 2002/03, we have estimates of the amount of time it has taken RFEPs to be redesignated. However, to fully address the question, we also need to consider ELs, who have not been redesignated yet. Thus, we have to use a methodology that considers both groups of students (i.e., RFEPs and ELs).

To do this, we use an approach based on estimating the probability of being redesignated after a given number of years in California, as described in more detail below. Using this approach the following results are obtained: a) after three years of

⁴³ Chapter V provides a more detailed exploration of the varying criteria and processes used by districts to determine when EL students redesignate to fluent-English-proficient (RFEP) status.

instruction in California we estimate that about 12 percent of ELs are redesignated as fluent English proficient, and after ten years that less than 40 percent of the EL population has been redesignated; b) Hispanics seem less likely to be redesignated; and c) important differences in redesignation are observed across districts.

Background

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 emphasizes accountability for all students enrolled in public schools. A significant requirement is that ELs should make annual progress toward and attain English language proficiency (via Title III), as well as meet grade-level academic achievement standards (via Title I). These two components—English-language proficiency and grade-level academic achievement in English language arts—are what largely constitute the redesignation construct in California.⁴⁴

The available research literature on these key components of redesignation presents a varied picture of the time it takes ELs to redesignate. For example, in studying the time-to-English-language proficiency component, Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000) analyzed two school districts in the San Francisco Bay Area and one school district in Canada, and found that ELs attain oral English proficiency in three to five years, and attain academic (i.e., reading and writing) English-language proficiency in four to seven years.⁴⁵

The Legislative Analyst's Office (2004) issued a report that uses the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) data of 2001 and 2002 to model a simulation of time-to-redesignation in California.⁴⁶ This study concludes that only half of the ELs enrolled since Kindergarten in the state are redesignated after six years of schooling. The authors conclude, “This is a long time. Students who are still learning English in grades 4 through 6 risk falling behind in school by failing to master the skills needed for success in middle and high school.”

Finally, Grissom (2004) follows three cohorts of English learners between 1998 and 2001 as they progress from grades 2 through 5, and looks at the proportion of EL students redesignated in each cohort. During their first year, ELs show a redesignation rate that ranges from 1.4 to 2.2 percent. That is, he shows that only about two percent of English learners are redesignated as English proficient in second grade.⁴⁷ After following these students for four years, the percentage increases to a range between 29.7 and 32.3 percent.

⁴⁴ For more explanation, see Chapter V below, as well as Linqunti (2001).

⁴⁵ At the time of this study, CELDT was not available, and the researchers used the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Proficiency Battery-Revised, which they judged the best available commercial English-language proficiency assessment. Academic achievement was not studied.

⁴⁶ It is important to note that, although this study tries to estimate time-to-redesignation, it does not take into account the academic performance of ELs, which generally takes longer than English-language proficiency development. This fact very likely explains the study’s lower estimate of the time it takes English learners to be redesignated in California.

⁴⁷ Since most districts consider students’ CST-ELA results when making redesignation decisions, second graders are very unlikely to be redesignated, since test results do not become available until after they finish the school year.

Data and Methodology

The analysis presented below attempts to extend the work above to gain a clearer picture of the estimated redesignation rate for ELs in California over longer periods of time. To accomplish this, we employ a somewhat different approach than those referenced above. Following Singer and Willett (2003), we use survival analysis (also known as event history analysis or duration analysis) to analyze the time it takes English learners to get redesignated in California.⁴⁸ This technique attempts to address the problem of not knowing what happens to those students not redesignated during the period of analysis. In order to understand this problem, imagine following a hypothetical cohort of students over time. Let us say that after ten years 70 percent of these students have been redesignated as fully English proficient. For this group of students, it is easy to estimate an average time to redesignation. But what happens to the other 30 percent? In deriving an overall average, what length of time should we assign to all those English learners who have not yet been redesignated, or who will never be redesignated?

To answer this question we have employed a statistical methodology that allows us to focus on the percentage of students redesignated after one, two, three, or more years in California. Using this approach, the measure (or statistic) of interest is the probability that an English learner will get redesignated in a certain future year.

Our results are primarily drawn from analyses of the entire statewide student-level dataset (STAR) for 2002-03.⁴⁹ A second data source used is the student-level, linked-over-time database from LAUSD, described earlier in this chapter. These two databases complement each other. On one hand, the LAUSD database allows us to follow ELs and former ELs over time. However, the findings apply only to LAUSD. On the other hand, the STAR data allow us to analyze redesignation in all California school districts, but are limited because they cannot be linked over time. Therefore, several assumptions have to be made. However, we were able to test these assumptions for reliability using the LAUSD data. A fuller description of these methods can be found in methodological note 4 in Appendix B.

Findings

Exhibit III-18 shows an estimated redesignation pattern for California. During their first year in California public schools,⁵⁰ these analyses suggest that 2.5 percent of English learners are redesignated, leaving 97.5 percent as ELs. We estimate that 75 percent of EL students are not redesignated after five years of schooling—these results are very close to those reported by Grissom (2004), who finds that proportion of ELs not redesignated after five years is about 70 percent. After ten years in California schools, our data indicate that less than 40 percent of ELs have been redesignated. It is important to keep in mind that this 40 percent represents a state average. Variations across school

⁴⁸ See Meyer (1990), Dolton and van der Klaauw (1995), and Foster and Jones (2001) for other examples of recent applications of survival analysis in social science research.

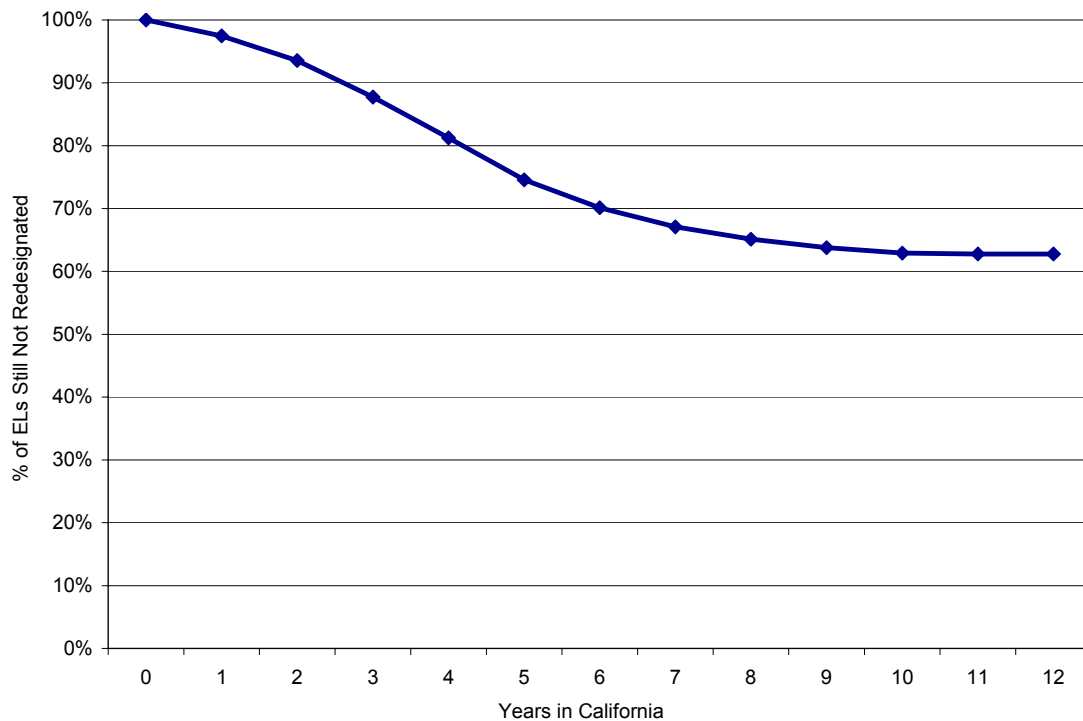
⁴⁹ We do not use the latest STAR database (2003-04) because one of the variables needed to create the history of ELs and RFEPs in U.S. schools (a measure of district mobility) was removed.

⁵⁰ Note that for ELs, we use their time in U.S. schools as a proxy for their time in California.

districts, across social economic status, ethnicity categories, and the grade in which students entered their respective district, underlie this overall average.

The alignment of findings across two major, independent analyses, at least over a five-year period, suggests the robustness of this finding, and that the contribution of this analysis is to extend the estimates of changes in EL status in California over a longer period of time. Exhibit III-18 shows that for the over 70 percent of California’s ELs not redesignated after the first five years of schooling, not much additional progress toward redesignation is made, with less than an additional 15 percent of EL students being redesignated in the subsequent five years. As reported above, after ten years of schooling, it is estimated that less than 40 percent of California’s ELs attain redesignation status.

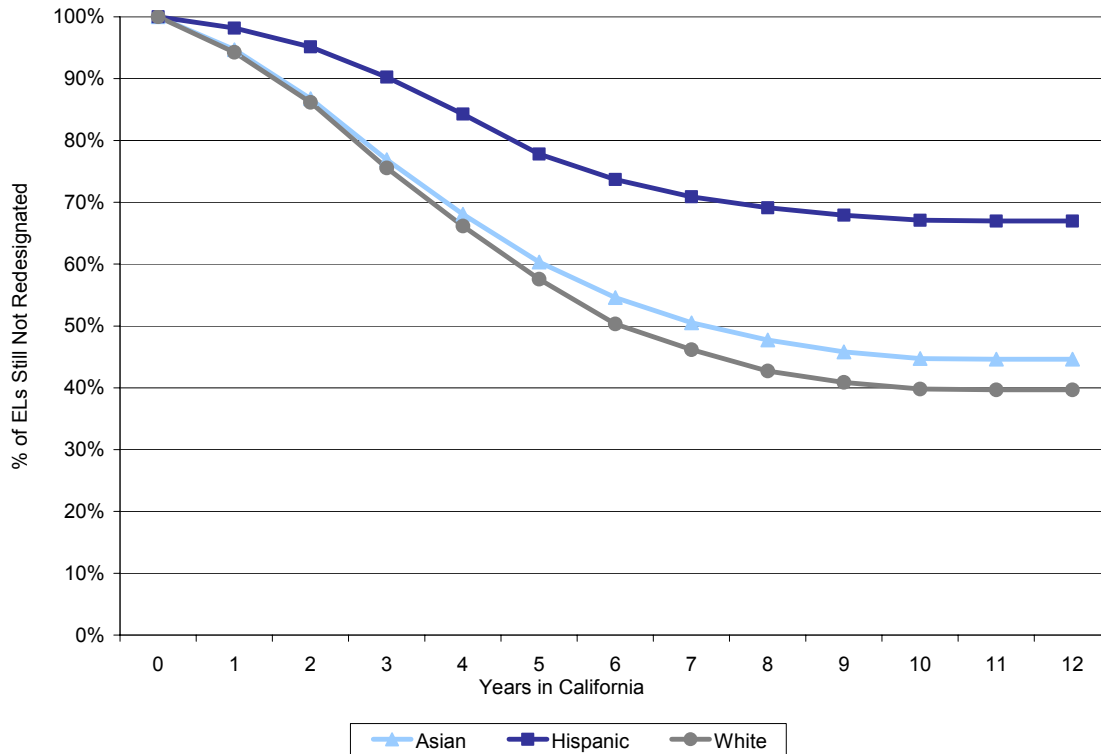
Exhibit III-18. Estimated Percentage of ELs Not Redesignated by Year in California



Source: STAR 2002-03

Significant differences show up when these data are disaggregated by racial/ethnic categories. Exhibit III-19 shows the survival functions of three broad ethnic groups of ELs: Hispanics, Asians, and Whites. Note that Hispanics represent about 85 percent of the EL population in California, while Asians and Whites represent about three percent each. As shown, Hispanics have a much lower redesignation rate than Whites and Asians.

Exhibit III-19. EL Student “Survival Function,” or Estimated Percentage Not Redesignated by Year in California, for Hispanic, Asian, and White Students



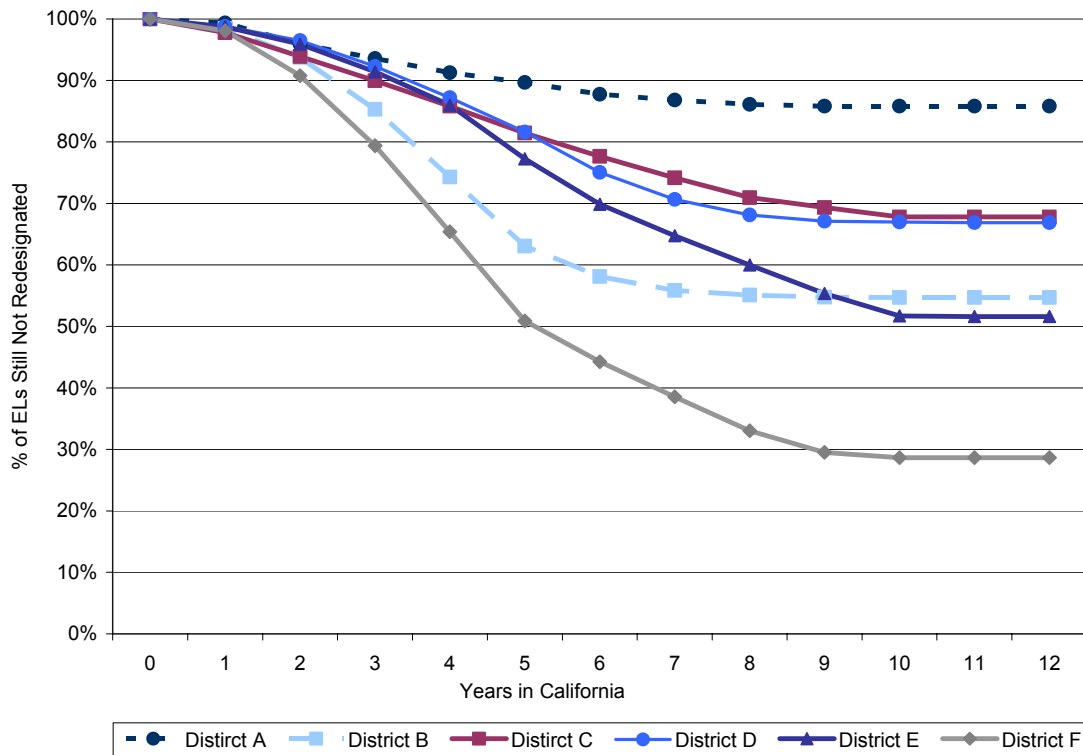
Source: STAR 2002-03

After three years, about 77 percent of Asian ELs have not been redesignated, compared to approximately 90 percent for Hispanic EL students. After six years the gap is wider, with almost 45 percent of Asian EL students, as compared to 26 percent of Hispanic ELs, being redesignated. While it is important to acknowledge these disparities, it is also critical to remember that race/ethnicity is a complex construct, and interpretations based on it must be made with great caution.

While the State Board of Education provides redesignation guidelines, school districts are given latitude to set their own local criteria, as described in more detail in Chapter V of this report. This is one likely reason behind the significant variation in redesignation rates that are observed across school districts. We analyzed redesignation patterns across six school districts with high EL concentrations. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch in these districts ranges from 55 to about 80 percent and, thus, all of them are above the statewide average of 49 percent. In addition, there is variation in the percentage of ELs with Spanish as their primary language. Some of the districts included in this analysis have less than half of their ELs with a primary language other than Spanish, which may also affect the observed varying rates of redesignation.

Exhibit III-20 shows our redesignation analysis results for these six school districts. As mentioned earlier in this section, after ten years in California schools about 60 percent of the ELs have not been redesignated to fluent English proficient status. However, this probability varies widely across school districts. For example, about 28 percent of ELs have not been redesignated in District F after ten years in California public schools, compared with 86 percent of the ELs in District A. In reviewing these results, it should be kept in mind that, in addition to the kinds of variations in redesignation policies across districts described in Chapter V, as well as other local factors that may affect redesignation, the students in these districts vary by such characteristics as primary language and poverty, which our analyses suggest also affect redesignation rates.

Exhibit III-20. Estimated Percentage of ELs Not Redesignated Over Time across Six School Districts



Source: STAR 2002-03

Reliability

As discussed, the patterns for the six districts shown above are estimates. However, because we have student-level, linked data for LAUSD, it is possible to corroborate the estimate for LAUSD (from the above analysis) with what is observed when we follow individual ELs over time. The estimated and actual patterns for LAUSD

look remarkably similar, with the estimated pattern of redesignation being only slightly higher than what is actually observed.⁵¹

The results of these analyses are preliminary, but give cause for concern. They show a long path to redesignation in California, with less than 40 percent of ELs reaching redesignation status after ten years in California schools. Further research on this subject is needed. For example, it might be of use to calculate variations in these estimates based on the grade in which students enter the California public school system. In addition, further inquiry into the broad degree of variation observed across districts, as shown in Exhibit III-20, seems warranted. Once student characteristics known to affect redesignation are controlled, what variation in time to redesignation is observed, what accounts for the remaining observed variation, and what are the implications for state monitoring and future EL instructional and redesignation policies? In Chapter V, we further explore redesignation via a qualitative analysis of state and local redesignation policies and procedures, and identify several findings and concerns regarding redesignation policy and practice as currently implemented in California.

Other Outcome Measures

This section presents analyses of several different measures of student outcomes in addressing two of the study’s research questions. The first of these is “How have the implementation of Proposition 227 and ELAP provisions affected the academic achievement of EL students, as measured by STAR results, redesignation rates, drop-out rates, high school graduation exam passing rates, and high school graduation rates?” We consider statewide dropout and graduation rates and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) results.

Unfortunately, limitations in the data available for each of these analyses prevent us from looking at trends over time (these limitations are discussed further in the analysis sections below). As a result, it is impossible to speculate about any connection between the results shown and the passage of Proposition 227. Instead, we provide descriptive information about the relative performance of students in schools with different concentrations of ELs, and provide a picture of differences between ELs and EOs, and between Hispanic and white students, in the various measures.

The second research question refers to EL access to the core academic curriculum. We address this by analyzing the percentages of EL students completing the courses necessary for admission to the University of California and California State University (UC/CSU) systems.

California High School Exit Exam by Language Fluency Subgroup

In this section we analyze the results of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) by English language fluency subgroups (i.e., EL, EO, RFEP) as well as by concentration of ELs. This test is designed to ensure that students that graduate from high

⁵¹ Given that the LAUSD database includes the years 1997 through 2003, it is not possible to follow students for more than seven years using this data set.

school can demonstrate basic skills according to the state content standards for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Our results show that statewide passing rates differ dramatically between ELs and non-ELs, with 37 percent of ELs passing the ELA section of the test in 2003-04, compared with 75 percent of EOs.

Data and methodology

The CAHSEE is composed of two parts, ELA and mathematics, which are aligned to California academic content standards.⁵² Starting with the class of 2006, students must pass both sections—demonstrating competency in reading, writing, and mathematics—to be eligible for graduation. The CAHSEE is administered to all California tenth graders; high school and adult education students may retake parts of the exam not previously passed. CAHSEE results are currently used in calculating both API and AYP accountability requirements for high schools.

While the CAHSEE has been administered since spring of 2001, due to changes in the CAHSEE content⁵³ we analyzed only the most recent data available (2003-04) and looked at the passing rates of tenth graders on the ELA and mathematics sections. To examine student performance, we calculated the average number of students per school receiving passing scores by language fluency subgroup (EOs, ELs, and RFEPs).

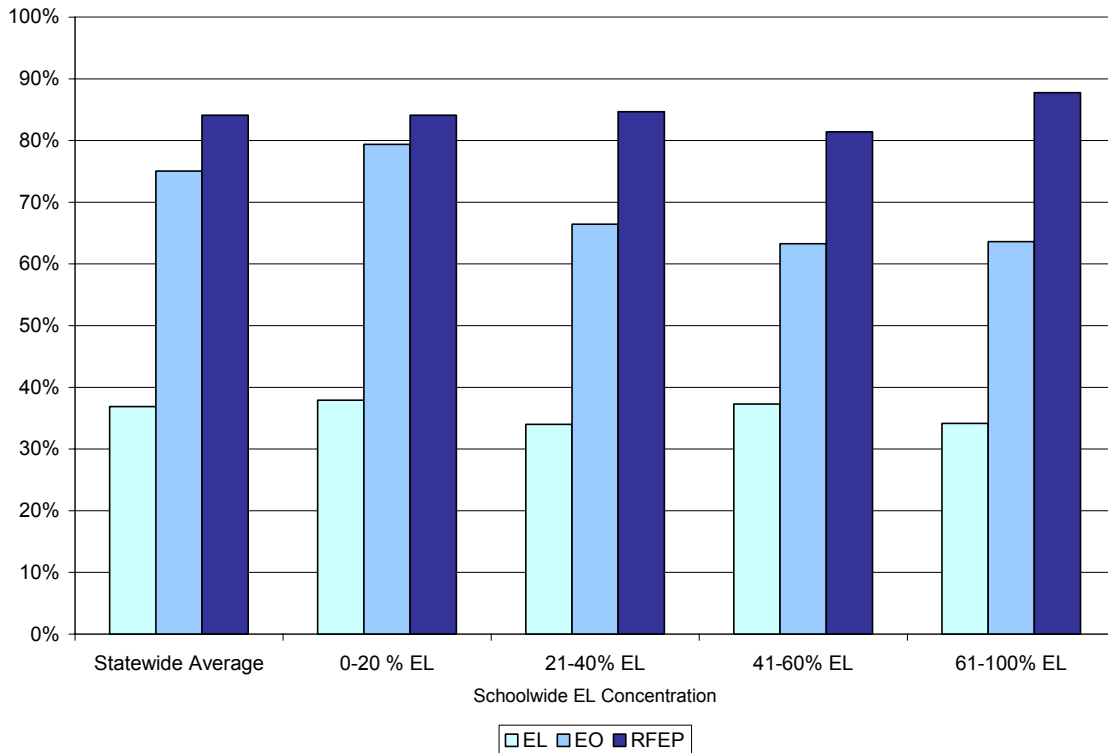
This analysis also explores patterns related to EL concentration. The data include a total of 907 high schools and 441,703 tenth grade students, broken down as follows: 69 percent of the high schools have less than 20 percent ELs, 22 percent have between 21-40 percent ELs, 7 percent of the school have 41-60 percent ELs, and 2 percent have more than 60 percent ELs. Passing rates were calculated by dividing the number of students with passing scores in a school's subgroup by the total number of students in that subgroup.

The statewide average passing rate for ELA is 75 percent for EOs, just under 37 percent for ELs, and about 84 percent for RFEPs. The statewide average passing rate for math is about 72 percent for EOs, 48 percent for ELs, and almost 82 percent for RFEPs. Exhibit III-21 illustrates CAHSEE ELA passing rates by EO, EL, and RFEP subgroups, grouping high schools by EL concentration.

⁵² See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/documents/assistfacts05.pdf>

⁵³ See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/overview.asp>

Exhibit III-21. CAHSEE ELA 10th Grade Passing Rates, by Language Fluency Subgroup and Schoolwide EL Concentration, 2003-04



Source: California High School Exit Exam Passing Rate, 10th graders 2003-04

The exhibit shows that the average EO passing rate is lower for high schools with more than 20 percent ELs. Schools with less than 20 percent ELs have a passing rate of 79.4 percent, compared to between 63 and 66 percent for schools with more than 20 percent ELs. Average EL passing rates range from 34 to almost 38 percent for all school categories, not showing a clear trend related to EL concentration. Average RFEP passing rates remain above 80 percent for all concentrations of ELs, ranging from 81.4 to 87.8 percent, and exceeding the EO average. This finding reflects the high achievement pattern in the longitudinal achievement analyses of SAT-9, CAT/6, and CST scores for former ELs, previously described in this chapter.

We see a similar pattern when looking at CAHSEE mathematics passing rates. Appendix B, Exhibit 50 shows these results.

Graduation Rates by EL Concentration

NCLB requires that high schools and school systems report graduation rates as a companion to achievement scores in determining adequate yearly progress (AYP). Unfortunately, calculating graduation rates is not straightforward, as most states do not

have student-level linked data over time that allows tracking students from grade to grade and from school to school.⁵⁴

California has chosen to use the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) formula for NCLB reporting purposes.⁵⁵ This formula divides the number of graduates by the number of graduates plus the total number of dropouts in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. At the time this analysis was conducted graduation rates disaggregated by language fluency subgroups were not available, so we conducted the analysis by ethnicity and EL concentration at the school. In July 2005 CDE reported the number of graduated ELs, as well as EL dropout counts for grade 9 to 12. This new information made the calculation of ELs graduation rates possible.⁵⁶ The overall graduation rate is about 94 percent for white students, and is about 90 percent for Hispanic students. The EL graduation rate is much lower, with an average of just under 66 percent.

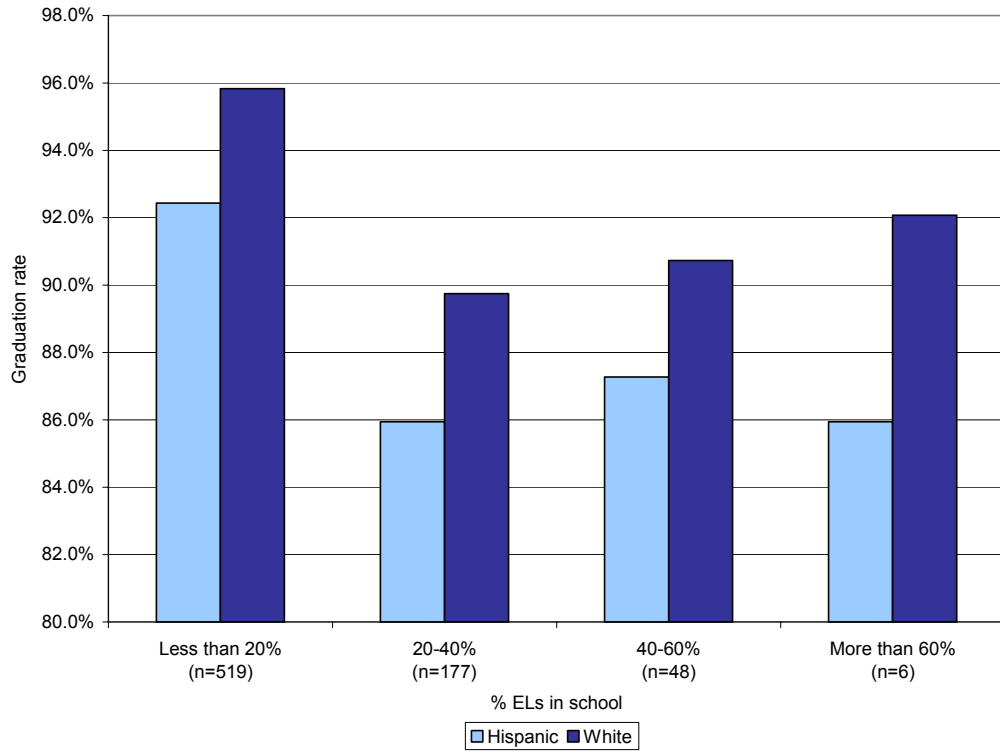
As in the previous analysis, schools were categorized by EL concentration: schools with less than 20 percent ELs, schools with 21-40 percent ELs, schools with 41-60 percent ELs, and schools with more than 60 percent ELs. Schools with the lowest concentration of ELs show the highest graduation rates, at about 96 percent for white students and about 93 percent for Hispanic students. Hispanic graduation rates drop considerably when the concentration of ELs increases in the school, probably due to the large overlap in these two categories in California.

⁵⁴ Note that as of June 30, 2005, California now requires that all local school districts include unique student identifiers in their data systems. Implementation of this change will enable linked student-level longitudinal analyses in the future.

⁵⁵ The methodology that California uses to calculate graduation rates have been criticized (Wald & Losen, 2005) because it results in a higher graduation rate than other methods. The state reported a robust graduation rate of 87 percent in 2002. However, as an example, using the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI), the overall graduation rate is 71 percent for the same time period. The state is working towards a better tracking system that will allow following students' progress, and ultimately allow a better understanding of graduation rates.

⁵⁶ CBEDS data files, retrieved in July, 2005 from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/cbedshome.asp>

Exhibit III-22. Graduation Rates for White and Hispanic Students, by Schoolwide EL Concentration, 2003-04



Source: CBEDS School Information Form (SIF), 2003-04

Dropout Rates by EL Concentration

In this section dropout rates are analyzed by EL concentration for white and Hispanic students. One limitation of this type of analysis is that dropout data are known to be unreliable. Students who drop out do not file forms—most simply stop showing up, often leaving their status as an open question. If individual student-linked data were available, students would be able to be tracked and better data would be available.

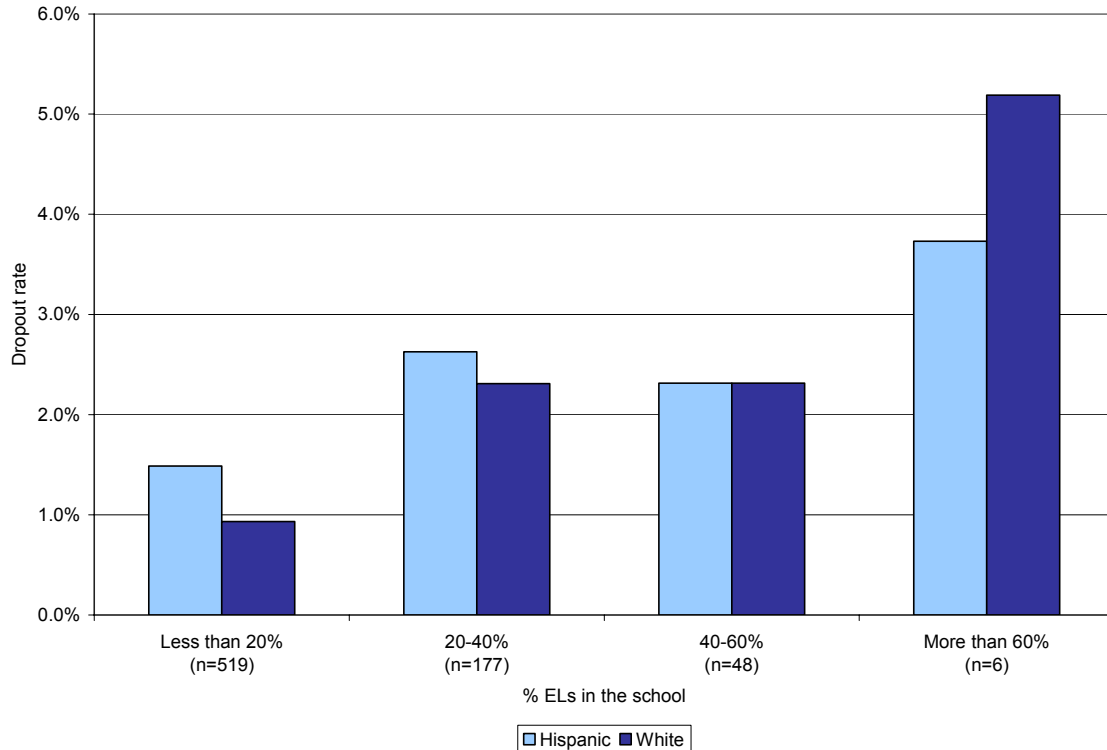
Meanwhile, existing data, despite methodological limitations, reveal critical differences across schools with different concentrations of EL students. Exhibit III-23 shows dropout rates for white and Hispanic students by EL concentration.⁵⁷ As mentioned previously, in July of this year CDE released the number of EL students that have dropped out in grades 9 to 12, making possible the calculation of dropout rates for ELs.

The dropout rate for ELs amounts to just under 3 percent, while the average dropout rate for white students is almost 2.5 percent and 2.6 percent for Hispanic students. Dropout rates also vary considerably across schools with different concentrations of ELs. White students have less than 1 percent dropout rates in the

⁵⁷ The dropout rates used in this analysis are the one-year dropout rates as reported by CBEDS. This rate is calculated by dividing grade 9-12 dropouts by the total enrollment in grades 9-12.

schools with the lowest concentration of ELs. However, dropout rates increase considerably for both groups of students when the concentration of ELs increases, which also correlate highly with increases in poverty.

Exhibit III-23. Dropout Rates for White and Hispanic Students, by Schoolwide EL Concentration, 2003-04



Source: CBEDS School Information Form (SIF), 2003-04

University of California/California State University (UC/CSU) Requirements: “A-G” Courses

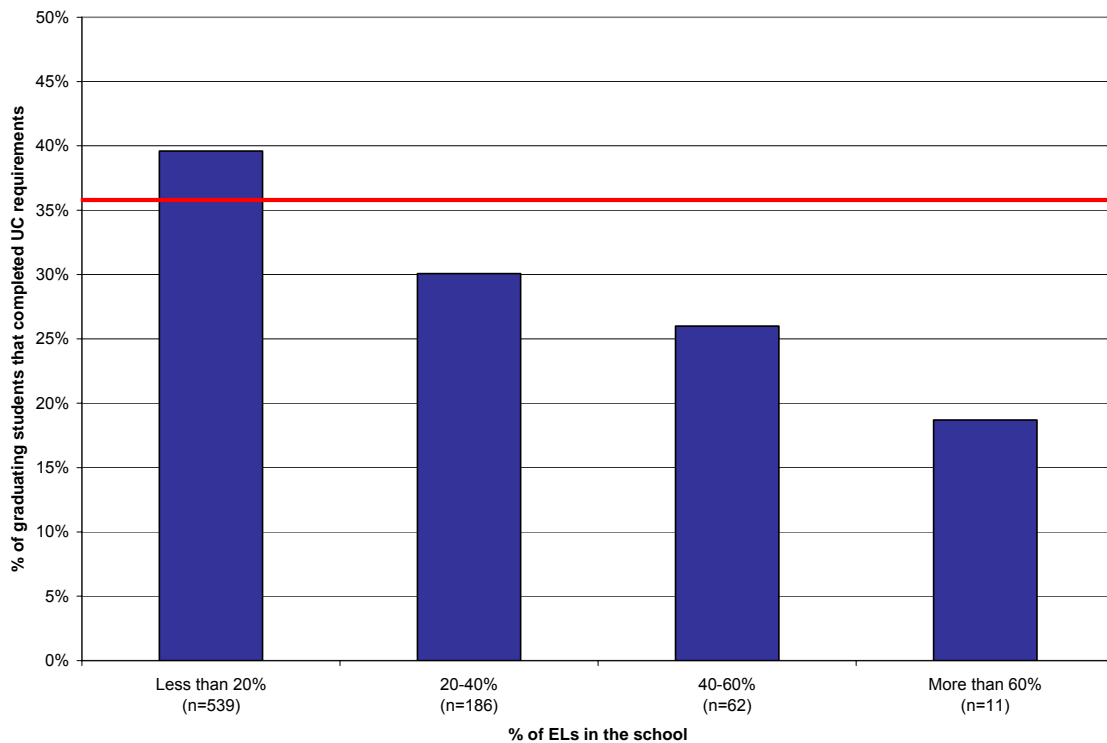
The University of California/California State University (UC/CSU) admissions processes require students to have taken an approved list of courses, the “A-G courses,” in order to be eligible. The California Education Code establishes that these courses should be seen as minimum requirements for graduation from California high schools. However, when we analyzed the equality of access to these courses, we found important differences across high schools. The high schools that do not offer these courses have much higher concentrations of ELs. In addition, lower percentages of students graduate with these UC/CSU requirements in schools with high concentrations of ELs.

The data used for this analysis came from the CBEDS School Information File. We used the data for 2001-02 school year, which is the latest year with information about “A-G courses.” This file reports the number of twelfth-grade graduates who also completed all of the “A-G” courses required for entry into the University of California with a grade of “C” or better. We then divided this number by the total number of

twelfth-grade graduates in order to calculate the percentage of students who had completed “A-G” courses in each high school.

The red line in Exhibit III-24 illustrates the statewide percentage of students graduating with these requirements (about 35 percent). Notably, schools with higher concentrations of ELs have lower percentages of students that have completed the required courses. The schools with more than 60 percent ELs had about 19 percent of students passing these courses, compared to almost 40 percent for schools with less than 20 percent ELs.

Exhibit III-24. Percentage of Graduating Students that Completed UC Requirements, by EL Concentration, 2001-02



Source: CBEDS School Information Form (SIF), 2001-02

About 97 percent of the high schools in California offer the “A-G” courses, and their student populations’ average about 42 percent EL. The 3 percent of high schools that do not offer these courses enroll a much higher percentage of ELs, at 67 percent. These results raise questions about equal access for ELs to these college-preparation courses.

Chapter IV. Identifying and Learning from Schools' and Districts' Success with ELs

Highlights

- Based on our finding in the prior chapter that model of instruction is not the operative variable in differentiating academic success with ELs, we explored the premise that the best source for understanding what does lead to high-level academic performance for English learners (ELs) would be schools and districts that appear to be achieving this result. A model was developed for identifying high EL performance using a school selection tool that enables users to interactively control demographics and selection criteria.
- Within the context of relatively high and varied levels of EL concentration and the proportion of students receiving primary language instruction, we identified and interviewed administrators from 66 schools and 5 districts that are among the highest performers statewide, relative to schools and districts with comparable student characteristics.
- While findings suggest that there is no one path to academic excellence among ELs, administrators tended to pinpoint a few key features that their success hinges upon. School principals identified the following as most critical: 1) staff capacity to address EL needs; 2) schoolwide focus on English Language Development and standards-based instruction; 3) shared priorities and expectations in regard to educating ELs; and 4) systematic, ongoing assessment and data-driven decision-making.
- Many of the common elements that our findings suggest are important contributors to excellence in EL education have been repeatedly shown to lead to success in all schools over the past decade. On the other hand, several of the factors respondents cited as most instrumental to their success are specifically focused on addressing the needs of ELs—that is, ensuring that teachers have knowledge and skills needed to support EL students, having in place systematic, carefully designed plans for provision of ELD instructional services, and deliberately fostering academic language and literacy development across the curriculum.
- District administrators also discussed strategies to support EL academic achievement such as sustained, on-site technical assistance and professional development; strategic resource allocation, and timely provision and careful use of data.

Why Effective Practices for ELs?

A major research question posed for this five-year study is, “Which programs and services being provided to ELs are most effective and least effective in ensuring equal access to the core academic curriculum, the achievement of state content and performance standards, and rapid acquisition of English?” From the outset of the study, our statewide achievement analyses of instructional programs for ELs have been designed to address this research question to the greatest extent possible, given the limitations of state data. Continued examination of this question over the span of the study provided little evidence that model of instruction (e.g. bilingual versus immersion) is among the most dominant factors affecting academic success for ELs.

As described in Chapter 3, in prior years of study, we found that improvements in EL academic performance occurred across instructional models, with no clear pattern favoring one over the others.¹ These earlier, tentative conclusions are further bolstered by the findings presented in the previous chapter, which are now based on the vastly improved (but far from perfect) data from the state as well as data newly available to this study from LAUSD.

We do not claim to have ended the long-standing state and national debate over bilingual versus immersion models of instruction. However, our empirical findings from the first year of the study, which brought into question the influence of model alone, cast sufficient doubt that it became clear that we should attempt to identify other factors that may influence EL achievement.

Our initial exploration of what practices, services, or other factors associated with EL instruction do appear to relate to academic success began two years ago. We initially pursued the question through intensive site visits to 18 schools in 14 districts that demonstrated unusually strong academic performance by their ELs. Building on that exploration of effective practices, this year we broadened our sample by conducting phone interviews with 66 school administrators and 5 district administrators. We also interviewed five administrators from districts where ELs are demonstrating high performance.

Rather than using random selection, we chose schools and districts with high EL academic performance relative to other schools and districts with similar characteristics. The schools and districts have a range of poverty and EL enrollment levels, and all of the schools are in the 90th percentile of achievement among schools with similar levels of poverty and EL populations. To study EL success, it was obviously imperative to include many schools and districts serving large numbers of ELs, and to consider other factors beyond school control known to affect academic achievement (e.g., poverty and percentage of ELs from the state’s largest second language by far, Spanish). The schools and districts selected for the phone interviews are clearly beating the odds.

¹ See our final reports from Years 2 and 3 of this study. These are available online at the following web page: http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx

Selected Literature on Elements of School Effectiveness and Effective Practice with ELs

Our examination of effective practices with ELs concentrates primarily on school-level elements. Studying high-performing schools serving low-income and minority populations has been a focal point of education research since the emergence of the effective schools movement launched by the late researcher Ron Edmonds three decades ago. Collectively, the body of work on effective schools consistently highlights five school characteristics that correlate with high performance as defined by student achievement:

1. A positive and academically focused school climate (Edmonds, 1979; Davis & Thomas, 1989; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1985)
2. Shared goals and professional community (Davis & Thomas, 1989; Darling Hammond, 1996; Hoy and Hunnum, 1997)
3. Monitoring of academic progress (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Neumann & Associates, 1996)
4. Parent involvement (Fullan, 1991; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1983)
5. Strong instructional leadership (Davis & Thomas, 1989; Edmonds, 1979; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Terry, 1996)

In addition to the general literature on school effectiveness, other researchers have also studied what constitutes effective practice specifically for English learners. Drawing upon the framework of school and classroom effectiveness presented in August and Hakuta's NRC report (1997) and elements seen as defining features of effective English learner instruction in the literature (Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, & Tharp, 2003; Scarcella, 2003; Thomas & Collier, 2001; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000), our exploratory Year 3 site visits were guided by the following four themes, which consolidate several elements of school-level effective practice with ELs:

- Utilizing a clear, explicitly defined plan of standards-based instruction to teach English learners in a manner that is responsive to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds by embedding new learning in meaningful connections to existing knowledge;
- Promoting language and literacy development through opportunities for challenging, engaging, facilitated learning;

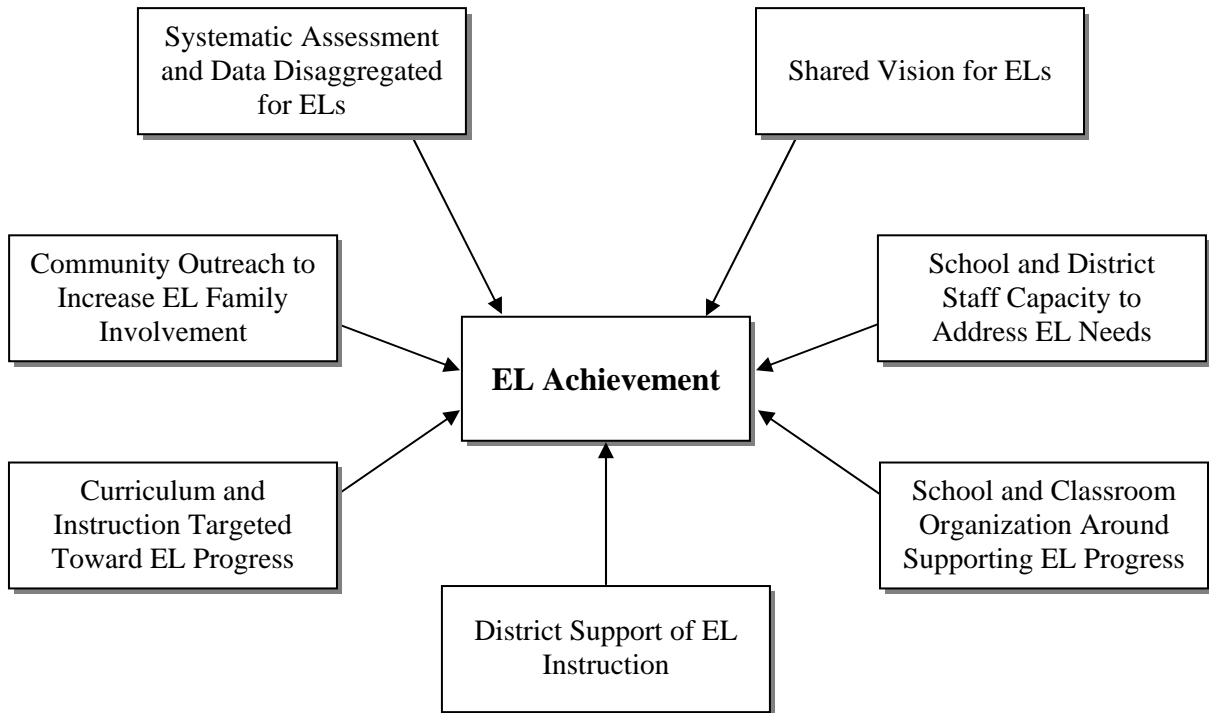
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- Conveying high expectations for student performance while attending to the skills needed to meet those expectations through ongoing assessment to inform instruction; and
 - Cultivating schoolwide accountability for English learner linguistic and academic achievement via strong leadership, well-prepared staff, and district, school, and community support to provide a foundation on which other effective practices can be built, sustained, and continuously renewed.

Findings from our Year 3 site visits aligned with these guiding themes by highlighting the critical importance of leadership, systematic assessment to inform instruction and accountability, and a clear, consistently implemented plan for instruction of ELs. In preparing to use phone interviews in this last year of the study to explore on a larger scale what sets schools with high-performing ELs apart from those with similar characteristics, we expanded on these themes and findings by developing a typology of 7 broad domains and 30 detailed elements that may contribute to EL achievement or create barriers to it. This typology was grounded in the literature reviewed above and also drew from the domains of comprehensive school reform for schools serving ELs that were presented in the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) resource guide, “Going Schoolwide” (Berman, Aburto, Nelson, Minicucci, & Burkart, 2000).

The typology includes seven broad areas of practice with ELs: shared vision for ELs, school and district staff capacity to address EL needs, school and classroom organization around supporting EL progress, district support of EL instruction, curriculum and instruction targeted toward EL progress, systematic assessment and data disaggregated for ELs, and community outreach to increase EL family involvement.² As shown in Exhibit IV-1, we refer to these areas as “domains which may contribute to EL achievement.” A detailed version of the full typology is included in Appendix C, Exhibit 5.

² Note that there is overlap among many of these domains—for instance, “school and classroom organization around supporting EL progress” and “curriculum and instruction targeted toward EL progress.” We included the two as separate domains to distinguish school structures for organizing staff and students from instructional content, goals, standards, and strategies.

Exhibit IV-1. Domains Which May Contribute to EL Achievement



We formed the typology partly to provide a structure for a summary of what prior research had found to be important elements to EL success, but also to have a pre-determined list against which respondents' comments could be checked. While it formed the basis for some of the probing questions to school and district administrators, they were also free to list whatever factors they believed were important contributors to their success. In other words, while we used the list as a basis for tallying what they said, we intended for it to be a formative tool that would be shaped by their responses and updated accordingly.³ In addition, the list was important in guiding our work, but it was not given to the respondents in advance of or during the interviews, allowing them complete freedom to offer their thoughts regarding the experience in their schools. Findings relevant to each of the domains will be discussed in depth later in the chapter.

It is also worthy of note that a major purpose of these interviews was to gain practical advice. We are most interested in what can be learned from successful sites serving substantial numbers of ELs that may benefit state policy as well as practice at other like schools around the state.

³ As shown later in Exhibit IV-4, there was only one response that we were unable to classify using the typology. That said, after all responses were coded and we began analyzing them, we did adjust some of the element descriptors to more fully reflect responses.

This chapter begins with a discussion of considerations involved in identifying high performance among ELs, discusses how we selected schools and districts for this year's telephone interviews, and presents findings regarding facilitating factors and challenges to effectiveness with ELs. We discuss top strategies and elements of effectiveness identified as critical by school respondents, including staff capacity to address EL needs; schoolwide focus on English Language Development (ELD) and standards-based instruction; shared priorities and expectations in regard to educating ELs; and systematic, ongoing assessment and data-driven decision-making. Discussion of challenges to effectively serving ELs and strategies for addressing them follows. Themes emerging from our interviews related to ways that districts can support EL success are also summarized. Finally, we present advice offered by principals about helping ELs to succeed, and profile six schools from our sample which we believe provide good examples of the varied strategies schools in our sample reported using in attaining unusually high EL academic performance.

Identifying High Performance among ELs

Studies intended to examine effective elements of practice for English learners have traditionally relied on identifying schools through a nomination process or other qualitative judgments, rather than on the basis of student outcomes (August & Hakuta, 1997). For example, in the last major state-sponsored study of EL education in California, case studies of eight "exemplary" schools conducted by Berman et al. (1995) employed a nomination and screening process for school selection that included initial nominees by pre-selected respondents, extensive screening telephone interviews, and one-day site visits. A major reason many of these prior studies exclusively used qualitative indicators to identify excellence in EL service provision is that comprehensive and comparable quantitative data were not available. Berman et al. explored quantitative indicators that might have assisted them in identifying high-performing schools. However, at that time, California school districts were administering different tests at different times, to different students, making comparisons of EL academic performance across schools virtually meaningless. Variation in testing practice was even further exacerbated for ELs, with some taking no tests at all for varying numbers of years (based on local policies) and with included students sometimes being tested in English, sometimes in Spanish, sometimes in both languages.

Based on their qualitatively derived sample, Berman et al. (1995) attempted to determine the level at which the following criteria were being met: "1) high quality language arts, mathematics, or science programs for LEP students; 2) significant school restructuring (i.e., with respect to governance, organization of teaching, uses of time); and 3) implementation of a well-designed English language acquisition program." Six "indicators of excellence" were then used to assess these criteria. The authors note that the purpose of the study was not to link the indicators quantitatively to student outcomes (which they could not do), but rather to describe how "these schools are highly innovative and follow practices that are considered by researchers to provide outstanding learning opportunities for LEP and all students."

While standardized test scores may not fully represent school effectiveness or account for the full scope of educational outcomes that should be considered in determining educational success, research suggests that quantitative data may provide direct and indirect evidence of success on a broader range of factors than just test performance (Berman et al., 2000; Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). A major purpose of our Year 3 site visits was to explore whether any relationship between EL outcomes and elements of effective practice identified in the literature would be observed—that is, to what extent the sites that appeared “effective” through empirical analyses of statewide EL student achievement data and demographic measures also appeared “effective” through direct observation. We made a conscious decision to move away from identifying successful schools using a nomination process, which relies on subjective judgment, to a more objective and replicable process. We consider it essential that the state be able to continually identify schools that are truly beating the odds in regard to EL achievement, with the idea that ongoing learning can occur both at the state level and in other schools and districts across the state.

It is also worth noting that while test scores do not tell us all we want to know about whether ELs are receiving a comprehensive education, these test scores are the standard against which schools and districts are being held accountable. These scores are clearly measurable and comparable across sites and across years (with some limitations—see Chapter 3). Clear goals and well-established means for measuring progress toward them over time are important elements in tracking success in education and ensuring that students are receiving the education services to which they are entitled.

In Year 3, we also attempted to gain a better understanding of the connection between high test performance and innovative practice. Toward this end, we defined effectiveness as high EL performance on statewide achievement tests at the school level in the context of varied EL concentrations (i.e., low, moderate, and high) and proportions of students receiving primary language instruction (i.e., substantial L1 and not substantial L1). We visited 18 schools nested in 13 California school districts: nine “effective” schools, whose ELs appeared to have had sustained high performance relative to those with similar characteristics and to the rest of the state on the SAT-9 and California Standards Test (CST) over the previous three years; three “growth” schools, whose ELs appeared to have made relatively substantial academic progress on these tests over the past three years; and six “comparison” schools, whose ELs scored below the state EL average on state assessments.⁴ These site visits suggested a strong relationship between the elements of effective practice and EL academic performance. While no one criterion appeared absolutely essential to success, strong leadership, the constructive use of assessment data to inform instruction, and a clear plan for EL instruction were the strongest candidates.

In this last year, we have extended this study of school-level elements of effectiveness with ELs to a broader sample of schools with high EL performance in the context of relatively high and varied levels of EL concentrations and the proportion of

⁴ See our Year 3 report, available at http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx, for a full description of this methodology.

students receiving primary language instruction, as defined through our previous related work in the third year of this study. Given that our Year 3 site visits suggested that EL students' academic performance seemed to be a generally reliable indicator of practices more qualitatively assessed as effective for this population, comparison schools were not included in our sample this year. This allowed us to maximize the number of schools performing exceptionally well in regard to ELs we could include in the phone interview sample.

We refined our model for identifying high EL performance this year by developing a school selection tool that enables users to interactively control demographics and selection criteria. The tool allows manipulation of criteria such as the statewide tests included in a performance index, as well as contextual indicators such as EL concentration, poverty, primary instructional model, predominant primary language, regional location, and urbanicity. To identify high-performing schools meeting specific criteria, the interactive selection tool generates a single composite index score (modeled after our Year 3 selection method), composed of student-level performance data from 1999 through 2004, to calculate school-level percentile ranks for EL and RFEP academic performance for each school in the state serving this population. This tool was an important asset for the study and, we believe, a valuable product from it.

Our Year 3 efforts emphasized for us that attempting to define schools that are “effective” is often politically charged and contentious. This seems especially true in regard to ELs, where historic debates surrounding instructional strategies and the most appropriate outcome measures are involved. Given that there is likely no uniform set of criteria that would be universally accepted, our goal was to enable the user to control, combine, and manipulate selection criteria to explore a variety of effectiveness criteria across all schools and districts with ELs in the state, or by limiting the population to examine schools realizing considerable success within the context of particular settings, geographic regions, or other conditions. The tool ranks the highest-performing schools satisfying specified selection criteria, thus removing ambiguity regarding what constitutes beating the odds under those conditions. This tool potentially could be used by policymakers and practitioners interested in identifying such exemplars.

The need for the school selection tool in the context of this study arose from the belief that the best sources for understanding how to achieve high-level academic performance for ELs were school administrators, teachers, and others who had accomplished this feat. Looking over much of the prior research literature, who better to provide the state and local instructional staff with advice regarding the most difficult-to-answer research question posed for this study: Which practices, strategies, and other factors are “most and least effective” in promoting EL academic achievement?

Underlying our effective schools inquiry is the basic premise that the state as a whole is struggling in regard to high-level educational outcomes for ELs, yet with the largest state EL population in the country by far, some of the state's schools are clearly national leaders in this area. If these schools can be identified in some agreed upon fashion, there is a lot to be learned from them in shaping future state policy as well as in

using them as blueprints for providers in similar schools who would like to do better with their EL population.

The difficulty was in making these selections. We learned during our Year 3 attempts to use data to select “top-performing” schools in relation to EL achievement that there is a lot of potential for argument. Furthermore, there is a real danger that disagreement about which criteria and conditions are most important in selecting successful schools and what variables are most reasonable to control (e.g., poverty), and disagreement resulting from the fact that schools “beating the odds” within their classification of similar schools are not necessarily at the top of the state, may paralyze efforts to identify and learn from such schools. All of these factors can overwhelm the concept that some schools are doing unusually well while enrolling large percentages of one of the state’s most challenging category of students. We are remiss to not learn from them (and, arguably, also not to acknowledge them). This selection tool has the power to help us get past many of these objections by allowing the criteria to be easily changed to reflect those characteristics most valued by the interested party. In this sense, we are able to move beyond the burden of selecting the “best EL schools” in the state to those that are best in terms of the outcome criteria selected by the interested party and those within the category of schools most relevant to the purpose at hand.

For the purposes of this study, we have focused exclusively on the test results on which districts and schools are being held accountable by the state. In regard to types of schools included, we have sought variety across a mix of important factors known to influence student achievement and considered important given the research questions posed for this study (e.g., varying groupings of schools based on percent EL, model of instruction, region, and percent Hispanic). However, since the mix of test scores used or the categories of schools selected can also be subjects of debate, all these factors can be varied, using the tool, to assess the extent to which different schools arise as top-performing as these selection factors change.

This ability to adjust parameters not only provides flexibility in terms of selection, it also provides a sense of robustness in regard to the schools selected. For example, if you choose the outcome criteria in five different ways (e.g., by placing much more importance on some traits rather than others, or including data from the past three years, rather than the past five) and the same schools continue to emerge, it increases confidence in the validity of selection. Also, from a practical sense, in focus groups we held on this topic as a part of this study, local service providers were very interested in being able to obtain the names of schools similar to theirs that were doing extremely well with their EL population. Many wanted to be able to contact these schools themselves to better understand the elements of success within a context like theirs. By providing a conditional rather than an absolute selection of high-performing EL schools, we feel the tool is potentially important for future evaluative research on this topic, as well as for more practical applications.

How We Selected Schools and Districts

While the tool enables users to vary the demographic and outcome selection criteria, for the purposes of selecting a sample of schools for participation in phone interviews, it was necessary to establish a single set of criteria. This allowed us to identify the top-performing schools in the state given the specified selection criteria. As such, the schools we selected are not intended to represent a definitive list of the most effective schools for ELs in California. Rather, they represent the highest performers relative to schools with comparable characteristics.

To rank the schools of the state in regard to EL performance, we created index scores by standardizing and averaging CST, SAT-9, CAT/6, and CAHSEE scaled scores⁵ for all tested EL/RFEP students in each school statewide across all subjects, all grades, and six years (1998-99 to 2003-04).⁶ Weights were assigned to each test and subject (within test) in accordance with those used in that year's Academic Performance Index (API).⁷ To emphasize consistent school performance over time, we assigned a 20 percent weight to the four most recent years of test data (2000-01 to 2003-04) and a 10 percent weight to the prior two years (1998-99 to 1999-2000). The tool uses this composite index score to calculate two types of percentile ranks: an absolute rank comparing each school's performance against all other schools in the state (i.e., the "statewide EL achievement rank" for 1999-2004) and a rank comparing similar schools within selected criteria (i.e., the "within stratum EL achievement rank" for 1999-2004).

We then categorized every school in the state using four stratifiers:

1. School level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high)
2. Concentration of ELs⁸
3. Instructional approach employed for a substantial proportion of ELs⁹
4. Unique regional circumstances (i.e, Central region schools)

⁵ Note that we also considered including annual CELDT scores in our school selection performance index and built a composite measure of CELDT progress over time into the interactive tool, but ultimately decided not to use this measure for sample selection purposes. First, inclusion of this measure in the school selection index seemed to have little to no impact on the lists of top-ranked schools that were generated. Moreover, we wanted use the API as a model for the weighting scheme assigned to the various tests included in our index, and the CELDT is not incorporated in the API.

⁶ This individual student-level data was provided by the California Department of Education.

⁷ Composition of the index score can be manipulated using the interactive tool to assign different weights to tests and years of available data.

⁸ Given the high correlation of EL concentration with poverty level, we did not include poverty as a separate stratifier.

⁹ Information about how the instructional approach stratifier relates to California schools as a whole is presented in Exhibit II-2 of our Year 3 report, available at:
http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx

To create the school level stratifier, we assigned the school level of elementary, middle, or high based on the grade span offered.¹⁰ For EL concentration, we divided the number of ELs by total school enrollment to generate a percentage of ELs at each school. Both stratifiers were created using 2003 CBEDS school level data. For the third stratifier, instructional model employed for a substantial number of ELs, we used 2004 Language Census data to calculate a percentage of students receiving primary language (L1) instruction at each school; substantial and non-substantial L1 were classified according to a 25 percent cut point.¹¹

To ensure that schools in the state's central areas were represented in the study, we introduced a final stratum including only schools in the Central Coast, Central Foothill, Central Mountain, and San Joaquin Valley regions.¹² With the inclusion of this stratum, our sample selection became roughly representative of the state's distribution of ELs, with 23 percent northern region schools, 56 percent southern region schools, and 21 percent central region schools.¹³

Finally, to ensure that our sample reflects the representation of EL home languages statewide, we limited school selection to those that have a predominantly Spanish-speaking EL population—California's EL population is 85.1 percent Hispanic. However, the sample also reflects the state's linguistic diversity more broadly—it includes schools in which the Spanish-speaking EL population is the overwhelming majority and schools with a more diverse linguistic mix, including many of the state's other most common language groups.¹⁴

¹⁰ We divided schools into four school level categories based on the grades of enrollment. Schools enrolling grades kindergarten through 5 were classified as elementary schools, those enrolling grades 6 through 8 as middle schools, and those enrolling grades 9 through 12 as high schools. Schools with grade spans K-6 or K-8 were also classified as elementary schools. Schools serving wider grade spans (e.g., K-12, 6-12) were classified as "other."

¹¹ For this stratifier, the 25 percent cutoff was identified using a sensitivity analysis. On first consideration, the 25 percent threshold might seem low for characterizing a school as providing substantial L1 instruction. It should be kept in mind, however, that most schools offering L1 instruction (or alternative courses of study) operate a transitional bilingual program for some students and structured English immersion for others. Furthermore, transitional bilingual programs are typically "early exit" programs designed to phase students into English within a few years. In contrast, the achievement analyses presented in Chapter 3 use a 50 percent cut point as the standard for "substantial" primary language instruction, as this represents a majority of students in the school.

¹² Our regional definitions consolidate the eleven regions discussed in Tafoya (2002) into three broad regions: north, central, and south. We assigned the North Coast, Northern Mountain, Northern Foothill, Sacramento Valley, San Francisco Bay Area regions to our northern region and Inland Empire, Los Angeles, and San Diego regions to our southern region. Appendix C, Exhibit 2 contains a map displaying our three broad regional classifications; for reference, the northern region accounts for approximately 16 percent of the state's ELs, the southern region for 63 percent, and the central region for 16 percent, based on 2004 Language Census data. For information regarding the state's distribution of ELs by county, please see Exhibit I-3 of our Year 3 report, available at http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx

¹³ The I stratum parallels the school level and EL concentration criteria used to define strata A through H. As seen in Exhibit I, we selected six high EL elementary schools, five moderate EL elementary schools, two moderate to high EL middle schools, and two moderate to high EL high schools.

¹⁴ It was not necessary to control for this balance, as it emerged naturally among the top selected schools. For more information on the state's linguistic make-up, please see Chapter 1.

In summary, we defined these strata and selection criteria to ensure the selection of high-performing schools representative of diverse circumstances across the state. While we could have just selected the highest performing schools in California, they are of little interest to this study because they educate so few ELs.

Using these strata and selection criteria, we used the tool to sort schools from highest to lowest performance within each stratum, and selected the top-performing schools for the sample.¹⁵ In addition to this “sorting” method, an alternative method for selecting schools that appear to be beating the odds used regression analysis to conditionally select schools based on achievement in light of such control variables as percentage of students in poverty. For each stratum, this regression method yielded similar (often almost identical) lists of top-ranked schools to those generated from the sorting method and, therefore, served as a secondary check. As the results from the two approaches were very similar, we opted for the sorting method because it is much easier to explain. Rather than try to introduce concepts in relation to conditional selection, we can just report that based on these stated criteria we sorted schools meeting these conditions from top to bottom and selected those at the very top in terms of EL student performance.

Following this method, 75 schools were included in our sample, with 3 of our original selections replaced at district suggestion.¹⁶ We then asked these schools to participate in a phone interview regarding effective practices for ELs, and were able to complete interviews at 66 of the 75 selected schools.¹⁷

Exhibit IV-2 displays the stratifiers used to define each sampling cell, including the school levels and EL concentrations for the schools selected as part of the Central (I) stratum. The number of schools from each of these strata that participated in the phone interviews is also listed. In addition, note that the stratum designations (A, B, C, etc.) are indicated below in italics.

¹⁵ We sorted using the within-stratum EL achievement rank described earlier.

¹⁶ In two cases, districts requested that we not interview sampled schools because they felt that the level of EL achievement in evidence was due more to demographics, than to these schools’ instructional policies and practices. The third school was not included due to a recent change in administration.

¹⁷ Note we were granted district approval to interview 75 sampled schools, but that some did not participate for logistical reasons.

Exhibit IV-2. Number of Schools Interviewed by Strata

School Type	Concentration of ELs			Total
	High EL ^(a)	Mod EL ^(a)	Low EL ^(a)	
Elementary				
Non-Central Valley	15	13	9	36
Non-L1 ^(b)	12 A	11 B	7 C	30
L1 ^(c)	3 D	2 E	2 F	7
Central Valley	4 I	5 I		9
Middle Schools				
Non-Central Valley	1 G	7 G		8
Central Valley	1 I	1 I		2
High Schools				
Non-Central Valley	4 H	4 H		8
Central Valley	2 I			2
Total	27	30	9	66

(a): The percentage ranges for the three classifications of EL concentration differ by school grade level because elementary schools typically enroll higher percentages of EL students than secondary schools (which tend to draw their students from larger areas). At the elementary level, schools with high EL concentration were defined as those with 61% or more EL students; moderate EL schools were those with 41% to 60% EL students; and low concentration schools were those with 21% to 40% ELs. At the secondary level (including both middle and high schools), schools with high EL concentration were defined as those with 41% or more EL students and moderate EL schools were those with 21% to 40% ELs. Schools with fewer than 21% ELs were not considered for phone interviews.

(b): Primary language instruction offered to less than 25% of ELs in 2003-04

(c): Primary language instruction offered to 25% or more of ELs in 2003-04

Exhibit IV-3 summarizes EL performance and schoolwide context characteristics for our sample. EL performance characteristics show the average within-stratum rank (column 6) and average state rank (column 7) for each stratum. As an example, 9 of the 12 schools selected for stratum A were at or above the 98th percentile in regard to EL performance as compared to all high EL, non-L1 elementary schools in the state. These rankings were generated using the composite index score, and serve to identify the highest-performing schools meeting the selected criteria for each stratum. The exhibit displays demographic information in the form of average percentages for EL, Spanish-speaking ELs, and poverty for each stratum. For reference, of the state's 6.3 million K-12 students, 50 percent receive free or reduced price meals, 25 percent are ELs, and 85 percent of ELs are Spanish speaking.¹⁸ Performance data from API state and similar schools ranks for 2002 and 2003 is also included for reference.

¹⁸ See Chapter 1 for further information regarding California's EL population.

Exhibit IV-3. Selected Characteristics of Interviewed Schools, by Stratum

Sampling Stratum (1)	Strata Characteristics				EL/RFEP Performance Characteristics		Schoolwide Context Characteristics						
	EL Concentration (2)	EL Instructional Model (3)	School level (4)	N of Schools (5)	Avg. Within Stratum EL Ach. Rank (99 to 04) (6)	Avg. State EL Ach. Rank (99 to 04) (7)	Avg. % ELs ¹⁹ (8)	Avg. % Spanish Speakers (9)	Avg. % Poverty ²⁰ (10)	Avg. API Similar School Rank 2002 (11)	Avg. API Similar School Rank 2003 (12)	Avg. API State Rank 2002 (13)	Avg. API State Rank 2003 (14)
A	61-100%	Non L1	Elem.	12	98.6	79.3	71	70	87	9	9	6	6
B	41-60%	Non L1	Elem.	11	98.7	85.8	47	54	66	8	8	7	7
C	21-40%	Non L1	Elem.	7	99.5	91.8	28	56	42	9	8	9	9
D	61-100%	L1	Elem.	3	99.3	68.4	72	82	91	8	9	4	5
E	41-60%	L1	Elem.	2	99.7	80.5	53	71	81	10	10	7	7
F	21-40%	L1	Elem	2	99.6	80.2	30	69	47	6	5	6	6
G	21-100%	N/A	Middle	8	99	81.7	31	52	56	7	7	6	6
H	21-100%	N/A	High	8	97.9	71.7	41	57	63	7	7	5	6
I	21-100%	N/A	N/A ²¹	13	97.4	50.9	53	94	76	8	8	4	4

¹⁹ Percent ELs was calculated using student-level STAR 2003-04 data, which includes data for tested students in grades 2 through 11.

²⁰ Percent poverty was calculated using student-level STAR 2003-04 data, which includes data for tested students in grades 2 through 11.

²¹ Please see Exhibit IV-2 and footnote 11 for a description of the school levels included within stratum I..

Given the stratified nature of our sample, some variation in agreement between the overall EL achievement ranking statewide (column 7) and within-stratum performance (column 6) is expected.²² In regard to these differences in strata defined by instructional model, it must be kept in mind that there tend to be substantial student differences between schools offering bilingual and immersion models, such as entering English proficiency levels, which cannot be captured by general demographic characteristics such as poverty and EL concentration.²³ In short, while schools in certain strata (D, H, and I) stand out as relatively low-performing when compared to the state as a whole, they are the highest-performing schools in their category (column 6). Because we feel it is important to include these categories within this inquiry, it is therefore necessary to include these schools that are clearly beating the odds even if they are not the highest performers in the state.

Another dimension of this year's study is that in addition to schools, we attempted to identify districts with relatively high-performing ELs. We included districts because of their considerable potential to affect school and student performance. Five districts in which ELs overall demonstrate relatively high academic performance were selected using a regression method. For this regression, we used 2003-04 California Standards Test, English Language Arts (CST-ELA) scale scores.²⁴ Controlling for parental education, poverty, and school level, we selected the top five districts meeting the following criteria:

1. A positive and significant estimate for “district effect”
2. At least 21 percent EL concentration
3. A minimum of 1,000 ELs
4. At least two sites from our school sample for possible triangulation

Again, we would not characterize these five districts as necessarily the “most effective” for ELs in California. As above, this would depend on exactly how effectiveness is defined. We did, however, select the top five districts based on the criteria above.

All five district interviews were successfully completed. The selected districts included four unified districts and one elementary district. Four offer primary language (L1) instruction to less than 25 percent of their ELs and one offers L1 instruction to more than 25 percent of its ELs in 2003-04. Regional balance was also an objective. With the

²² Additionally, it should not be surprising that API rankings do not necessarily coincide with our statewide and within-strata EL/RFEP rankings, since we included only EL and RFEP performance in our composite index score; EL/RFEP performance may not accurately reflect the school's performance as a whole.

²³ Please see Chapter 3 of this report for a detailed discussion of findings regarding instructional model.

²⁴ Unlike the sorting method used for school selection, regression models require the use of a single dependent variable (student scores on a single subject test in a given year, in this case). We used the 2004 CST ELA to select districts for our sample because it represents the most current data available regarding EL achievement for the subject that shows the greatest gap between EO and EL performance.

final sample including two northern districts, two southern districts, and one central district, this criterion was met by the top five districts that naturally emerged from this analysis. On average, 72 percent of students in these districts are eligible for free or reduced price lunch and 36 percent are ELs.

Telephone Interviews

The telephone interviews were primarily conducted with school principals. However, in some cases additional staff were also invited to participate. In total, 65 principals, 4 assistant principals, 11 EL coordinators, and 3 teachers participated in the 66 school interviews conducted for this study. The interview protocol for both schools and districts focused on themes of effective practices for ELs, instructional programs, redesignation, and the impact of Proposition 227 and the accountability movement (see Appendix C, Exhibit 6). The protocol was structured with a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions, and lasted approximately one hour. This structure provided a balance of quantitative and qualitative data. Following each interview, we entered quantitative responses, response summaries from open-ended questions, and an overview of each of the four themes into an Access database designed to allow us to filter responses by school characteristics, helping us detect relevant trends within and across schools.

Roughly half of the interview (12 out of 25 questions) focused on factors contributing to, and barriers to, school success and effectiveness, or “beating the odds,” with ELs. Exhibit IV-4 displays our conceptualization of broad domains which contribute to EL achievement. As described earlier, within this theme, interviewers coded each respondent’s answer using our typology (Appendix C, Exhibit 5). These codes were used to develop Exhibit IV-5, which displays the most critical factors identified as contributing to success with ELs. It shows the frequency with which interviewees identified each factor 1) as the single most critical factor and 2) as one of the top three factors. In addition to factors cited by school administrators, we also specifically explored the importance of using student performance data, a clear plan for instructing ELs, district support, and leadership—factors surfacing as particularly important in our initial exploration of effectiveness through our Year 3 case studies.

Findings Regarding Facilitating Factors and Challenges to School and District Effectiveness with ELs

As noted earlier, our Year 3 site visits suggested that the relationship between effectiveness as evidenced by EL academic achievement data on state assessments and the practices and characteristics observed during visits to the sites was strong. This year’s study asked school and district respondents whether their perceptions matched our data. The vast majority (95.5 percent) of the 66 responded that they were aware of how well their ELs were doing.

However, a few school respondents expressed concern about inconsistencies between their own perceptions in this regard and the labels that are attributed to them as part of state accountability policy. As one principal described:

I was very proud of our accomplishments here until this past year when we all of a sudden became a program improvement school. I feel that I am getting mixed messages. I do get phone calls from different agencies in the state because they say I'm on a low-income high-achieving school list. On the other hand, here we sit on a list of program improvement schools. I guess it's a little discouraging.

In addition, it is worth noting that among the overwhelming majority who see themselves as doing well, the qualification that there is still room for improvement was pervasive. In the words of one principal, "Part of our perception is the work isn't done." This sentiment of continuing to strive for excellence may be integral to the success of participating schools.

Top Strategies and Elements of Effectiveness School Respondents Identified as Critical

This section discusses the top practices, strategies, and other factors identified by respondents as most effective in boosting the academic achievement of ELs in their schools, how they addressed some of the unique challenges they face in educating ELs, and the important role districts can play in influencing outcomes for ELs.

We asked administrators for their best judgment about the critical elements necessary to achieve desired outcomes for ELs. Prior to discussing individual components, however, it is important to point out that respondents often emphasized the interrelated and interdependent nature of these elements. In the words of one school principal, "The most critical factor cannot be separated out. They are all co-mingled...if you don't have one of them, it won't work."

As described, respondents were asked to describe the top three factors they felt have been most effective in boosting EL academic performance at their school, and then asked them to identify what they considered to be the one most essential factor. Their responses were subsequently coded using our typology of 7 broad domains containing 30 detailed elements. These responses are summarized in Exhibit IV-4 where responses are collapsed into the 7 broad domains, and in Exhibit IV-5, which provides more detail. Across the two exhibits, the domains are ordered by frequency of response; likewise, in Exhibit IV-5, the elements within each of these domains are displayed in this order. Furthermore, note that the top five elements cited by respondents across all domains are shown in bold in Exhibit IV-5.²⁵

²⁵ Note that two elements 1) teacher/departamental collaboration and 2) organized process for monitoring student outcomes to plan instruction tied for fifth among those respondents ranked as the most critical.

Exhibit IV-4. Most Critical Domains of Effectiveness as Identified by School Interview Respondents (Grouped Responses)

Domains of Effectiveness	Ranking Domain as #1		Ranking Domain as One of Top 3	
	N	%	N	%
Staff Capacity, Characteristics, and Training to Address EL Needs	26	38.3	49	25.1
Curriculum and Instruction Targeted toward EL Progress	21	31.7	57	29.2
Shared Vision for ELs	8	11.7	31	15.9
School and Classroom Organization around Supporting EL Progress	4	6.7	19	9.7
Systematic Assessment and Data Disaggregated for ELs	4	6.7	17	8.7
District Support of EL Instruction	2	3.3	5	2.6
Community Outreach to Increase EL Family Involvement	0	0.0	10	5.1
Other	1	1.7	7	3.6
Total	66	100	195	100

Exhibit IV-5. Most Critical Elements of Effectiveness as Identified by School Interview Respondents²⁶

Detailed Elements of Effectiveness	Ranking Element as #1		Ranking Element as One of Top 3	
	N	%	N	%
Staff Capacity				
Experience, qualifications and characteristics of instructional staff	17	25.8	26	13.3
Teacher/departmental collaboration	4	6.1	7	3.6
Professional development	3	4.5	7	3.6
Leadership	2	3.0	6	3.1
Instructional coaches/support	0	0.0	3	1.5
Curriculum and Instruction				
Focus on English Language Development (ELD)	8	12.3	23	11.8
Curriculum and instruction tied to goals and standards	6	9.1	13	6.7
General instructional strategies	3	4.5	6	3.1
Model of EL instruction (e.g., immersion, bilingual, dual immersion)	2	3.0	3	1.5
Adequate materials to address instructional needs of EL students	2	3.0	10	5.1
Whole-school reform model	1	1.5	1	0.5
Equity of access to core curriculum for EL students	0	0.0	1	0.5
Shared Vision for ELs				
Shared expectations and priorities in regard to educating ELs	6	9.1	13	6.7
Clear, coherent instructional plan	2	3.0	9	4.6
Supportive school/district climate	0	0.0	9	4.6
School and Classroom Organization				
Grouping/integrating of EL students	3	4.5	8	4.1
Maximized use of instructional time during normal school day	1	1.5	5	2.6
Additional instructional time for ELs	0	0.0	6	3.1
Systematic Assessment and Data				
Organized process for monitoring student outcomes to plan instruction	4	6.1	16	8.2
Primary language and/or English proficiency as well as academic achievement are assessed regularly	0	0.0	1	0.5
District Support of EL Instruction				
District curriculum support/development	2	3.0	5	2.6
Community Outreach				
Family Involvement	0	0.0	9	4.6
External partnerships and integrated services	0	0.0	1	0.5
Other				
Resources	0	0.0	3	1.5
Technology to supplement instruction	0	0.0	3	1.5
Other	0	0.0	1	0.5
Total	66	100	195	100

²⁶ Note that results for four elements originally included in our typology are not shown above because they were not cited by respondents as among the most important factors. The dropped elements included three related to district support and one related to teacher accountability. Please see Appendix C, Exhibit 5 for the full typology.

While these patterns in the domains and elements most commonly cited emerge, the relatively broad distribution across all of the points are also worthy of note. Two implications are suggested: 1) the typology we developed was a reasonable mechanism for capturing what respondents from the participating schools in our sample see as most critical to their demonstrated effectiveness with ELs; and 2) the paths to EL success appear to vary. Keeping this notion in mind, the elements identified by respondents as most critical to their English learners' success are discussed below across four primary themes.

Staff capacity, characteristics, and training to address EL needs

Principals singled out the capacity, characteristics, and training of instructional staff to address the unique academic and linguistic needs of ELs as most critical. As shown in Exhibit IV-4, more than a third of respondents (38.3 percent) identified elements contained in this domain of effectiveness as *the* most important (#1) and the elements within it represented a quarter (25.1 percent) of the responses ranking the top three factors. As indicated in Exhibit IV-5, which shows the more detailed classification of responses, two key elements within this domain stood out as among the most crucial factors cited by principals as contributing to their effectiveness with ELs: 1)

“We’re looking for the whole package: for teachers who want to work with [ELs], and are eager to work with kids who are struggling....We demand passion and content knowledge from our teachers, and [teachers who will respond] when we go into the classroom and make suggestions...[We want] teachers who are highly qualified, can recognize student deficits and address them, and are able to create useful lesson plans which target student problem areas.” –Assistant Principal Grace Love, Alhambra High School (Alhambra Unified School District)

experience, qualifications, and characteristics of instructional staff (with 25.8 percent of all 66 respondents ranking this as #1) and 2) staff collaboration (with 6.1 percent of all respondents ranking this as most important).

Teacher knowledge, skills, and training

The necessity of having qualified staff with competency in instructional approaches that help ELs develop language skills and academic abilities may seem obvious. However, it is important to note that, on average, it appears somewhat at odds with what is observed statewide. For example, the lower the concentration of ELs in a school, the better the ratio of EL students to fully credentialed teachers and those holding special authorizations to teach this population.²⁷ In contrast, it is also worthy of note that the successful schools participating in these interviews averaged the same percentage of fully credentialed teachers as that observed statewide (92.0 percent), but a higher percentage than other schools with comparable levels of poverty and concentrations of ELs (87.1 percent in schools across California with similar characteristics—those with approximately 50 percent or more ELs and 70 percent or more students eligible for free

²⁷ See further analysis of data regarding certification of staff providing direct instruction to students by EL concentration in Chapter 1.

or reduced lunch). Concerns in regard to this disparity are also discussed elsewhere in this report.

A wide range of themes emerged in regard to staff capacity, characteristics, and training. Among the most widespread were the importance of teacher credentials, knowledge, and skills; commitment to teaching and dedication to working ELs; and teacher collaboration. In addition, the role of leadership in hiring decisions, empowering teachers to do their jobs, and involving teachers in decision-making were also commonly reported as part of these discussions. This section discusses these themes in more detail.

More than half (57.7 percent) of the 26 respondents identifying teacher characteristics as most important highlighted specific teacher qualifications as vital to quality of instruction. Teacher credentials, certifications to teach ELs, and years of experience were most frequently mentioned, with many principals pointing out that the majority of their teachers are properly credentialed and have the CLAD or BCLAD. As one put it, “whether they are new or experienced, they have the background [necessary to teach English learners].”

Although the particular expertise considered to be most important varied, the overwhelming majority of respondents (80.8 percent) specified the critical value of teachers’ knowledge and skills pertinent to working with ELs. Appropriate training both in preparation for teaching and which is ongoing and job-embedded were described by many as central. One principal expressed one of the most prevailing sentiments in saying, “Staff development is a high priority here.” Another reported, “All teachers have their CLAD and are expected to teach using appropriate methodologies.” The knowledge base and instructional skills described by administrators as most important, in order of frequency of response, included first and second language acquisition; Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies; differentiated instruction; general literacy development; and understanding of the state English language arts (ELA) and ELD standards.

In the words of one principal, “Our teachers’ knowledge base of working with EL students allows them to understand who their students are and enables them to deliver content in a way that covers standards meaningfully and comprehensibly.” Another principal was more specific about how special qualifications to teach ELs translate in the classroom:

Our school has highly qualified teachers: all have their CLAD and are trained in ELD techniques. Because of this, teachers recognize and implement the instructional strategies that help ELs learn English. The teachers recognize what it means that English is not these kids’ first language. For example, they use a lot of repetition when teaching ELs to read and put a great deal of emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, and oral work. They use a step-by-step process to teach writing, starting with turning oral work into written work, and building on that as students progress through the grades. They call attention to

grammatical forms, like past tense, and use other techniques that help ELs learn English.”

Training in these areas was also said to impact teacher awareness of EL English proficiency levels and how they affect specific student needs. Respondents reported that teachers who are highly sensitive to the needs of ELs are equipped to provide the support to match those needs so that students can master English and advance in their academic subjects. In describing the necessity of providing differentiated instruction that meets individual students’ needs, another principal stated, “When teachers rework their approach and take a great deal of responsibility for student learning and think, ‘What can I do to be sure the student is learning?’ then it really makes all the difference.”

A few others who also identified teacher quality as fundamentally important put forth a countervailing view that it is “not their credentials or experience necessarily” that makes the most difference, but rather that teachers are “naturals in the classroom” and “willing to do whatever it takes to help these [EL] students succeed.” One principal elaborated on this idea, explaining that not only are SDAIE strategies “implemented across the board,” but that teachers also “know how to get the students involved and be active in their learning.”

Teacher commitment and collaboration

Another predominant theme across the respondents was staff interest, commitment, and dedication to teaching, and to the EL population specifically. Almost half (46.2 percent) of the 26 respondents citing teacher capacity and characteristics touched on the high level of staff commitment to supporting English acquisition and to the strong work ethic prevalent among their staff. These principals commonly reported “highly trained and motivated” teachers who “are extremely committed,” “go above and beyond,” and “spend much overtime to help [ELs] achieve their language goals.” For example, one principal reported that 37 out of the school’s 39 teachers had volunteered to teach in a before- and after-school extended day program specifically targeted at their EL population. Moreover, in the words of another principal, “We’re always looking at student-level growth on state scores. The overall dedication of staff to find whatever works for students to help them make this growth is vital.” Some respondents also linked staff commitment to a willingness on the part of teachers to try new strategies. As one principal put it, “All of [our teachers] are highly motivated to do a good job and are happy productive teachers....They have been at it for many years. They go to workshops, are willing to learn new things, and adopt them for their classrooms.”

As mentioned earlier, teacher collaboration emerged from our interviews as another related factor cited by respondents as among the most important. Across all 66 respondents, 6.1 percent cited it as *the* most critical element to their effectiveness with ELs, and many (34.6 percent) of those citing teacher characteristics more generally also touched on the importance of such relationships and dialogue among teachers. Those discussing the importance of this factor reported that teachers in their schools collaborate within and across grades and departments about student needs, meeting on a regular basis formally (often weekly) as well as informally. They stressed the importance of setting aside time for instructional staff to work together, with several mentioning that teachers

are given release time for this purpose. As one principal reported, these meetings are “a great opportunity to share techniques and best practices. Teachers share materials and talk about lesson plans.” Similarly, many respondents described their staff as “team-oriented” and “very willing to share and help each other.”

Respondents described another hallmark of this collaboration as coordination about student needs (as identified using data) and about planning in order to implement the best instructional strategies for addressing those needs. As one principal put it, “There is a lot of feedback and teamwork and talking about student needs,” which has “helped identify students that aren’t making growth.” Not only did respondents report that their teachers routinely have “conversations about how students are doing,” but they also highlighted teacher initiative to “articulate common struggles, and work together to provide solutions.” As one principal said, “From the minute a student walks in the door, there is somebody who is aware at what level they are at....The teachers are always talking with each other, so it is a team effort. There is someone who is always conscious of where the student is academically. Cooperation and team effort is critical.” The words of another principal sum up these ideas:

Teachers are given opportunities to meet [within] grade levels where they bring student data. They brainstorm ways of how they could help their students, where their students are struggling, and where they need to make a change. They do a lot of sharing. Then they come to me saying, ‘We met at the grade level and we feel like this item will help us do the job’ and I facilitate that—I purchase what they think they need. We are always tweaking and trying. There is a lot of feedback and teamwork and talking about student needs.”

Data-driven decision-making for the purposes of instructional planning is another of the elements identified by respondents as among the most important, and will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Distributed leadership

In addition, the importance of empowering teachers to participate in making important decisions and to assume leadership roles was another key theme that emerged from our interviews. One principal called herself “a facilitator that helps the experts,” explaining that the extended-day activities offered are mostly run by teachers, and that she gives them the authority to choose which supplemental materials they want to use. Several principals described similar practices and also commonly mentioned relying heavily on teachers to do in-services for their peers focused on instructional methods for ELs.

In fact, when asked specifically about their leadership styles, many respondents from the participating schools cited the value of distributed leadership—53.8 percent specifically described it as being central to the way they operate. One principal commented, “Leadership is not micro-managing what the teachers do. It’s important to think of leadership in a distributive sense and to surround yourself with good people to do the things you want them to do.” Another echoed this common theme, saying:

I allow my staff to be the experts in their respective fields, but I supply the leadership to get things done for all my programs and students...This school is very teacher-centered; I get to say no every once in a while. I have instilled in my staff the need for them to be leaders and to move things forward and they are doing it. I get to help them.

Moreover, it was not uncommon for the principals we interviewed to downplay their role in their schools' success with ELs. As one remarked, "I suppose I'm one of the primary leaders in regard to instruction of ELs, but honestly it is the excellent teachers helping each other. It's the individual classroom teacher that makes or breaks us." This principal also mentioned trying to minimize extra burden on teachers: "I'm not nitpicky about all the paperwork," she explained.

In addition, more than a quarter (26.9 percent) of the principals who identified teacher characteristics as most critical to their success emphasized that they are very selective about those they hire and retain. Many of them told us that they make finding qualified teachers to teach ELs a high priority. One such principal described viewing her role as finding good teachers "and then getting out of their way." Another portrayed the criteria used to make these decisions as "grueling," explaining that "incoming teachers are selected by the interview process and their performance during the first one or two years."

Other aspects of leadership echo the themes described above and were frequently attributed as critical to effectiveness as well. Several principals described their role in cultivating a positive school environment. As one recounted, "Before we had a fragmented faculty without a vision...where teachers were being disrespectful with each other, causing teacher turnover. I improved teamwork and collaboration by building trust and mechanisms for in-school support and professional development." Another who shared the view that "teamwork and a total level of trust between all members of the school community is essential" emphasized that "you can't do anything without trust which will develop teamwork. We have learned to reach consensus here." This principal reported making sure that the teachers are part of the processes of decision-making and change implementation, which she contends builds buy-in. One principal further asserted that a non-authoritarian attitude towards teachers impacts their motivation and ultimately their performance, stating that "when the teacher realizes that they are recognized as the instructional leader, they become more accountable to their students and each other."

Schoolwide focus on ELD and standards-based instruction

As shown earlier in Exhibit IV-4, respondents credited elements within the “Curriculum and Instruction Targeted toward EL Progress” domain as key contributors to their EL students’ demonstrated success almost as commonly as they did elements within the “Staff Capacity” domain—31.7 percent cited elements within the former as the single most critical factor and 29.2 percent listed such elements as among the three most important. In addition, two elements within this domain were most commonly described as instrumental: 1) a schoolwide focus on English Language Development (ELD) (identified by 12.3 percent of all 66 respondents as #1) and 2) curriculum and instruction tied to goals and standards (identified by 9.1 percent of all respondents as most important). Discussion of these elements centered around three key themes: schools’ systematic, carefully designed plans for provision of ELD services; a deliberate emphasis on academic language and literacy infused throughout all curriculum and instruction; and the importance of designing and implementing instructional programs for ELs that are standards based. Each of these themes is discussed below.

“The role of leadership is to continually bring EL language acquisition to the forefront, reminding teachers...so that it never leaves the cycle of top priorities.”

*–Principal Colleen Underwood,
Brightwood Elementary School*

Provision of ELD services

The state recommends that ELs receive at least 30 minutes per day of explicit ELD instruction.²⁸ However, this requirement does not specify that this instruction must be provided during a dedicated class period, and some schools with ELs in mixed SEI/mainstream settings choose not to do so, but rather to integrate ELD services through “sheltered instruction” in academic content. Of the 23 respondents citing focus on their ELD instruction as one of the important factors in their EL students’ overall success, however, almost three quarters (73.9 percent) pointed to specific aspects of their ELD program design as instrumental in this regard. These administrators described ELD programs that were systematic: that is, rigorously structured, standards-aligned, and specifically scheduled throughout the year. All of these 17 respondents implemented ELD services during a designated structured class period. None of their schools offered a bilingual program; thus they reported that their some or all of their ELs²⁹ were clustered for a systematic daily ELD block (usually 30-45 minutes) to receive a well-defined sequence of literacy instruction specific to their English proficiency level needs, and then mainstreamed with targeted support during the rest of the school day.

Many of the comments from this set of respondents corroborated our finding from Year 3 that a clear instructional plan with a set of common goals for EL students’

²⁸ The State Board’s 2002 Reading/Language Arts/English Language Development Adoption Final Report specifies “a minimum of 30-45 additional minutes of English language development instruction daily that is systematically connected to the basic reading/language arts program.” Retrieved August 15, 2005, from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/im/documents/rladopt2002.pdf>

²⁹ In some cases, only ELs at CELDT levels 1-3 were clustered for explicit, structured ELD time.

linguistic and academic success is one of the most essential elements characterizing schools where ELs perform well. They commonly described being “very focused on moving students towards English proficiency or teacher development in this area” with “intense focus on the ELD portion of the day” and “clear, specific goals for each lesson.” Several also emphasized the importance of grouping ELs by level of English proficiency. One principal elaborated on these ideas by stating that “developing students’ acquisition of English is a clear goal and the progress of each student in meeting that goal is closely monitored.” Another explained that their “refined, standards-based, districtwide [ELD] program...creates the ability to give very specific instruction. It is easier for teachers to concentrate on addressing specific elements when all students in the class are at the same literacy level and have the same needs. This concentrated, consistent program that helps kids progress year after year has been most critical.”

In addition, a few other key considerations were mentioned by principals in regard to the design of an ELD program. One hurdle several principals mentioned needing to overcome was figuring out how best to allow enough time to cover ELD given other instructional demands. One stressed the importance of breaking instruction down by ELD standard, another emphasized their concerted “push for intense, focused instruction” with all teachers on a pacing schedule, and several described their scheduling efforts to ensure that the ELD period did not interrupt EL students’ access to the core curriculum. Moreover, as one principal put it:

You have to make sure ELD actually happens. Sometimes teachers get busy—a math lesson goes long or something, and it’s easy to not do ELD at the right time. Sometimes ELD is not made a priority because something else cuts into it and that time gets frittered away. So the students don’t get a lesson specifically designed for them.

He further suggested scheduling ELD during a common period schoolwide, so that it is easier, as an administrator, to “walk through the school during ELD time and see it happen.” Finally, 17.5 percent of respondents pointed out that their ELs are also targeted for supplemental support through extended-day and intercession programs focused on ELD. In one case a principal mentioned that for ELs in kindergarten, the day is extended by one-and-a-half hours to have extra time for ELD.

Common strategies for addressing ELD

In addition to careful planning and coordination about how to match appropriate strategies with the EL proficiency levels, the 23 respondents who emphasized a focus on ELD as important described having in place a set of core teaching strategies that are implemented by all staff across all grade levels or departments. These strategies were commonly reported to reinforce language acquisition, encourage teamwork, and be structured so that students make connections with personal experience and prior knowledge. The importance both of offering opportunities to practice English through structured academic conversation and extensive reading, and of instructional strategies aimed at enhancing English acquisition and comprehension (such as emphasis on teaching basic word recognition skills) were described as paramount.

Principals from participating schools frequently pointed out that, even apart from their EL status, the majority of their high-poverty EL population has low literacy in their home language as well. As one remarked, “What we now understand is that the kids really do not have the language to address much of the curriculum. [They] are not coming to us with the pre-knowledge that they need.” Another principal pointed out that “the awareness that some ELs are also English-only speakers is critical – they don’t have literacy in their home language either.” To address this challenge, respondents overwhelmingly identified efforts to focus on academic language and vocabulary development as among their foremost priorities. As one principal stated, “There has been a concerted effort to ensure that teachers have the necessary training to become expert language arts teachers, especially in early literacy. One of the primary goals for all students at the school, including ELs, is to help them develop academic language.”³⁰ Another reported that they promote “a heavy focus on explicit instruction in vocabulary—every lesson in any content area for all students begins with direct and explicit vocabulary instruction relevant to the lesson.”

Moreover, this type of “frontloading” language in all lessons (i.e., explicitly discussing key vocabulary words) and giving ELs “forms” or “frames” for how to formulate language were among the most predominant strategies respondents described using to attain these goals. The specific kinds of techniques reported included “identify[ing] the most challenging words you think might come up and throw them off. You introduce that word and say, ‘What do you know about this word? What do you see in this word?’” and giving ELs “pragmatic forms on how... language should look. Here is a frame, like a simple frame: noun, subject, verb—like a fill in the blank almost. You’re giving them a formation like telling them how to reword the question, and how then to fit the answer to that into those blocks.” Explicitly trying to teach listening and speaking skills was also reported as an area of emphasis. One strategy reported to be effective in this regard was insisting that ELs speak in complete sentences, especially during structured activities such as “share pair,” in which two children discuss the material together, and a student with basic English proficiency is paired with a more advanced student, and “table talk,” in which all students at a table discuss a story, often connecting it to their own personal experience.

Many other strategies for educating ELs were reported to be valuable as well. Commonly utilized techniques like realia and total physical response were described as indispensable to ensuring that concepts are developed so that ELs understand them; this was reported to be especially true for newcomers who know absolutely no English. In addition, one principal highlighted the practice at his school of emphasizing visual presentation as a strategy, including using Powerpoint slides in class and circling important terms. Building in intensive reinforcement of content, so that key elements of lessons are reviewed over and over again, was also considered effective by several respondents. In order to maximize instructional time one respondent reported trying “to

³⁰ The notion that many native English speakers have similar language development needs will be further discussed later in this section.

kill as many birds with one stone as they can,” by touching on several different subjects and standards in a lesson simultaneously.

Finally, many of the participating schools that do not formally offer a bilingual program emphasized the importance of offering some assistance in students’ primary languages. “Ideally there is time for a teacher who knows the students’ primary language to do a little preview of the critical vocabulary prior to the lesson,” one stated. Across these 59 schools, 78.7 percent reported that instructional aides provide primary language support on an occasional or frequent basis; almost half (46.6 percent) reported that teachers use primary language from occasionally to frequently for basic clarification; and use of primary language to preview or review instructional content was reported by 30.0 percent to occur on an occasional or frequent basis.

Emphasis on literacy

Another key theme emphasizing the importance of ELD that emerged from the interviews is deliberate emphasis on academic language and literacy infused throughout all curriculum and instruction. Respondents highlighted the importance of adapting curriculum to attend to EL needs and of integrating ELD instruction across all core content. As one principal put it, “We teach ELD really all day long, not just in the designated 30 minutes.” In describing how they bridge language learning objectives with academic objectives, another administrator’s response was typical of many: “English acquisition has been systematically integrated into core content courses, by reinforcing basic ELD concepts within focus standards defined at the district level.” For many of the schools emphasizing this element, focusing on language development and vocabulary enrichment seems to be part and parcel of all instructional activities.

“Few children arrive at school fully competent in the language required for text interpretation and for the kind of reasoned discourse we assume is key to becoming an educated person. Academic language is learned at school from teachers and from textbooks. It is learned through frequent exposure and practice over a long period of time – from the time children enter school to the time they leave it....Often explicit teaching of language structures and uses is the most effective way to help English learners” (*Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000*).

Notably, as alluded to above, since the overwhelming majority of students in the schools we interviewed come from high-poverty backgrounds, many respondents pointed out that most of the native English speakers (EOs) in their school are not proficient in “standard or academic English” either, and they described an intensive focus on vocabulary development for all students in the school. In fact, 29.8 percent of respondents reported that they opted to include provision of these ELD services to *all* students, including EOs, in their formalized ELD program designs. The belief that ELD strategies benefit all students, not solely ELs, was a common theme expressed across many schools in our sample. These respondents stressed the importance of making the development of literacy a schoolwide focus for all students who have not yet acquired a strong language base. As part of trying to address these issues in the classroom, one

principal commented that “similar needs have similar solutions;” therefore, they isolate issues “for all students having problems with text and verbal skills...with constant attention given to, ‘What are our instructional strategies and why are we using them this way?’”

Focus on standards-based instruction

Another overarching theme reported by respondents as instrumental to their success with ELs was purposeful attention to ensure that instruction is based on the state-adopted standards. These respondents pointed out that aligning instruction with the state’s academic content standards is critical, and also particularly emphasized incorporating ELD standards into instruction. Some respondents reported that their ELD curriculum is carefully structured to align with the state’s ELD standards, while others pointed to their concerted efforts to align ELD and ELA instructional objectives. One principal’s comment typified responses in this regard: “The ELD program is standards-aligned, we have curriculum guides for all core subjects. Everything’s done with intentionality, with focus and direction. Our entire year is planned out.” In addition, several mentioned that they have clear, standards-based goals for ELs for meeting both academic content and ELD standards. The use of data to help define clear goals and instructional programming will be discussed later in the chapter.

For example, one principal explained that their primary focus is the basic instructional planning for everyone (i.e., ensuring the same standards are addressed for all students). He went on to say that “the secondary piece is what EL standards must be met so they can have the annual progress. It literally lays over the top of what the regular planning must be.” Another explained that ELD and academic content standards are “used to define what the instruction looks like, what the interventions look like. It becomes: What can we do on a short-term pull-out or a push-in basis to facilitate individual student performance?”

Two respondents were more specific about how they ensure that instruction is standards-based. One principal reported that “Teachers have an understanding of the corresponding ELD standards for each content standard they are addressing. The district identifies overarching focus standards with a set of substandards that include English acquisition reinforcement.” Another principal explained that at the beginning of each year, staff are required to show him their objectives and instructional plan for the whole year, which must integrate regular instruction with ELD. They do curriculum mapping with the ELD standards and assessments. He reported that, as a result, he can “walk into any classroom and know where that teacher is in their plan.”

Shared expectations and priorities in regard to educating ELs

Shared expectations and priorities in regard to educating ELs was among the elements most commonly cited as facilitating their academic achievement. It was ranked as the #1 factor by 9.1 percent of respondents, and its elements constituted 6.7 percent of the items selected as among the three most critical). Among these respondents, the most prevailing theme reported (by 11 out of 13) was the importance of conveying high expectations for EL academic performance while providing the necessary support to meet these expectations. One principal summed up this sentiment as follows: “We believe in their ability to perform at high levels, so we put [ELs] in the most challenging settings possible, with support that they need.” Another put it this way: “The standards have to be set and the expectations are high for all children. The support that we give [ELs] has to be there. But the standards—or the expectation—are never lowered.”

“Students learn according to what you ask of them. High expectations allow them to learn at an accelerated rate.”

—Principal Elizabeth Castaneda, Los Feliz Elementary School (Los Angeles Unified School District)

While the notion of high expectations coupled with the appropriate support to meet them was most predominant, a few respondents (3 out of 11 identifying this as most important) also indicated that all students are expected to learn and be high achievers, which was a critical factor underpinning their success. As one reported, “Our goal is the acceleration of learning for all students. We do not differentiate for ELs. It is important to have high expectations for all.” One such respondent explicitly stated, “We treat ELs just like EOs,” but the extent to which this practice was common among those emphasizing high expectations for all was not clear. Just as commonly, respondents indicated that high expectations for ELs were an important aspect of cultivating the shared understanding that educating ELs is the responsibility of the entire school staff. One principal stated that ELs “are not an isolated part of the school. This has resulted in high expectations for all students and consistency of instruction. No one is special or different and everyone is expected to make progress.”

Encouraging ELs to believe in their abilities and do their best were also cited as essential outgrowths of the “high expectations” mindset that respondents reported as effective. One principal stressed the concept that “success breeds success.” She went on to say: “If we want them to succeed, then we have to support and constantly praise and work from their strengths, and make it realistic.” Another argued that “working to get students to feel that they are capable is the most important factor,” adding that “all students can learn, but they can’t in a prejudiced environment.” She therefore sees one of her leadership roles as being a “cheerleader” who makes sure the school has a climate that appreciates and values students’ home cultures to create a positive and challenging learning environment. Another principal conveyed this same idea: “I also model the kind of attitude that I would hope teachers have. The model of total equality and providing access and opportunity for everyone. I provide a balanced model where kids can feel successful.”

In fact, two key elements that emerged as particularly important in our initial exploration of effective practices for ELs through Year 3 site visits—leadership and having a clear plan for instruction of ELs—were commonly referenced in respondent reports about the importance of shared expectations for and beliefs about ELs. First, leadership was often described as the key vehicle to establishing these common expectations and beliefs. Second, having a clear plan for instruction of ELs was described as both a means to that end and as an artifact of the school’s vision. Moreover, when asked specifically about how leadership affects the performance of ELs, 51.7 percent of the 61 respondents indicated that the principal’s role in articulating both a schoolwide vision for instruction of ELs and high expectations and accountability for their performance are critically important. The ways in which respondents reported these factors as influencing one another illustrates one example of the important linkages among them.

Systematic, ongoing assessment and data-driven decision-making

Well-documented best practices with regard to improving student learning through assessment include regular review of assessment data to monitor both teaching and learning, as well as adjusting instructional planning based on student performance. In the context of EL instruction, assessment can be particularly important for gauging progress in English acquisition, as well as in academics. Our Year 3 site visits suggested that systematic, ongoing assessment that informs efforts to improve program practices is among the most important elements of effective practice. Among our Year 5 respondents, having an organized process in place for monitoring student outcomes to plan instruction was also among the most commonly cited elements facilitating their EL students’ academic achievement (6.1 percent ranked it as the #1 factor and 8.2 percent listed it as among the top three), as previously seen in Exhibit IV-5.

“Ongoing performance data is what gives the most bang for your buck. Not CELDT data, since CELDT only tells how you’re doing once a year, but the classroom assessments, the program assessments, the teacher assessments. It’s the ongoing progress check that I think is most important.” –Principal Michael Gulden, Barbara Comstock Morse Elementary School (Elk Grove Unified School District)

Because the importance of systematic data use figured so prominently in our Year 3 work, we also asked all respondents to provide advice regarding effective data use and to rate the extent to which data impacts their success with ELs. Principals overwhelmingly rated data as of critical importance, describing it, in many cases, as fundamental to their top three effective elements. Thus, while respondents rated many of the other elements discussed previously in this chapter higher than systematic data monitoring, this may be in part due to the respondents’ perception that data use guided the implementation of other identified strategies to improve effectiveness with EL students.

Our prior site visits suggested that for ongoing data monitoring to be effective, there must be a clear and smooth path from the data system to classroom instruction, as well as clear goals and expectations. While California’s content standards (as well as the ELD standards, which address English literacy skills such as phonemic awareness and decoding) outline specific goals in the form of proficiency benchmarks, it remains up to school leadership to articulate a plan for reaching these standards. In turn, ongoing data monitoring to gauge progress towards these goals, coupled with adjustment of instruction as necessary, can be instrumental in helping ELs with heterogeneous instructional needs to achieve content standards. Perhaps not surprisingly, the approaches our Year 5 respondents described to data monitoring differentiated three levels of decision-making: school-level, such as resource allocation or program development; grade-level, for decisions such as classroom instructional planning; and student-level, to guide placement and intervention assignments.

Participating schools reported using a variety of data sources to monitor student outcomes. While the majority cited using the statewide standardized English proficiency tests (82.8 percent, 53 out of 66) and standardized achievement tests (78.1 percent, 50 out of 66), many commented on the insufficiency of annual tests, especially with the delayed receipt of results, for ongoing decision-making regarding instruction and student placement. While viewed as a valuable tool for guiding EL placement and assessing long-term progress, the CELDT in particular was commonly reported to be problematic due to the delay between the annual assessment (July through October) and receipt of results (typically late January to February).

An even greater number (92.2 percent, 59 out of 66) reported using district, school, and classroom assessments to gauge student progress. The critical importance of assessing students at regular intervals to guide instruction, school organization, and decision-making was underscored in many interviews, with one principal stating, “Daily classroom assessments are critical. Do not wait for the district or the CELDT. You need to assess continuously, you need to gauge whether or not your students understand concepts and alter instruction.” For this reason, administrators reported using multiple and regular assessments to monitor EL academic and English proficiency outcomes.

Five Suggestions for How to Use Data from the Successful Principals Interviewed for this Study

1. **Be systematic:** “Have an ongoing system where you monitor student progress and make appropriate instructional decisions. That really happens with teachers using rubrics, discussing student work and progress, as well as trends. That really is the key.”
2. **Carve out time as a staff for analysis and interpretation:** “Set aside time on the calendar to review data. Finding the time is the greatest challenge. Regularly do a grade-level meeting over EL progress in academics and English proficiency once a quarter with constant review and staff meetings to make meaning of the scores.”
3. **Keep it manageable:** “You don’t want to overwhelm staff. Have to select and digest important programmatic level data. Need to equip staff with the ability to analyze their own data. Give them some professional development in data, data collection tools, or, in how to look at data, and then provide them the time to do it.”
4. **Identify and address trouble spots:** “For the classroom teacher, identify areas where many of your students had difficulty. Then differentiate. The kids who got it should move on, but those who didn’t master it should be grouped. Do not retest. Instead, take one component of that same skills test that will be the most important part of the test that you feel would be the greatest component to accelerate the kids’ learning—where they really screwed up or it's super-important towards the standards—and go over that part only of the test until they get what they did wrong. And then move on.”
5. **Empower students—make it personal:** “I do a principal’s test talk with every individual student. It sounds like it's an impossible task, but it isn't... We want students to know their data. We want them to understand that it is their data, and they can change their data, and improve their data. We look at it, and talk about it. It’s that individual dialogue where they know the principal's interested and that the teacher is interested in them... Another thing we do is make kids a part of their teacher-student-parent conferences. Again, this is their data, we want them to know that they own that data and have the power to change it.”

Using data for program development

At one school, regular use of data to inform instruction was prompted by the realization that EL test scores had stagnated. An external evaluator helped the school develop a new vision for the instruction of ELs, particularly their Hispanic population.³¹ Following this initial step, the school reallocated resources and set goals focused on establishing a clear and consistent instructional plan based on common units, assessments, and tests. Now instructional strategies are adjusted continuously based on assessment data.

While regular assessment provides valuable information that can facilitate decision-making, the amount of data typically available to school administrators can be overwhelming. Principals reported analyzing school, subgroup, and class data to guide resource allocation and goal-setting. One principal explained, “I look for trends and patterns... I read it, and I internalize it much more than I ever wanted to, so that I can come back and efficiently say to teachers, ‘Okay, here’s what it looks like statewide, districtwide, and at our school.’” Another administrator commented that when she gets 100 pages of test data, she pulls out what is most significant, summarizes it in 5 pages, and shares it with instructional staff. Other principals reiterated the responsibility of administrators to distill important trends from the volumes of data that schools now receive. Explicitly linking instructional planning and data through an articulated plan is one strategy our participating schools use for identifying and focusing on the data elements most critical to targeting instructional needs.

Using data for instructional planning

Several schools (7 of 16) reported implementing a cyclical data review process involving regular student assessment in core content areas followed by a staff data review and discussion. In addition to information gained from data, implementing such a process can help emphasize the school’s prioritization of EL instructional needs. Some respondents described fairly sophisticated monitoring for ELs, looking at EL placement and English fluency in conjunction with academic progress. The structure of these data reviews varied across schools, with several implementing one or more of the following: weekly or monthly grade-level meetings to identify student needs and develop targeted strategies across departments; formal and informal vertical teaming for articulating language development instruction across grades; regular one-on-one meetings between the principal and teacher to look at class, subgroup, and individual EL student achievement to identify areas for additional support; and all-staff meetings analyzing schoolwide progress to make resource allocation decisions.

A key component to successful data use, therefore, appears to be setting aside time for regular, structured meetings to look at assessment data, then using it to guide decision-making; 13 (out of 58) respondents mentioned this as part of their advice for effective data use. One principal who described his school as still working towards

³¹ Please see Chapter 2 for a broader discussion of respondents’ perspectives regarding the impact of the broader accountability movement at their school, including the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP), in which participating schools are required to consult with external evaluators to develop a plan for improvement.

effective data use explained, “You need to have a coordinated prep period and collaboration time set aside. You need to develop a protocol to make decisions and have collective decision-making based on data becoming part of the culture.”³²

Overall, principals described data use as important for targeting the diverse instructional needs of a heterogeneous EL population. Administrators also emphasized the importance of training teachers to use data to guide their own instructional planning. At one school, for every class “teachers are given a print-out of all their kids and language levels: a tool to assist in planning.” Respondents suggested that ongoing data monitoring at regular intervals helps encourage teachers to be self-reflective about what is and is not working, as well as gain confidence in adjusting instructional plans to target student needs.

Respondents also discussed the importance of data in raising teacher awareness of EL-specific instructional needs and fostering collaboration between grade-level and cross-grade teachers. One principal described a recent example of her school’s work to individualize support, involving a family with three boys who recently immigrated from Guatemala and spoke only Spanish. As a team, teachers brainstormed to develop strategies to target the instructional needs of each child, which included placement in a different class during reading time, buddying with other bilingual children, and peer tutoring by local high school students.

Using data for student placement and progress

Monitoring individual progress over time, particularly with regard to progress in acquiring English fluency, is another important use of data for many of our participating schools. Use of EL profile cards is one way that our respondents reported tracking individual student progress over time. One principal described her school’s profiles as a series of prescriptive benchmark tasks and abilities of the student in regard to English proficiency. At this school, teachers are responsible for noting the date each ELD standard was reached and reteaching any areas where students may have lost ground since the previous update. The principal systematically assesses EL academic and language objectives by reviewing EL profile cards in conjunction with report cards at the close of each grading period. Another administrator described standards-based EL profiles developed by her district,³³ which include student writing samples and teacher notes as well as assessment information. While the content of the EL profile cards varied across our participating schools, they serve the common purpose of tracking progress in acquiring English fluency.

Consistent review of EL progress has also helped some schools develop clear expectations around EL progress and identify students who could benefit from extra interventions or special education services. For example, three principals mentioned

³² Please also see “5 Suggestions from Successful Principals for How to Use Data,” presented earlier in this chapter.

³³ While we did not interview this district’s EL Coordinator as part of our district sample, six of our participating schools are part of this district. The development of the EL profile card was mentioned as a critical component of their success with ELs.

targeting students that do not move to the next CELDT level after a year’s enrollment for additional support. At one school, the combination of a clear plan for the expected progress of ELs in gaining English proficiency from year to year and a system for looking at individual students for teacher accountability allowed staff to identify new immigrants as having needs that were not being met by their SEI program. In response, they created a special class to target the skills needed to succeed in an SEI classroom. Their regular review of data enables movement between classes and ongoing redesignation, as opposed to an annual cut-off point.

Challenges to Effectively Serving ELs and Strategies for Addressing Them

In addition to factors facilitating effectiveness with ELs, we also explored barriers that challenge schools’ ability to succeed with their ELs. Principals discussed a variety of challenges to effectively serving ELs, such as the need to assess and target individual EL needs, and inadequate EL instructional materials and EL-focused interventions. However, unlike the responses regarding facilitating factors for effectiveness, which were distributed across our typology, responses discussing the most severe barriers clustered around two elements: diverse and unique EL needs (28.2 percent) and barriers to family involvement (15.6 percent).³⁴ This section briefly summarizes these responses and highlights strategies schools are using to try to address some of the major challenges in serving ELs, as identified by effective EL school principals.

It should be noted at the onset of this section that we anticipated that principals of schools educating large numbers of ELs, even successful ones, would note as particular challenges the characteristics of EL children and families. While not downplaying these difficulties, they are factors beyond school control. The respondents were also principals, and others, who had fostered substantial academic success among ELs, despite the challenges associated with this population. Of course, many of these principals succeeded because they recognized the strengths of a linguistically diverse student population and the global perspectives this population brings. At the same time, the challenges associated with educating English learners are real. A major purpose of this section, after describing these challenges, is to learn from these successful administrators regarding the strategies they have developed to address them.

Challenges to serving diverse and unique EL needs

Serving a diverse EL student population, in terms of both academic level and English fluency, was reported as the single greatest challenge facing 18 of our participating schools. Among challenges facing their school as a whole, principals mentioned high poverty levels, gaps in student achievement, and a schoolwide need for academic language development. Specific to their EL population, issues such as EL itinerancy, low literacy levels in home languages, multiple home languages, limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom, and varied levels of English fluency were discussed as primary barriers to effectiveness with ELs. Thirty-nine principals rated complexities related to the unique needs of their student population as

³⁴ See Appendix C, Exhibit 7 for the full responses to barriers typology.

among their top three barriers to effectiveness with ELs, and 29 of these respondents described strategies they are using to address these issues.

Within the group of principals discussing challenges related to the unique needs of their ELs, a significant number of schools reported that their students are highly itinerant, complicating their ability to offer a targeted and continuous instructional program. Nine schools identified student mobility as their single greatest challenge. As one respondent described, “not only are students coming and going all the time, but there are significant differences in level of preparation...Many do not have much preparation to get them ready for school. This is true of ELs and EOs alike.” In particular, limited ability to reallocate school resources mid-year can pose a significant challenge to a school’s ability to meet the diverse needs of incoming students. One principal commented that while they try to cluster language groups within classrooms, high transiency rates mean that they often have to place new students where there is an opening.

Late-entry newcomer students also pose a challenge for principals, as reported by eight respondents. One elementary school principal explained that unlike ELs who have been enrolled since kindergarten, her late-entry students tend to struggle academically and seldom reach reclassification before moving on to secondary school. Other principals echoed this theme with comments regarding difficulties in serving the varied academic needs of students, particularly newcomers. In addition to a general focus on EL placement, principals also reported implementing systematic newcomer placement with teachers that speak the home language, clustered pull-out sessions with bilingual aides, and assigning language partners (pairing newcomers with a student that speaks their home language) to support them.

Principals discussed several strategies they employ to overcome these formidable challenges. To improve their ability to respond to individual student needs, principals emphasized the importance of careful student placement based on performance data. This appeared to be particularly important in schools with itinerant populations, but also surfaced as a general theme across participating schools. As one principal explained, “high transiency means that building on student learning and tracking their progress is especially challenging. For this reason, frequent assessment and understanding how to interpret data is all the more important.” Longitudinal student profiles and standardized forms and procedures have also helped schools more accurately track student progress across grades and schools within a district.

Overall, respondents commented on the importance of regular review of data with teaching staff, using the data to analyze student progress to guide instruction as well as classroom placement for all students. One respondent described her school’s cyclical approach to data-driven instruction. First, teachers analyze student data in grade-level groups. Once they identify an area needing improvement, they develop a direct instructional strategy and a differentiation strategy to target that skill area for the group. All the teachers then implement these strategies. When they get results from the next

progress assessment, they look for student improvement in that area. If they don't see improvement, they develop a new strategy.

Maximizing available teaching resources is another way that principals are attempting to target the diverse academic needs of their EL population. Assigning teaching responsibilities with an eye to EL-specific credentials and expertise, then clustering ELs with the most qualified teachers and bilingual aides, is one approach reported by participating schools. For example, to maximize the expertise of one elementary school's single BCLAD teacher, the district pooled available resources and extended the school day to allow that teacher to work with ELs grouped by fluency level. Another approach involves implementing a "practical" professional development program around EL instruction to improve all staff members' expertise in the area of EL instruction. One school worked closely with a local college to develop a tailored in-service program focusing on two particular needs identified by school staff: aligning textbooks to focus EL delivery and use of supplementary materials.

Extended-time programs focusing on intensive academic instruction for ELs are another approach that schools report in targeting diverse academic needs; 98 percent of our respondents reported offering extended-time programs for ELs. Principals described after-school, Saturday, and intersession programs with diverse academic focii—some target language development specifically, while others center on core content support. Additionally, some schools offer programs specifically for their EL population, while others open such programs to students in need of support schoolwide.

Barriers to family involvement

The benefits of family involvement in children's education have been documented in over 30 years of research.³⁵ Ten of our participating schools identified barriers to family involvement as the single biggest challenge to their effectiveness with ELs; 26 schools overall identified this as among their top three challenges. At the same time, 22 of these schools reported addressing barriers to family involvement through a variety of strategies. Interestingly, three of the schools discussing barriers to family involvement as a challenge also included family involvement as among their top three elements for success.

The challenge of communication with non-English-speaking parents emerged as a common theme among participating schools. As one principal described, "the communication with parents is the most challenging; I always need a resource to translate for me and you can't be personable through an interpreter. When there is a lack of communication, it is not easy to get them to be involved in your school and understand that this is a safe place to come even though you don't speak English."

The importance of home language communication emerged repeatedly in relation to family involvement, with school staff (and in one case a parent contracted by the

³⁵ See particularly Epstein (1991) and Henderson and Berla (1994) for general discussion of how family involvement has been shown to impact student achievement, as well as August and Hakuta (1997) for discussion of this issue specific to the EL population.

school) translating for non-English speaking parents. Five principals mentioned communication with EL families through a community liaison (also known as a bilingual liaison or home-school coordinator). Through this position, schools provide regular home-language communication regarding school activities (e.g., translating at PTA and parent-teacher meetings, as well as school documents) and academic expectations (home visits to discuss school policies and expectations regarding attendance, academic progress, and reclassification).

Fourteen respondents framed their discussion of barriers to family involvement around home support. As one principal explained, “parents are supportive of their children's education, but do not have the skills to provide the necessary level of academic support. They can buy books and take their kids to the library, but since the parents don't know English, they can't directly assist with homework.” In one district, a local affordable housing organization offers a K-12 education program in their rental units. Credentialed teachers staff the program, which focuses on improving students’ mathematics and English skills, featuring close coordination with the neighboring elementary and middle schools.

Respondents also discussed efforts to ensure that their schools have an environment that appreciates and values students’ home cultures. One principal’s brief summary of efforts to involve parents included an active ELAC (English Language Acquisition Committee) with a strong core of parents led by the bilingual liaison, programs such as a healthy living council and English classes, literacy nights, and cultural celebrations. Another school offers a family-focused Friday evening gathering (which they call “escuelita de viernes”) in their library, providing English instruction through poetry and folktales in both Spanish and English.

Regarding strategies for making parents more comfortable in the school setting, many respondents described English classes offered to parents at the school. Many of these classes are funded through the Community Based English Tutoring (CBET) program, discussed in Chapter 6 of this report. Beyond English classes, 14 principals described “practical” afternoon and evening workshops and training sessions to support student learning at home. One high school developed a five-week parent education program in conjunction with their Boys and Girls Club. The program is offered in Spanish, Vietnamese, and English, and focuses on adolescent and education issues.

How Districts Can Support EL Achievement

Given the potential of districts to play a major role in supporting EL instruction, we chose to explore effective practices for ELs at the district level this year, in addition to the school level. As described earlier, we interviewed the administrators overseeing instruction of ELs in five districts with relatively high-performing ELs to learn about which district-level practices they see as most effective for their ELs. Additionally, as part of our school-level interviews, we asked participating administrators about district support around EL instruction, asking that they identify what their district had done that most supports efforts to improve EL performance, as well as what the district could do to

better support these efforts. This section summarizes our initial exploration of district impact on EL performance.

Among the five district administrators, articulation of a clear plan with regard to EL instruction and expectations was reported as among the top three most effective elements by two relatively large, urban districts and two smaller districts, one urban and one rural. One described this theme in terms of the “faithful replication of programs”—in addition to providing schools and teachers with the data and guidance needed to consistently place EL students, this district has implemented a common intervention program across schools, specifically designed to provide continuity for their highly mobile student population. Another district outlined their progress in developing a district-wide, articulated, aligned, and comprehensive ELD program as well as improving the consistency of EL instructional model implementation. Both were recommendations that emerged from a recent external study of programs for ELs in the district. In two smaller districts, one urban and one rural, the development of a clear plan for student assessment and placement district-wide, as well as expectations around how teachers should cover the curriculum, were identified by district respondents as instrumental to the progress of their ELs.

Impact through technical assistance and professional development

Technical assistance and professional development related to EL instruction were discussed by 36 school administrators as the most effective form of district support. Many principals (18) also highlighted technical assistance and professional development as an area where they would like to see increased district support. As a school-level strategy, one principal mentioned reserving part of the school budget each year to provide professional development by external experts at the school, with EL instruction as her most recent focus. She felt this approach impacts her school more directly than the “train-the-trainers” model of ELD training that the district currently supports. This principal was enthusiastic about professional development supported by the district program, but noted that she would like more institutes, to allow all teachers to attend.

The design of technical assistance and professional development efforts reported by our five district-level respondents varied, but they seem to primarily take a practical and hands-on approach to refining EL instruction. One larger, urban district funds ten bilingual/ELD resource teachers on special assignment to coordinate and support school programs. This district offers a “menu of services,” allowing principals to request school-based professional development including the following: the forms of modeling and coaching assistance, providing substitutes so that teachers can observe other school exemplars in the district, working with the school leadership team and instructional reform facilitators to refine the EL program, and identifying appropriate materials for EL instruction, among others. Another larger, urban district funds on-site staff developers. These staff offer teachers coaching and demonstrations, using a technique called co-presenting—the staff developer and teacher collaboratively plan a lesson, the staff developer models the lesson, and then observes the teacher on that lesson.

At a smaller, rural district, recent efforts around EL instruction have focused on aligning professional development to needs articulated by teachers. Rather than implementing a formal professional development program, their approach is to encourage regular teacher collaboration around best practices. During time made possible by extending the paid school day, teachers work with writing coaches who have volunteered to be part of the ELD program implementation process. The administrator from this district felt that the assistance they have offered in setting time aside for teacher collaboration has been integral to improving EL instruction. This is not only because of the sharing of practices, but because it focuses teachers' energies on the goal of improving the EL instructional program, bringing it to the forefront. At the school level, three principals also described technical assistance made possible through teacher release time as the most effective form of support provided by their district.

School administrators shared a variety of strategies that their districts use to bolster EL instruction. The issue of the degree to which districts are active participants in shaping EL curriculum and instruction or, alternatively, leave such planning at each school's discretion emerged in 15 of our school-level interviews. Eight administrators reported the district's role in increasing the continuity of curriculum and programs throughout the district, particularly through clearly articulated district goals, as most effectively supporting their EL program.

As examples of district impact on their EL program, principals highlighted districtwide implementation of EL profile cards (i.e., records documenting EL students' progress in meeting district expectations in regard to English acquisition) and uniform curriculum for ELs. One respondent said, "The use of the same books and materials...and having a pacing plan is the best thing that ever happened so that everyone is on the same page." A principal from a different district saw the need for a more systematic and measurable approach to providing support to ELs, and suggested that a more structured district plan in this regard would be helpful.

In contrast, seven administrators cited the level of flexibility to cater to their local context as the greatest aspect of their district. One principal cited his district's funding of a bilingual liaison to provide primary language communication for parents, which is unique to their school, as an example of district responsiveness to their local context. Another school respondent conveyed that the district's permissiveness in "allowing me, as the site principal, the flexibility to determine what my kids, my teachers, my site needs and then working with me to come up with the solution" was advantageous.

Impact through resource allocation

Twenty-four principals (out of 63, or 38.1 percent) also described as being useful their district's role in careful allocation of resources to provide EL-focused support in terms of EL materials, curriculum instruction, extended-day and intersession programs, and availability of student data. Diverse resource allocation strategies—newcomer programs run by the central office, new curriculum packages, and programs to increase parent involvement—were highlighted by respondents.

While all districts discussed the role of resources specific to their EL population, one larger, urban district formally uses a weighted student formula (weights include numbers of EL, special education, and lower socioeconomic status students, with students remaining EL six or more years receiving a heavier weight) to allocate resources based on the number and needs of students. These resources are used to provide additional tutoring, lower class size, and target student attendance in lower-performing schools throughout the district.

Impact through data

The theme of impacting EL instruction through systematic use of data also emerged in both school- and district-level responses to questions regarding district support. Six principals singled out support provided in this regard as the most effective and useful contribution of their districts. This discussion centered around data-focused professional development, establishment of a data system and regular review of data, and a focus on moving to data-driven decision-making.

At the district level, one larger, urban district described intensive data review and analysis as the most critical element to her district’s success with ELs. She described their focus on identifying ELs whose English proficiency drops, examining their fluency level and placement closely, and sending a report to schools suggesting interventions for individual students. This district also provides leadership academies, which focus on training teachers to analyze data with respect to district goals and EL progress.

10 Tips from the Successful Principals Interviewed for this Study

1. **Align around common expectations and strategies:** “I think the key to our success is consistency. That’s the key. The expectations—the standards have to be set and the expectations are high for all children. The support that we give them has to be there. But the standards—or the expectation—are never lowered. You cannot do that without consistency. So, it doesn’t really matter necessarily what the curriculum is, as long as the strategies that are used to deliver that instruction are consistent across the grade levels, in every strand.”
2. **Don’t underestimate ELs:** “Remember that these students are highly motivated, and want to learn English. It’s important to provide them with a good support group, and to ensure that their first experiences help them to keep their goals high. This is critical.”
3. **Make ELs a whole-school priority:** “All teachers must take responsibility for EL kids – it can’t just be the EL department. We only have 40 kids in our ELD classes, but we have one-third of our school classified as EL. So they are sitting in regular classes and we need to get them to a fluent level. All teachers have to know who they are, what level they are, in order to bring them up to the fluent level, and that involves the whole staff.”

4. **Motivate, train, and involve teachers:** “Developing highly efficient and effective teachers is the first challenge as a principal. Start by sharing research and demographics with them. Teach them how to read and analyze test scores. Teach them step-by-step all the issues with ELLs: what the CELDT levels mean, what the typical life experience of an EL in the school is like, etc. Work as a team to solve the problems. Build in time for lots of dialogue and reflection. Work collaboratively as an entire school through vertical and grade level meetings. Include teachers in decision-making.”
5. **Focus on the needs of individuals:** “It’s hard to do that. Teachers can’t look at 30+ students and say, ‘I’m going to meet all of your needs every day.’ It’s overwhelming and you can’t do it. But you must identify needs and find commonalities to group. Where groupings don’t work, address it as an individual need. Can’t approach it as a ‘one-size-fits-all.’”
6. **Be an active participant in instruction:** “As principals, we really need to be instructional leaders – to be in the classroom and speaking with kids ... What are they understanding and what do they struggle with? ... I try to get in as often as I can, set aside time during the day. Sometimes there are barriers. That’s where we are as instructional leaders across the nation: how do we delegate, give up, let go of the various administrative things that we have throughout the day to really get in and look at classrooms and come out as instructional leaders? Coming back into staff meetings or professional development and teachers taking you as someone who’s credible, saying, ‘That principal came into my classroom and sat through a guided reading lesson and found the same obstacles as I found.’ Then we can talk about those and how do we overcome them.”
7. **Emphasize literacy:** “In our school, everything is based on language. Schools are language places. If kids are going to do well in schools, they have to be good at language. Everything is based on language. You have to work on language composition...We have put most of our eggs on reading and comprehension. The library here is a hoppin’ place and it is well used.”
8. **Encourage collaboration:** “Make sure to allow opportunities for cross-dialogue among teachers within and across grade levels to make sure there is coordination and information sharing about what various teachers have been focusing on and how kids are doing.”
9. **Seek staff input about training needs:** “Offer staff opportunities for development, and conduct an inventory of staff development needs to see if they are fully prepared. Ask them what they feel would help them best serve these students, and they will be candid.”
10. **Have a dedicated classroom for late-entry newcomers:** “Keep the class size small. In our school, these students get ELD all morning and then are mainstreamed with EOs in the afternoon. I find that the students speak a lot more in this special classroom. Then they get role models with the English speakers in the afternoon. After one year they are transitioned into another class. Sometimes they can move out sooner than one year.”

School Profiles

In order to highlight some of the exemplar schools included in our phone interview sample, this section profiles six schools offering a range of EL instructional approaches. These profiles, which with the permission of each school include identifying information, may be valuable for others seeking models of successful instructional programs for English learners. Note that we also include the sampling cell or, stratum, for each school (see Exhibit IV-2 for stratum definitions), as well as the EL percentile ranks that we generated for sampling purposes. As explained earlier in this chapter, the EL within-stratum rank compares the performance of EL/RFEPs in similar schools (as defined by sampling strata) and the EL statewide percentile rank is an absolute rank which compares each school's overall EL/RFEP performance against that of all other schools in the state.

School: Bennett-Kew Elementary

District: Inglewood Unified

Stratum: C

EL Within-Stratum Percentile Rank: 99.4

EL Statewide Percentile Rank: 90.9

Despite being a large, suburban elementary school with a mobile school population, Bennett-Kew does an exceptional job of identifying the individual needs of all its students. “It’s important to know students, to believe that they can learn and to be able to identify the issue at hand,” states Principal Lorraine Fong. Through constant monitoring, total immersion and collaboration around student achievement, the predominately Spanish-speaking EL population (88 percent of the 30 percent designated as ELs) at Bennett-Kew has exceeded expectations and, at almost the 91st percentile on our statewide measure of EL achievement, ranks among the top performers in California.

One of the first in the state to pilot Open Court two decades ago, there is an emphasis on phonics at Bennett-Kew, as well as a concerted effort to make sure that ELs have equal access to the core curriculum. There is ongoing formal and informal monitoring of EL students’ progress—teachers assess individual achievement at the beginning of the year and for every reporting period, while the principal monitors individual, grade-level, and school-wide achievement. Although there is no difference for ELs in the pacing and exposure to the core program, a language specialist provides supplemental help to those at different English proficiency levels and provides staff development and support that ensures that teachers identify and meet individual student needs. Finally, as assessment data is regularly shared among staff, teachers have a high level of accountability for student progress and achievement.

In addition to constant monitoring and total immersion of English learners, Bennett-Kew has responded to high levels of transience among the student population through increased efforts to involve parents. The school frequently holds parent meetings and holds an open house during the day to accommodate parents’ variant work schedules. Through the school’s literacy programs, “parents have learned how to read to their kids,” says Fong. Also, a parent-community liaison is frequently utilized to explain policies and address delicate issues (for example, taking extended vacations) with parents.

Through constant communication, monitoring, and high expectations, students at Bennett-Kew are succeeding. While they have not drastically changed their approach to instruction, according to Principal Fong, Proposition 227 has helped focus attention on ELs and has increased accountability for these students.

School: Cahuenga Elementary
District: Los Angeles Unified School District
Stratum: D
EL Within-Stratum Percentile Rank: 99.9
EL Statewide Percentile Rank: 83.7

“We have visitors coming from all over to observe,” says Cahuenga Elementary principal, Lloyd Houske, when asked about how the public perceives the effectiveness of his school’s success with English Learners (ELs). Cahuenga, located in one of the most ethnically diverse and densely populated areas of Los Angeles, has built a reputation for academic success despite serving some of the most historically challenging populations in the state of California. With approximately 83 percent of the student population classified as English Learners and 90 percent of all students eligible for free and reduced lunch, outsiders would not be surprised if the school failed to meet state standards. Not only has the school ‘not failed’—they have excelled and increased the scores of their Hispanic students by 261 points on the API over the last 6 years.

To meet the needs of its high concentration of ELs, Cahuenga has implemented what they call a “biliteracy” approach to instruction. As 71 percent of EL students at Cahuenga are classified as Spanish speakers and 22 percent are Korean speakers, most EL children learn to read in either English and Spanish or English and Korean starting in kindergarten, while one classroom at each grade level offers English immersion (i.e., Structured English Immersion, or, SEI). While learning English is a primary focus for EL students at Cahuenga, special care is taken to ensure that literacy in their native languages is retained. “My wish is that all children would be biliterate. I think we are living in a different world and the concept of having one language is really not meeting the needs of children of the future,” says Principal Houske. While one might expect that he would perceive Proposition 227 as limiting, Houske reports that the law has actually given his school the freedom both to teach foreign languages (such as Korean) to English-only students in kindergarten, and to introduce English to ELs as soon as they enter school.

To retain and promote this biliteracy, new instructional strategies focusing on the acquisition of ‘academic’ language are constantly being integrated into existing curriculum and standards. Cahuenga was one of first schools to use ‘thinking maps’—a strategy used for K-5 students that organizes thoughts for writing. Other common literacy strategies geared towards language development, such as word walls, manipulatives, and encouraging English use in multiple settings, are pervasive, with teachers constantly “adapting their own curriculum and adapting their strategies to meet the standards,” Principal Houske reports. Data is constantly monitored to assess if these strategies are meeting the standards and staff development is planned accordingly. Meaningful professional development both on instructional strategies specific to ELs and on themes uncovered through data analysis is available to teachers on a regular basis.

Finally, while some schools have cut elective time and budgets in response to increasing emphasis on test scores, Cahuenga has actually done the opposite. They allocate state funding to enrichment activities and electives including dance, orchestra, Korean drumming, and Tae Kwon Do. They also have a ‘good citizen assembly’ every two weeks where teachers go over what makes a good citizen and praise parents for their involvement. The aforementioned strategies are incorporated into these activities and there is a constant focus on academic literacy, regardless of subject matter.

In short, Cahuenga is a school that faces considerable challenges but still has been able to make substantial progress in developing EL students’ English acquisition and content knowledge while heightening cultural awareness and second language acquisition for other students. This unwavering focus on biliteracy, the systematic strategies used by teachers to attain it, and the belief that “we are living in world where having one language isn’t meeting the needs of children for the future” make Cahuenga a model in its successful implementation of bilingual education.

School: Carrillo Elementary
District: Garden Grove
Stratum: A
EL Within-Stratum Percentile Rank: 97.4
EL Statewide Percentile Rank: 73.6

To address the unique needs of its EL population, which composes 80 percent of the total student enrollment, for many years Carrillo Elementary used state test results to guide instruction. However, lack of up-to-date information due to the lag time between when tests are taken and when results arrive was such a source of frustration that the school initiated their own in-house testing program in 1999. This home-grown testing program increased the transparency of students' literacy levels and the results "woke up people as to telling them where their child really is in terms of their reading level," reported Principal Barbara Batson.

While the administered tests give quick feedback on literacy levels and highlight areas in need of improvement, they are not the only method of monitoring used. These short assessments are often combined with results from other programs, such as Accelerated Reader (an incentive-based program that allows students to earn awards for achievement), to accurately place students into skill groups that provide small group instruction for 1-1½ hours each day, depending grade level. These small reading groups and frequent monitoring of literacy outcomes have promoted a personal, needs-oriented, and high resolution instructional program for ELs at Carrillo.

The philosophy guiding this program is to deliver instruction in a way that is meaningful for EL students in an English immersion setting. To accomplish this, Carrillo groups ELs according to their English proficiency and specific academic needs in an SEI setting, and modifies content when necessary. They also initiate multiple supports for this population, such as an after-school intervention program, pull-out by a full-time ELD teacher, and a summer school program—all of which focus on English language acquisition.

The school views state and federal accountability policies as having exerted a positive influence as they have inspired efforts to achieve at higher performance levels. In turn, Carrillo has sharpened its focus on the needs of individual students and building effective strategies to serve them. As a result, "students know where they are, and they know they are not stuck there." In conclusion, Carrillo prides itself on "provid[ing] a bridge for kids to help them start with what they know and get them to start moving towards specific objectives" reports Principal Batson.

School: Hobart Elementary
District: Los Angeles Unified School District
Stratum: A
EL Within-Stratum Percentile Rank: 97.9
EL Statewide Percentile Rank: 76.2

“We need to prepare our children to go out and compete with everyone else,” states Hobart Elementary Principal Mercedes Santoyo-Villavazo when questioned about her school’s transition from a bilingual to an SEI model post-Proposition 227. With 81 percent of the student population designated as English learners, Santoyo-Villavazo felt it was a major problem “that the children were spending way too much time in primary language reading and writing and were not transferring the skills into English.” This emphasis on English language development, along with high expectations, extra time, and data-driven instruction, has earned Hobart Elementary recognition as a school with high achievement despite a near 100 percent poverty level.

According to leadership, high expectations and hard work drive student achievement. While some feel that society at large has watered-down expectations for low-income urban schools, this attitude is not tolerated at Hobart. “Our children might be poor,” states Principal Santoyo-Villavazo, “but they’re not brain dead. They have just as much brainpower as anyone else, and they can do it. They will achieve and they will meet our expectations.” Despite a large EL population, the school prides itself on challenging students with demanding material – for example, a few staff members teach Shakespeare as early as 5th grade and all staff are reported to “truly believe that our children can and will achieve.”

This hard work often comes in the form of extra time and effort dedicated to language acquisition and development. At Hobart, all students engage in Open Court and focus on reading, writing and spelling for approximately 2 ½ hours each morning. The school also conducts ELD instruction for 30 to 40 minutes each day for all students, regardless of their EL status. After-school and Saturday school sessions are structured to monitor program growth through pre- and post-tests in order to tailor interventions offered to specific subgroups. While these programs may sound rigid, according to Principal Santoyo-Villavazo, “staff does try to make it pleasant for the students ... the children love coming. We have good attendance even at Saturday school.”

In addition to a strong focus on literacy development and English acquisition, data is considered integral in assessing student progress and identifying where the teachers should collaboratively focus instruction. “We definitely take a lot of time to analyze data. I think that’s one of the most important steps that we do here on a yearly basis. We do that at the school and at the grade level to identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses. Then we focus and try to gear our programs toward those areas where the children are needing a little more help so it’s data-driven instruction,” reports Santoyo-Villavazo. A weekly grade-level meeting looking at areas of need, planning, and sharing resources has also made a positive difference in student achievement.

In conclusion, the unwavering focus and support of English acquisition as a path towards success has facilitated buy-in among staff, parents, and students. The idea that students need to be prepared for experiences such as taking college and state exams in English, not necessarily in their primary language, lends a sense of urgency to Hobart’s goal and has resulted in a decision by school staff and parents not to offer waiver classes. Overall, the support and belief of the entire school community in English acquisition makes Hobart Elementary a model SEI program.

School: Moscone Elementary
District: San Francisco Unified School District
Stratum: E
EL Within-Stratum Percentile Rank: 99.9
EL Statewide Percentile Rank: 90.1

Moscone is rare in that the demographics of its population have not changed significantly over the past two decades—it has always served a high-poverty, highly immigrant student body, but has worked hard to achieve extraordinary success. Leadership at Moscone, including Principal Patti Martel, attributes this success to the vision they have pursued for the past 17 years that every child will reach their full potential—a vision that “necessitates that every person that comes to interact with our community must put aside all personal and political agendas.” In a state with a politically charged climate in regard to how best to educate English learners, Martel reports that these words sound simple, but have profound and reverberating affects when taken seriously.

To attain the vision that every child will become proficient in English while valuing and validating their home language and culture, Moscone, a school with approximately 60 percent of their students designated as English Learners and 80 percent eligible for free or reduced lunch, relies on a coherent instructional plan that has evolved over the years, including both bilingual and SEI classrooms. The “early-exit” bilingual classes are offered in both Spanish and Chinese, and each grade progressively integrates more English into the curriculum so that by the fourth grade all students are mainstreamed into regular classrooms. In all classes, teachers build academic English through pragmatic instruction on grammar, vocabulary, and word usage. Martel reports that the teachers are “constantly focused on how to accelerate and acquire the English language while being supportive of the primary language” and use programs and strategies like Reading Recovery and the Focused Approach to provide a balanced approach to literacy acquisition.

While teachers have concentrated on building academic English through targeted instruction, Principal Martel credits her teachers with realizing what she considers the “biggest paradigm shift in education”—that is, performing constant checks to make sure that students are learning and, if they are *not* getting it, adjusting instructional strategies to ensure that they do. As Martel puts it, “If I see somebody stop a lesson half way through, I’m thrilled! ... I would no more say that’s a bad thing, because you know this lesson is not going over. [Our teachers] are constantly assessing what the kids are getting and who needs reteaching.”

She also reports that collaboration around ongoing classroom assessments, constant monitoring of all available student performance data, and subsequent strategic brainstorming across staff about how to respond, help staff calibrate instruction to give support to the entire student population. Often, either leadership or teachers identify an area of concern through data analysis, bring an idea to the table to address this concern, and implement it in several classrooms. The results are then evaluated and the staff makes a collective decision about whether to incorporate a strategy or intervention more broadly across the school. As a result, the staff at Moscone are constantly refining and reflecting on their approach, innovating new strategies, and keeping what works.

Building consensus around initiatives, setting aside political and personal agendas, and “working together with every element of the community from the administration to the parents” has enabled Moscone to define and tailor their academic program to meet the needs of their unique student population. In order to prepare students for the future and provide them with a solid foundation, “You need to have a clear vision... it has served us very well to know what we’re about, where we are going, and who we’re serving,” Principal Martel states. By using this clear vision to successfully provide the basic building blocks while maintaining high expectations, students at Moscone “believe that they can go way beyond after they get those basics” and achieve excellence.

School: Valley High School
District: Elk Grove Unified School District
Stratum: H
EL Within-Stratum Percentile Rank: 97.2
EL Statewide Percentile Rank: 67.1

“Students do not fall through the cracks,” exclaimed EL Coordinator Linda Gonzalez when probed about what makes Valley High School successful. Because Valley High, an urban high school in Sacramento, boasts such a diverse English learner population, they employ bilingual Spanish, Hmong, Chinese, Punjabi and Hindi paraprofessionals to assist students with content area. This type of dedication in meeting the needs of each individual student has resulted in an extremely low overall dropout rate (3 percent) – a noteworthy accomplishment considering that 62 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch and 26 percent are designated as English learners.

Part of what makes Valley High unique is the combination of systematic use of data and personalized attention that starts the moment students enter through its doors. Through analysis of CELDT and CST scores, as well as feedback from teachers and feeder middle schools, careful consideration is given to individually place every EL student in an instructional program that best meets their needs. Valley High offers a tiered “EL partnership” program with three levels of instruction: one for newcomer students; another set of “transitional” core courses for those ELs who have not yet attained the level of English fluency necessary to access college-level textbooks; and “SDAIE” core classes, all of which are approved by the University of California system as meeting college entrance requirements. Critical to ensuring the quality of instruction offered at Valley High, according to Vice Principal Chris Evans, is that teachers instructing classes at any of the three levels participate in a year-round professional learning program to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of ELs. Evans further emphasized that Valley High ELs would not be able to attain the results they have without Principal Roger Stock’s concerted effort to allocate the fiscal and human resources necessary to make sure that EL partnership classes are funded and that the administration makes serving ELs a priority.

In addition, the entire staff is extremely dedicated to giving credit where it is due and “any student who comes to Valley High School immediately sees a counselor [and] has a parent meeting” to determine what state standards they have already met so that students’ schedules can be tailored to meet graduation requirements. Often, this is easier said than done, but staff members at Valley High report going so far as to regularly communicate across continents to track down students’ prior transcripts in order to place them in the appropriate classes. “I’ve called Japan, I’ve called China, and I’ve called Mexico to have a relative to go to the school [and] get a transcript,” says Gonzalez. Ultimately students are provided with a schedule that minimizes repetitiveness and aids in English acquisition—ELs with relatively low English fluency trade one elective for a second hour of ELD class.

Once the students are placed, the teachers are given the freedom and support to implement curricula to meet the needs of their diverse student population. Recently, a task force was formed to look at data and research on materials related to EL instruction and textbooks focusing on the needs of ELs. Eventually, these materials, including Shining Star and Globe textbooks as well as software programs, were adopted to help students reach the overall goal of proficiency in both English and core content. Constant tracking by the bilingual paraprofessionals, teachers, and administration ensures all students’ progress is carefully monitored. This tracking and support for English learners is what makes Valley High, according to the three administrators interviewed, “a model program.”

Finally, like most exemplary schools, the students and staff at Valley High hold themselves to extremely high expectations and are dedicated to student achievement. As Principal Stock states, “You’ve got to start with commitment and belief that all students can learn. And that commitment can help them meet that goal.” This belief, along with strategic placement and relevant curricula, is what promotes high student achievement at Valley High.

Chapter V. Exploring Issues in the Redesignation of ELs

Highlights

- A qualitative study of the redesignation policies and practices of nine California school districts—four with relatively high redesignation rates, and five with relatively low redesignation rates compared to the state average—was undertaken to identify how local and state policies and practices contribute to different EL reclassification outcomes, clarify extraneous factors that may influence this varying performance, and discern implications for educators and policymakers.
- Notable differences were found with respect to districts’ redesignation criteria and chosen cut points; the procedures and systems in place to carry out redesignation; and the degree and kind of importance placed on redesignation in local accountability systems. These differences explain much of the observed variation, and derive in part from current state policy regarding the redesignation of ELs.
- Key issues in current state policy affecting local policies and practices include: 1) ambiguous and possibly contradictory guidance on redesignation criteria and cut-points, especially as these relate to NCLB goals for ELs; 2) unrealistic reporting timelines out of sync with assessment and school-year calendars; and 3) arguably flawed redesignation-rate calculation methods that likely under-represent success and ignore English learners’ progress over time across the spectrum of linguistic and academic performance. Underscoring these concerns is the challenge of ensuring that redesignated students progress and succeed without further specialized services, while at the same time preventing students from remaining in EL status so long that it undermines their educational opportunities.

Introduction

The redesignation or reclassification¹ of English learners to fluent English proficient (RFEP) status is generally considered a key indicator of the effectiveness of EL instructional programs, and statewide redesignation rates and their interpretation have figured prominently in debates about Proposition 227, both before and since its passage in 1998. Moreover, redesignation has become a topic of intense focus by policy analysts and state auditors as English Learners’ impact on state and local accountability has increased under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Nevertheless,

¹ Reclassification is the term most often used in the research and policy literature, as well as in most states; although both terms are used interchangeably in California, its policymakers and educators typically use the term redesignation.

redesignation's meaning and significance, the policies and procedures used to carry it out, and methods of calculating redesignation rates all continue to generate much confusion and concern.

Our reports over the past five years have studied redesignation, both in evaluating the impact of Proposition 227, as well as in attempting to explore the potential relationship of redesignation to tracking, segregation, and access to grade-level instructional opportunities. Years 1 and 2 of our study explored issues related to redesignation via site visits and statewide surveys of school and district personnel, while our Year 3 report provided a basic quantitative analysis of state redesignation rates by elementary, middle, and high school levels, and further explored the topic through case study site visits.

Given perceived low redesignation rates as a point of contention in policy discussions of Proposition 227; ambiguity in redesignation policies and procedures across the state; and ongoing concerns about the potential negative consequences of EL language classification status on students' educational opportunities at the secondary level, we opted to make redesignation a major focus of this final year of our study. In this chapter, we present findings from a qualitative study of the redesignation policies and practices of nine California school districts, four with relatively high redesignation rates, and five with relatively low redesignation rates in relation to the state average. While it is important not to over-generalize from a purposive sample of only nine districts, it is worth noting that all these districts enroll large numbers of ELs and collectively represent 27.5 percent of the state's EL population. Our major purpose, however, is to identify how local policies and practices may be contributing to these different EL reclassification outcomes; to clarify what extraneous factors may be influencing this varying performance; and to discern the implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers.

The chapter provides a brief review of some of the key issues discussed in the professional literature on redesignation. It then briefly reviews state reclassification policy and procedures in California, explains the methodology for this component of the study, and presents and discusses findings with respect to districts' redesignation criteria, procedures, and the importance given to redesignation in local accountability systems. Common concerns identified across districts studied are also explored, and amplified by our study's findings from prior years. The chapter closes with a summary, conclusions and implications, while recommendations regarding redesignation policy are presented in Chapter 7.

Background

Although often taken as straightforward, the classification of linguistic-minority students as English learners, and their eventual redesignation to fluent English proficient (RFEP) status, are notably complex undertakings from conceptual, psychometric and policy perspectives. Researchers both nationally and in California studying EL classification and reclassification policies and practices have repeatedly warned of definitional and measurement inconsistencies (Abedi, 2004a); lack of psychometric

soundness of existing language proficiency and standardized achievement assessments for the EL population (Abedi, 2002; Abella, Urritia, & Shneyderman, 2005; Stevens, Bulter, & Castellon-Wellington, 2000; Thompson, DiCerbo, Mahoney, & MacSwan, 2002; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994); non-comparability of reclassification criteria, procedures, and rate calculations across states and across districts within states (Abedi, 2004b; Linqianti, 2001; Mahoney & MacSwan, 2005); and challenges to the meaning and interpretability of reclassification as a measure of accountability (Gandara & Merino, 1993; Linqianti, Bailey, Lentz, & Pasta, 2000; Linqianti, 2001). In light of these well-documented concerns, any examination of redesignation must acknowledge and carefully navigate the complexities involved while avoiding oversimplification.

During the campaign for Proposition 227, redesignation of English learners to fluent English proficient (RFEP) status, and particularly EL redesignation rates in California, played an important role in debates surrounding the effectiveness of bilingual education. For example, Ron Unz, the initiative's author, regularly cited California's redesignation rate as demonstrable proof that the state's instructional services for ELs were ineffective: "Of the 1.3 million California schoolchildren—a quarter of our state's total public school enrollment—who begin each year classified as not knowing English, only about 5 percent learn English by the year's end, implying an annual failure rate of 95 percent for existing programs" (Unz, 1997).

Since the passage and implementation of Proposition 227, researchers and advocates have also cited statewide redesignation rates, which have risen only slightly since 1998, in critiquing both the premises of the proposition as well as the effectiveness of its default, mandated instructional program, structured English immersion (Mora, 2000; Grissom, 2004).

Moreover, in light of NCLB's growing importance, policy analysts have begun studying EL redesignation in an attempt to better understand factors that may predict or influence reclassification rates (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2004; Jepson & de Alth, 2005). Public auditors have also begun studying redesignation to determine whether district and state administrators are adequately monitoring English learners' readiness to redesignate, and whether grant-funding formulas based on EL counts may be creating disincentives to redesignate EL students (California Bureau of State Audits, 2005).

Researchers have also studied key components of the redesignation construct—particularly the development of academic language proficiency and achievement in core academic subjects—in an attempt to better estimate how long it may take EL students to attain particular levels of academic performance (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Garcia, G.N., 2000). Hakuta and colleagues found in their empirical research that EL students' poverty level may be powerful in predicting the rate of English acquisition (p. 13). Given what they note is already known about low socioeconomic status negatively impacting student achievement in traditional content area assessments (citing Moss & Puma, 1995), the degree of EL poverty may also affect redesignation rates, since English-language proficiency and academic achievement are integral to the redesignation construct.

While there is a general consensus that redesignation of ELs to RFEP status constitutes a notable milestone of progress, researchers, professional associations, and educational policymakers continue to warn that this not be considered “the whole story nor the end of story” with respect to students’ continued development of academic language skills and academic core content knowledge and mastery of standards (CCSSO, 1992; Gandara & Merino, 1993; Linquanti, 2001; TESOL, 1999). At the same time, researchers clearly warn of the potential negative consequences of students remaining indefinitely in EL status, particularly as they leave elementary for middle and high school, given departmentalization and the likelihood of track placement that limits access to grade-level instruction, electives, AP and honors courses, and courses required for admission to postsecondary education (Callahan, 2005; Valdes, 2001).

Initially Classifying & Redesignating ELs in California: Current Context and Issues

In preparing for the following discussion, it is important to understand the current context and key issues at the state level. In what follows, we answer some common questions about the current process of redesignation in California, then highlight certain ambiguities in current state guidelines for the initial classification and the reclassification of English learners (ELs). This will help contextualize findings from our examination of the nine districts, as well as substantiate our conclusions and recommendations.

Who are redesignated students?

Only EL-classified students can be redesignated to fluent-English-proficient (RFEP) status. Since academic achievement is a key criterion in redesignation, redesignated former-ELs *by definition* perform higher as a group than the remaining EL population, which continually receives new, usually lower-performing EL students (Abedi, 2002).

How are students initially classified as English learner?

In California, newly-enrolling students are identified as linguistic-minority based on answers to a brief Home Language Survey, which probes for use of a language other than or in addition to English in the student’s home. Students identified via this survey as linguistic-minority have their English language proficiency assessed using a statewide, standardized assessment known as the Initial CELDT.²

The state’s education code requires school districts to use the results of this assessment “as the primary indicator for the initial identification of English learners,” and state guidelines define the Initial CELDT cut-score threshold as overall Early Advanced, with each subskill score Intermediate or higher. However, these guidelines also permit districts to use a *lower* overall CELDT threshold of upper-Intermediate *in combination with* other, local academic and non-academic criteria (e.g., test scores, grades,

² In California, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), based on the state’s English Language Development (ELD) standards, is used to determine whether linguistic-minority students are initially classified as English learners (“Initial CELDT”); administered to ELs annually (“Annual CELDT”); and is one of the criteria used to reclassify them.

teacher/parent input) to determine students' language classification.³ Those students found to be at or above the threshold are classified as initially fluent-English-proficient, or IFEP, and never become ELs. Those identified as ELs are required to be provided services intended to address their second language needs as well as their academic needs.

While the initial classification of an EL is most often based on a single criterion—their performance on Initial CELDT, an EL student's reclassification is based on meeting *multiple* criteria. These include English language proficiency *as well as* academic achievement in at least English reading/language arts, since the latter has been considered essential to an EL student's likelihood of success in meeting age/grade-appropriate academic standards in mainstream settings with no specialized services. Therefore, what gets a student into the EL category is usually very different from what gets a student out of it. That is, a student can remain in EL status for academic performance reasons.

What guidelines does the state provide educators on reclassifying ELs to fluent English proficient (RFEP) status?

The CDE has published State-Board-approved reclassification criteria and guidelines; a decision guide for reclassifying ELs as RFEP, and suggested steps for reclassifying ELs.⁴ These include the use of two statewide measures, CELDT and the California Standards Test of English Language Arts (CST-ELA) with suggested—but not required—minimum cut points. In addition to these standardized measures of English-language proficiency and performance in basic English language arts skills, the guidelines also call for teacher evaluation and parent opinion and consultation. Moreover, they allow districts to identify and use other, locally defined criteria. One artifact of these varying criteria is that they make redesignation rates non-comparable across California districts.

How are annual district and state redesignation rates calculated?

Redesignation rates are calculated for each district and for the state by dividing the number of EL students redesignated as of February 28th of each year⁵ by the total number of ELs in the district as reported on the *prior* year's Language Census.

Key Issues in State Redesignation Guidelines

In carefully examining state criteria and guidelines, we believe that the State offers somewhat varying conceptions of what redesignation is intended to represent. These include that the EL student demonstrates that he or she is “able to compete

³ Academic criteria are more often used in initial classification decisions about newly-entering students in grades 2-12. Criteria, guidelines, and a decision guide for initially identifying linguistic-minority students as English learners, are in Appendix D, Exhibit 1, and come from the CELDT Assistance Packet for School Districts/Schools, Section II, available online from CDE at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/assistancepkt.asp>.

⁴ These are in Appendix D, Exhibit 2, and come from the CELDT Assistance Packet for School Districts/Schools, Section IV, available online from CDE at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/assistancepkt.asp>.

⁵ This is the deadline for establishing counts of EL and RFEP students for California's annual Language Census (LC R-30), which must then be filed electronically with the CDE by March 30.

effectively with English-speaking peers in mainstream classrooms” (p. IV-1); “is proficient in English” (p. IV-4); and is “sufficiently prepared to participate effectively in the curriculum” (p. IV-5). While these different conceptions entail careful operationalization, the state’s reclassification guidelines also contain ambiguities regarding specific performance standards that districts are to use, even with statewide standardized assessments.

For example, the suggested steps for reclassification state that, in assessing an EL’s English language proficiency, “the student *must* meet the CELDT definition of proficiency, which is an overall score of early advanced or advanced, and scores are intermediate or above for each of the subskill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing;” if an EL does not meet this criterion, “the student should remain an English learner.” (p. IV-2, emphasis added.) However, the guidelines later state, “Those students whose overall proficiency level is in the upper end of the intermediate level *may also be considered for reclassification* if additional measures determine the likelihood that a student is proficient in English.” (p. IV-4, emphasis added.)

In another instance, under teacher evaluation of student academic performance, the reclassification decision guide flowchart states that the district should “review the student’s academic performance,” and ask, “Does student meet the academic performance indicators set by the district?” (p. IV-6.) However, the guidelines for teacher evaluation note that “*incurred deficits in motivation and academic success unrelated to English-language proficiency* do not preclude a student from reclassification.” (p. IV-4, emphasis added.)

Similarly, the guidelines for comparison of performance in basic skills state: “For pupils scoring below the [CST-ELA] cut point, school districts should attempt to determine whether factors *other than English-language proficiency* are responsible for low performance on the CST in English-Language Arts and whether it is reasonable to reclassify the student.” (p. IV-5, emphasis added.)

As is clear in these examples, substantial discretion is left to districts to decide what constitutes adequate academic performance, and to what degree that academic performance reflects the student’s English-language proficiency, or is being impeded by factors unrelated to the student’s English-language proficiency.

This ambiguity in State guidelines—while partly reflecting the complexities of adequately assessing language proficiency and academic achievement of ELs well-documented in the research literature—also contributes to the confusion, concern, and substantial variation in policy implementation we found at the district level, as well as to the noncomparability of redesignation rates across districts.

Methodology

In order to identify districts for this in-depth examination of redesignation, a purposive sample was selected from the top 50 EL-enrolling California school districts. These 50 districts were rank-ordered by their average redesignation rate for the prior

three years (2002-2004).⁶ Based on this average score, the 13 highest-redesignating districts (i.e., top quartile) and the 13 lowest-redesignating districts (i.e., bottom quartile) were identified. From these two sets of districts, four districts with redesignation rates substantially above the state redesignation-rate mean, and four with rates substantially below, were selected in a stratified manner, giving consideration to student demographics, geographic location, urbanicity, and to the extent possible, mix of EL instructional services. While 13 of the top 50 EL-enrolling districts were either elementary or high school districts, only unified (i.e., K-12) districts were chosen for study. This was done in order to most fully capture the potential impact of a given district's EL classification and redesignation policies and instructional services by minimizing EL students' entering or exiting feeder or receiver districts, respectively. Also, unified is the most common district type in California.

Exhibit V-1 shows the selected mean statistics for the state; for the top 50 EL-enrolling districts; for the top and bottom quartiles of these 50 districts in regard to redesignation rate; and for sample districts drawn from those quartiles.

⁶ Although district redesignation rates as reported on the state Language Census were initially reviewed for the five-year period of 2000 to 2004, and these are displayed in the report, the team drew the sample using redesignation rate means from 2002 forward since it was from that year that more standards-based measures such as CELDT were uniformly used by districts statewide.

Exhibit V-1. Comparison of Selected Variables (mean values): Top 50 EL-enrolling Districts, Top and Bottom Quartiles, & Study Sample

District	Demographics			Settings & Services		Average Redesignation Rates					Indicator
	# ELs	% EL	% Poverty	% Alternative Program	% L1 Instructional Services	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	2002-04 Average
CALIFORNIA STATE TOTAL:	1,598,535	25.4%	49.0%	9%	8%	8.3%	7.7%	7.8%	9.1%	7.8%	7.9%
a. Top EL-enrolling (N = 50)	18,159	35.7%	61.1%			8.6%	7.6%	6.2%	7.2%	6.6%	7.5%
b. High-RFEP Quartile (N = 13)	11,004	27.6%	56.2%			13.6%	11.4%	10.3%	9.7%	9.0%	11.8%
c. High-RFEP Sample (N = 4)	15,966	26.5%	50.3%	8.3%	8.3%	17.2%	14.1%	11.9%	12.1%	9.3%	14.4%
d. Low-RFEP Quartile (N = 13)	11,263	37.5%	62.8%			5.1%	3.6%	3.9%	5.0%	4.9%	4.2%
e. Low-RFEP Sample (N = 4)	12,396	31.3%	68.4%	8.8%	8.3%	4.6%	2.5%	3.2%	4.7%	3.4%	3.4%

Exhibit V-2. Selected Statistics for Sample Districts

District	Demographics		Settings & Services		Geog. Location	Redesignation Rate					Indicators	
	% ELs	% Poverty	% Alt. Program	% L1 Inst. Svcs.		2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	2002-04 Average	RFEP % Status
Andreas	30.0%	42.8%	2%	2%	South	23.6%	14.2%	13.8%	14.5%	12.5%	17.2%	High
Benson	18.4%	38.1%	0%	0%	Central	18.2%	22.9%	6.7%	9.1%	9.7%	15.9%	High
Carlos	28.4%	54.7%	29%	29%	North	10.2%	12.8%	16.4%	8.3%	8.3%	13.1%	High
Davidson	29.2%	65.6%	2%	2%	South	16.9%	6.4%	10.7%	16.4%	6.5%	11.3%	High
CALIFORNIA	25.4%	49.0%	9%	8%	CA	8.3%	7.7%	7.8%	9.1%	7.8%	7.9%	AVG.
Evans	43.8%	79.6%	5%	4%	South	4.2%	2.1%	10.0%	11.2%	10.3%	5.4%	Low
Franco	29.4%	55.7%	22%	22%	North	5.1%	2.5%	4.2%	4.5%	2.9%	3.9%	Low
Gardenia	31.1%	78.2%	10%	8%	Central	6.7%	4.1%	0.6%	3.3%	3.4%	3.8%	Low
Haynes	40.0%	76.7%	2%	2%	Central	4.2%	2.3%	4.0%	5.4%	3.3%	3.5%	Low
Ignacio	24.5%	62.9%	1%	1%	South	2.5%	1.0%	4.1%	5.5%	3.9%	2.5%	Low

As can be seen, districts in the top and bottom quartiles (rows b and d) are quite similar in average number of ELs (11,004 and 11,263, respectively), while the districts sampled (rows c and e) have more ELs than their respective quartile groups. By definition, the percentage of ELs in all districts is higher than the state mean, but the top-quartile districts and selected sample (rows b and c) have notably lower EL percentages relative to their bottom-quartile counterparts (rows d and e). Poverty is also higher in all but 13 of the top 50 districts relative to the state, but mean poverty rates for the top quartile and selected sample are lower (56.2 percent and 50.3 percent, respectively) than those of the bottom quartile and selected sample (62.8 percent and 68.4 percent, respectively). That is, the lowest quartile of redesignating-districts, on average, has higher concentrations of ELs and somewhat higher percentages of students in poverty. The average redesignation rate used as our indicator is also by definition higher for the top quartile than for the bottom quartile (11.8 percent versus 4.2 percent), but our selected sample districts accentuate that difference (14.4 percent versus 3.4 percent, respectively). All but one of the districts in our selected sample offers bilingual instruction to at least some of their ELs, and the average percentage enrollment in alternative programs and primary language instructional services closely matches that of the state. However, two outlier districts—one from the high-redesignating sample, the other from the low-redesignating sample—clearly skew these averages upward, as most districts in the selected sample provide primary language instruction to very few of their EL students.

Given its size and impact on California, Los Angeles Unified School District—with 20 percent of the state’s EL population—was automatically included in our study sample. The final nine sample districts together serve 27.5 percent of the state’s ELs, and are distributed across the state’s geographic regions, representing largely urban and suburban settings, although also capturing some more rural and Central Valley locations. Selected mean statistics for each of the nine districts chosen are displayed in Exhibit V-2.

Over a two-month period, structured telephone interviews with district administrators in charge of EL services and document reviews were conducted for each of the districts.⁷ Interviews and document reviews focused explicitly on districts’ established redesignation criteria, procedures, and the importance given to redesignation in local accountability systems. Suggestions for state policymakers regarding policies, procedures, and redesignation rate calculations were also solicited from interviewed district personnel. Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. These transcripts along with the reviewed district documents were used to determine whether and to what extent notable differences emerged between high- and low-redesignating districts. Common concerns across districts regarding the areas studied were also identified and documented.

Findings

Findings are presented and discussed in relation to thematic sections of the interview protocol, beginning with a comparative review of redesignation criteria, and

⁷ The structured interview protocol is available in Appendix D, Exhibit 3.

proceeding to redesignation process/procedures, and the importance of redesignation to local accountability systems of the districts studied. Common concerns will then be discussed, as well as a summary, conclusions and implications for policymakers regarding redesignation policy, procedures, and redesignation rate calculations.

Redesignation Criteria

Key findings:

- Redesignation criteria—and conceptions of what these represent—vary between and within high- versus low-redesignating sample district groups
- Most sample districts (all but 2) set cut-points on statewide criteria above state-recommended guidelines, and all use many additional, locally-defined criteria
- Expanded grade eligibility, alternative, lower RFEP criteria cut points, and atypical EL identification practices contribute to higher RFEP rates in some instances

As noted above, the California Department of Education provides State-Board-approved guidelines for districts to use in redesignating English learners, including two statewide measures, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), and the California Standards Test of English Language Arts (CST-ELA) with suggested cut points. In addition to these standardized measures of English-language proficiency and performance in basic English language arts skills, the guidelines also call for teacher evaluation and parent opinion and consultation. Moreover, they allow districts to identify and use other, locally-defined criteria. Finally, they make reference to EL student eligibility, permitting redesignation of grade 1-2 students through alternative criteria, while discouraging reclassification of kindergartners. Exhibit V-3, below, summarizes the redesignation criteria of each of the nine districts studied.

Exhibit V-3. California & Sample Districts' Redesignation Criteria

District (all USD)	English Language Proficiency (CELDT)				Performance in Basic Skills (CST)		Teacher Evaluation		Other Criteria
	Overall	L/S	R	W	ELA	Math	Grades	Other	
CA SBE Criteria:	EA	I	I	I	300-up	n/a	"Review student's academic performance"		K not advised; 1-2 permitted Parent opinion & consultation specified
High-RFEP									
Andreas (Criteria Set #1 of 4)	EA	EA	I in either		325	325	-R/LA, ELD; & H/SS or science achievement: -K-6: 3 or 4 of 4 -7-12: C or +	-K-6 Writing benchmark: Proficient -7-12: ELD/English semester exam: 70%	-Redesignation performed K-12 -Signed parental approval required -CAT/6, R/LA & Math: 36%ile (used if CST not met) -SOLOM min.15 of 25; -Gr.10-12: CAHSEE ELA & Math: 350 (proficient)
Benson	EA	I	I	I	335	335	C or +	--	-Redesignation performed 3-12 -1-on-1 parent consultation
Carlos	EA	I	I	I	325	--	K-6: Satisfactory or + on student progress reports 7-12: C or +	-Oral language assessment rubric: Advanced or +	-Redesignation performed 3-12 -Signed parental consent letter
Davidson	EA	I	I	I	300		K-5: Proficient or + on standards-based report card; 6-12: C or + in 3 core subjs.	-Dist L/A & Math benchmarks; -CST-Math at Basic	-Redesignation performed 1-12 -Invitation to parent to participate in review; approval signature required
Low-RFEP									
Evans	EA	I	I	I	300	--	Gr.1-2: Meet each 6-8 wk ELA benchmark Gr.3-6: ELA & Math progress Rept. 3 or 4 Gr.7-12: C or + SDAIE Eng./ ESL ¾, & Math	Gr. 1-6: ELD portfolio 4 or 5; report card L/S/ R/W mastery scores 3 or 4	-Redesignation performed 1-12 -Automated parent notification letter sent when school confirms on system all criteria met
Franco	EA	I	I	I	325	--	K-6: Grade level in acad. core (rubrics) 7-12: C- or +	K-6: writing sample at grade level (per rubric) 7-12: ELD writing prompt: 4 or 5 of 5	-Redesignation performed 3-12 -Invitation to parent to participate in review -SOLOM min. 20 or + (4 of 5 for each of 5 areas)
Gardenia	EA	EA	EA	EA	300	--	--	Oral language assessment rubric: Meets criteria	-Redesignation performed 3-12 -Parent consultation w/ sign-off required
Haynes	EA	EA	EA	EA	350	350	3-12: C or + in core subjects	Observe student participation, attitude, collaboration, study habits & homework completion	-Redesignation performed 3-12 -Parent conference w/ sign-off required -CAT/6, R or LA & Math: 36%ile (used only if CST cut point not met)
Ignacio	EA	EA	EA	I	325	--	2-8: 3 or 4 of 4 in core subjects (rubrics) 9-12: C or + in core subjects	Writing sample: proficient or + (per rubric)	-Redesignation performed 3-12 -Parent conference w/ sign-off required

As can be seen, redesignation criteria varied somewhat between and within high-versus low-redesignating sample districts. Notably, only two of nine districts (one high-, the other low-redesignating) utilized the cut-points recommended in state guidelines for the two statewide standardized measures (CELDT and CST-ELA). The other seven sample districts set cut-points above state-recommended guidelines. Those districts doing so contended the state’s recommended cut-scores, particularly beginning-level of Basic on CST-ELA, represented too low a level of performance. They wanted to ensure ELs could handle the linguistic and academic demands of grade-level content in mainstream classrooms once specialized services were removed. “I want to make sure the CST Level 3 is solid and not borderline—we want [EL students] to be far away from the lowest end of Basic to feel confident,” explained an administrator from Benson Unified, which uses a cut-score above the midpoint of Basic for ELA and math. (This topic is further explored in the section on common concerns, below.) Those districts requiring standardized test performance in both ELA and mathematics were more likely to allow scores from the state’s norm referenced test (CAT/6) to be used as an alternative to the CST.

Moreover, low-redesignating districts tended to set higher CELDT cut-points in English language sub-skill scores relative to state guidelines and to the high-redesignating districts, again maintaining that the higher scores help to ensure student’s academic English language skills. Some districts reported that this reduced the number of students qualifying for redesignation, particularly due to the CELDT Reading sub-skill, which in past years has been the sub-skill ELs statewide score lowest on. In Ignacio Unified, for example, the higher CELDT Reading cut-point of Early Advanced was met by only 28 percent of otherwise eligible students in grades 3-5, making it the primary reason why students missed reclassification. Gardenia Unified also noted many cases where EL students scoring at the low end of Basic on CST could not meet the Early Advanced level on CELDT sub-skills, leading them to question the range of abilities represented in the Basic performance band of CST.

In addition to state standardized measures, virtually all of the districts used standards-based or traditional grades as well as locally-developed, core content and ELD assessments and writing prompts. Many considered these local criteria as vital to increasing their confidence in a decision to redesignate an EL student, particularly when they were standards-based and seen as an integral part of district standards and teachers’ instructional strategies. A number of districts noted that performance on local measures—particularly district writing and benchmark assessments—could keep many students from being redesignated who had otherwise met minimum state criteria. In fact, one high-redesignating district found some students could meet minimal state RFEP criteria cut-scores, and still be retained in grade for missing local assessment benchmarks.

Another, low-redesignating district dropped non-standards-based academic grades as a criterion this year after it found nearly half of those ELs who otherwise met RFEP criteria missed redesignating due to grades. “A lot gets funneled into that grade,” explained a district administrator. “Conduct, homework completion, attendance, behavior...and one grade below a C could hold you back.”

There was some variation with respect to eligibility for redesignation review by EL students' grade level, a factor which could affect the redesignation rate in the given district. While state guidelines permit redesignation of students in grades 1-2 using CELDT results and local academic assessment criteria and appear to advise against redesignation of kindergartners,⁸ low-redesignating districts were much more likely to review EL students for possible redesignation beginning at grade 3. They noted that CST scores are first available for students only after the end of grade 2.

Local decisions to set higher cut points on statewide criteria, use multiple local assessments, and restrict grade-eligibility all appeared to be linked to local conceptions of what redesignation criteria represent, and indeed to what redesignation itself is meant to signify. This ambiguity regarding the meaning and significance of redesignation is one of the key concerns discussed below.

Beyond the factors just reviewed, unusual policy options or practices in two of the high-redesignating districts clearly contributed to their higher RFEP rates. For example, Andreas Unified allows EL students to be redesignated using three different sets of progressively lower cut-points on the same redesignation criteria, depending upon the student's grade level. A fourth option allows the parent to request that their EL student be changed to RFEP status regardless of performance on any of the criteria.

Conversely, at least two of the low-redesignating districts reported that prior cut-points they set using norm referenced tests (NRTs) had historically contributed to low redesignation rates. For example, during the five years that California used the SAT-9 to measure students' basic skills, Gardenia Unified set RFEP cut-points at the 50th percentile in reading, language arts, and math subtests. For 15 years, Haynes Unified also required redesignating students to attain the 36th percentile in all three subtests of the NRT. While both districts adopted the CST-ELA for redesignation once the state required its use, Haynes requires reclassifying ELs to meet the Proficient level on both the English language arts and math sections of the CST.

In Benson Unified, a policy was practiced for several years where initially-enrolling linguistic-minority students were classified as ELs *regardless of results* on the district's English language proficiency assessment. Specifically, there were *no* IFEPs identified in kindergarten and first-grade from 1995-96 through 2000-01. Teachers in the district (which does not offer bilingual instruction) felt strongly that it was important to have results from standardized, statewide academic assessments before deciding whether students should be judged fluent English proficient and capable of meeting mainstream classroom demands without additional supports. However, this has had the effect of greatly increasing the number of EL-classified students who are very likely to perform well on redesignation criteria and be redesignated after second-grade, since there were virtually no IFEP students in grades 2-11 reported on this district's STAR standardized testing reports, and IFEP students statewide perform as a group at a level above native English speakers. The district abandoned this policy upon implementing the Initial

⁸ See Appendix D, Exhibit 2, p. IV-5.

CELDT test, which spurred it to adopt classification practices that were more in line with other districts statewide.

In summary, redesignation criteria varied within and across sample district groups. The application of different criteria cut-points on common measures, a wide variety of local assessments, and eligibility criteria differences, as well as unusual policies and idiosyncratic practices, all appear to be important factors contributing to different outcomes between high-and low-redesignating districts. And as was discussed earlier, the variation in criteria at the district level is clearly related to flexibility and ambiguity found in state guidelines.

Redesignation Procedures

Key findings:

- Substantial differences exist between high- versus low-redesignating sample districts in redesignation procedures and monitoring systems; defined roles and responsibilities; and degree of district oversight and administrative support to school sites
- Sample districts consider information technology and data systems essential for streamlining process under tight timelines, but many face technology challenges
- District perceptions of procedural rigor vary, and relate to importance of redesignation to local accountability and student progress-monitoring

Redesignation procedures are required under state law to be part of a district's EL master plan, and are routinely examined by state compliance officials. Moreover, the State's guidelines and decision guide for reclassification offer suggested steps and a decision matrix that describes the basic process in relation to statewide criteria. Indeed, all of the sample districts studied had some kind of established procedures in place, as well as ways of documenting that all criteria have been met. However, there were substantial differences in the procedures and systems implemented, explicitness of roles and responsibilities, and degree of the district's oversight and administrative support for schools.

High-redesignating districts tend to have very explicitly defined, highly organized procedures. They are more likely to provide detailed lists of "RFEP candidates" by name to school sites *multiple times* per year, as new results on each State or local criterion become available. While the redesignation process is decentralized (i.e., occurring at each school site), high-redesignating district personnel initiate, support, and follow up on school-based activities. Roles and responsibilities of school site personnel for redesignation-related tasks are very clearly defined. There is either a school reclassification team, or individual clearly charged to facilitate the process. Importantly, though, these districts are also much more likely to offer sustained on-site support to schools at critical time periods; have district teams visit schools to discuss progress of

individual EL students with teachers; and to review data provided by schools as well as electronically input these data for them.

In most instances, these high-redesignating district efforts are connected to a larger progress monitoring system and explicit expectations for academic progress that the district had established for all of its students, and was supporting in its schools. They also appear to be connected to explicit goals for English learners that have been adopted by district leadership. These dimensions are discussed further in the next section on local accountability.

There was also an acute awareness that this tightened procedural effort yielded higher redesignation rates. As one high-redesignating district administrator explained, “The year I began in the district, the major issue was process. [Redesignation] was all left to the sites, all loosey-goosey, they had to do all the work, and it was a [brief] window of time. . . . By centralizing the [redesignation] process as much as possible, taking away the labor intensity from the sites and making it simpler and training them on the new process, [making] it fail-safe, we really saw it pay off [in more students being redesignated] even the first year.”

Interestingly, this same district administrator related how a neighboring, low-redesignating district did not recognize the potential impact of rigorous, well-implemented procedures, and called to learn what instructional elements were contributing to the former’s higher redesignation rate. As she reflected, “They were probably teaching better [than us], but it was a failure of their process, so they blame the wrong thing for the problem. Yes, there can be instructional issues that are impeding [EL students redesignating], but that doesn’t mean that that’s the only thing to blame.”

The lost opportunity to redesignate ELs due to poor process was recognized by one of the low-redesignating district administrators interviewed. She attributed their low redesignation rates in part to poor implementation procedures: “Not everyone understood the process. This was the biggest downfall. It was not as up-to-date, rigorous or equally implemented across sites, and so there wasn’t a focus on it. I don’t think it was considered important or that people understood what all it entailed.” This reality, combined with high criteria cut-points, contributed to several years of the very low redesignation rates, which the local school board has now begun to focus on, though principally at the school level.

Low-redesignating sample districts tended to place more responsibility on school staff for identifying potential RFEP candidates; others identified potential candidates for schools, but placed more labor-intensive burdens on school staff for hand-gathering the documentation needed to justify a redesignation decision. It was also apparent that some did not define clear roles and responsibilities for conducting the process, noting that redesignation “did not get much traction” with principals, or that the district was “trying to get x to do it,” or “hoping that y or z will spearhead it.” Low-redesignating sample districts were also less likely to have automated systems in place. System-generated

printouts might be made available, but documentation needed to be completed by hand, mailed to the central office for review, final approval, and processing.

All districts discussed the difficulty of getting data to and decisions from school sites in a timely fashion for the cutoff date of the state’s Language Census February 28 deadline.⁹ Everyone lamented that the CELDT results typically do not arrive at districts until late January or early February, leaving at most one month to review EL students with new data on this required criterion. (In fact, several of our sample districts identified this issue as causing them to have to grossly underreport the number of students redesignated in certain years, because data had arrived from the test publisher too close to the deadline.) Notably, one of our larger EL-enrolling sample districts imposes an early-December cut-off date for schools to submit EL and RFEP counts in order to allow adequate time for review and data entry—almost 3 months earlier than other districts.

Districts from both sample groups also emphasized the challenges of using information technology to help automate the redesignation process. Nevertheless, high-redesignating districts were much more likely than their low-redesignating counterparts to report work-around solutions; to gather and provide to school sites reports on local criteria; and to have “the motor running” when new state-related data arrive. They were also much more likely to allocate staff and otherwise assist school sites with the peak data-entry effort, and to continue redesignating students on an ongoing basis after the state deadline had passed for submitting the given year’s count.

In summary, procedural differences between sample district groups are substantial, and are likely to contribute a great deal to the variation in outcomes between high-and low-redesignating districts. They also appear to be connected to a larger, systemic effort based on explicit goals for EL students, and to have progress monitoring systems in place that the district supports for all students. This directly connects to the issue of local accountability, discussed next.

Importance of Redesignation to Local Accountability

Key findings:

- All sample districts report that redesignation is an important measure of local accountability
- High-redesignating sample districts appear to have more consequential policies and practices in place—and for a longer time—that link redesignation to local accountability relative to their low-redesignating counterparts
- All sample districts report monitoring more closely the progress of students—regardless of language classification—on measures related to NCLB

⁹ California's Language Census requires districts to count the number of ELs and redesignated students as of February 28 of each year, and allows them 30 days (to March 30) to electronically submit these counts to the state.

accountability, but expected timeframes for meeting goals vary among districts

Sample districts interviewed attributed the increased importance of redesignation in part to the campaign for Proposition 227—where redesignation rates became a topic of debate; but especially to external accountability, particularly the No Child Left Behind Act, which explicitly disaggregates and counts in high-stakes decisions the linguistic and academic performance of the EL subgroup at both school and district levels.¹⁰

Yet, while all sample districts declared redesignation to be an important measure of local accountability, there were clear distinctions between high-versus low-redesignating districts regarding what specific policies and practices were put in place, as well as how long they had been in place.

High-redesignating sample districts were much more likely to have had specific district-wide goals established that use redesignation as an outcome indicator. Benson Unified, for example, has a district-wide goal that focuses on key criteria for redesignation, as well as the change of status from EL to RFEP. Like most of the high-redesignating sample districts, they specifically state that ELs will redesignate after five years in their district (although several districts noted that this is a goal they have not come close to meeting). They also set expectations for and monitor progress in ELD as measured by CELDT; and set targets to measure the percentage of EL students who reach proficiency on CST-ELA each year. District leadership at Davidson Unified specifically identified redesignation of ELs as a priority after Proposition 227 passed. Indeed, it was this prioritization that led Davidson to clarify its procedures and criteria, a factor they consider as contributing significantly to their high redesignation rates. Carlos Unified formally includes redesignation as part of their site principals' annual evaluation, while Andreas Unified's school board publicly reviews school and district RFEP statistics annually, comparing their rates with surrounding districts and the state.

Beyond these formal accountability policies and practices, two of our high-redesignating sample districts also attributed their intense motivation to redesignate ELs to local factors such as unusual pressure from EL parents in particular communities who consider the EL label to be a stigma, as well as to a court order curtailing segregation of minority students.

In contrast, low-redesignating sample districts either did not have such policies in place, or had only more recently adopted annual targets or district-wide goals for increasing the percentage of EL students redesignated, usually in relation to NCLB expectations under Title I and Title III. Two of the low-redesignating districts left their expectations for how long it should take EL students to redesignate unmentioned in district documents. When probed during interviews, they stated their expectations were from 7 to 8 years, longer than the five-year goal typically stated by other low- and high-

¹⁰ In California, the EL subgroup includes former-ELs (i.e. RFEPs) until these students score Proficient three times on CST-ELA.

redesignating sample districts. (It should be noted that these two districts did not necessarily use higher cut-points on common criteria relative to their peers.)

Low-redesignating districts were also less likely to have had data systems in place for very long to monitor student progress, and to monitor it across the entire spectrum of grades. One low-redesignating district, for example, noted that their “big push is looking at 5th-grade [since] it’s important for us to redesignate students before they get to middle school.” This district (like many others) frankly acknowledged the disadvantages ELs face entering middle school, citing their “exclusion from enrichment classes,” and in high school, their “inability to take A-G courses required for UC and CSU.” But they did not as closely monitor EL progress throughout all the elementary grades.

Interestingly, despite the declared importance of redesignation to local accountability, another two low-redesignating districts interviewed appeared to place the locus of accountability for EL progress and redesignation largely at the school or teacher level. They did not identify these as goals for which district-level leadership explicitly holds itself accountable. As an administrator at one of these districts remarked, “We have been able to provide more data directly to teachers that show which [EL] student did or didn’t make growth and the only person who can do something about it now is that teacher.”

In summary, the importance that some districts demonstrably attach to redesignation as part of local accountability policies and systems, in more concrete ways than others, appears to be contributing somewhat to differences between the high- and low-redesignating districts in our sample. This local accountability is in turn driven by district leadership, sometimes in combination with pressures from external factors—whether NCLB requirements, legal action or community advocacy—to place continuous and growing emphasis on setting expectations for English learners’ progress toward redesignation, and on using systems and supports that extend from district to school sites. Many districts appear to be setting a 5-year-in-district goal for ELs to redesignate, but all acknowledge that this is a goal being pursued but not yet achieved. Moreover, how carefully and regularly the progress of all students is monitored, and where the actual locus of accountability resides, are additional dimensions distinguishing high- from low-redesignating districts.

Common Concerns

Throughout the course of these interviews and document reviews, several common concerns about current redesignation policy and practices in California emerged repeatedly among all our sample districts. These interrelated concerns reflect the systemic nature of the complex issues under consideration. As they illustrate, California’s current redesignation policies offer too little guidance or clarity. Districts must, on their own, determine the balance-point between setting appropriate redesignation criteria and raising RFEP rates; between defining “a reasonable amount of time” for ELs to reach academic grade-level standards, and “overcoming [English learners’] academic deficits” before they “become irreparable;” between ensuring students continue receiving specialized services to accelerate their linguistic and academic progress, and preventing the diminished opportunities too often awaiting ELs at middle and high school levels. These

concerns also offer potential insights to educational leaders and policymakers interested in strengthening local accountability for EL success, by situating redesignation within the context of NCLB performance expectations, especially as these evolve to better measure students' longitudinal progress. These concerns are briefly reviewed next.

Common Concern #1. Current state guidelines on redesignation criteria and cut-scores generate confusion and ambiguity about the meaning of redesignation; render outcomes noncomparable across districts; and appear to contradict NCLB Title I goals for English learners.

As noted throughout this chapter, significant ambiguity exists in state guidelines regarding the significance of redesignation, its operationalization, and its place in state and local accountability. As our examination of the nine districts studied shows, districts are filling this void with competing interpretations of what the state's current redesignation criteria are meant to represent. The varying conceptions offered by district personnel interviewed include: 1) "minimum competency" to participate in mainstream classrooms with no further specialized services (apparent for some in the state's current cut-point range of beginning-to-mid-Basic on CST-ELA); 2) comparability to native English speakers' academic performance in the district (which itself varies widely across the districts studied); 3) "recouping of academic deficits" ELs incurred while developing English language skills (reflecting legal requirements of the federal court decision *Castaneda v. Pickard* tested in the state's Coordinated Compliance Review); and 4) ability to meet grade-level standards and be academically successful (reflected for many in Title I AYP requirements). While all of these conceptions are defensible, they are not compatible. And given the state guidelines' varying conceptions of redesignation and ambiguity in redesignation criteria discussed earlier, many we interviewed described tensions and trade-offs that may unintentionally undermine accountability for EL success.

For example, one administrator interviewed noted a downward trend in how RFEPs from her district perform academically since they adopted the beginning point of Basic on CST-ELA. This administrator described "fighting behind the scenes to say that redesignating everybody at the lowest level of basic is not a good idea, but it's falling on deaf ears, because others are saying the higher [the redesignation rate] the better, and the longer they're EL the less likely they are to ever get out." Describing instances where EL students could meet minimum state cut scores on CELDT and CST-ELA, and still be retained in grade for missing local assessment benchmarks, she concluded, "The lowest level of Basic [on CST] is very low and schools are telling me unofficially that it is not good to redesignate."

Several also worried that those students redesignated under lower cut points may continue to need the kind of specialized services that will be removed along with the change of language classification. As one administrator from a low-redesignating district explained it, "The goal needs to be Proficient on the CST, not Basic. Establishing the bottom of Basic on the CST is not realistic for the student. It's too great a distance for them to travel afterwards on their own. Or it puts the student into an intervention program that is not designed to meet the needs of a second language learner, which are unique. They would not be necessarily getting what they needed."

In addition, district administrators highlighted an inherent contradiction between the state’s current academic achievement criterion cut-point range for redesignation—which is beginning-to-mid-Basic—and its requirement for EL subgroup academic achievement on NCLB Title I AYP, which is Proficient. As one high-redesignating district administrator distilled the issue, “The state is penalizing districts in terms of AYP if EL kids are not at Proficient. So why are they saying that it’s OK to get rid of them—remove services because they’re not LEP anymore—at the lowest level of Basic? To me that’s incongruent double-speak and a mixed message, especially because these kids still get to be Title I, but not Title III.”

Virtually all of our sample districts expressed support for establishing consistent cut scores statewide on California’s two common criteria. At the same time, these educators also expressed concern that the state may set these criteria too low, or decide to eliminate the use of local assessments, which districts highly value as a source of “multiple-measures” to increase confidence in their decision to redesignate.

Common Concern #2. The deadline for reporting redesignation results is out of sync with the calendar of required assessments, and the availability of assessment results; this complicates local redesignation procedures and exacerbates noncomparability issues.

As discussed above in the redesignation procedures section, school districts experience significant pressure carrying out redesignation procedures and completing counts of redesignated students in time for the Language Census’s February 28 deadline. The main reason cited for this is that results for the Annual CELDT test, which is given from July 1 to October 31, are made available from the test publisher in late January or early February. Several districts noted that they have had to grossly underreport the number of students redesignated in those years where the test publisher delayed providing their particular results. Moreover, some districts noted that this short February time window is further compressed as they also require parents to meet one-on-one with educators, participate in the redesignation process, and/or sign off approving the decision to redesignate. Additionally, one large EL-enrolling district’s review procedures cause them to set an internal deadline of early December for schools to provide EL and RFEP counts.

While districts readily concede that underreporting redesignated students in a given year due to delays will “wash out” over subsequent years, they expressed frustration that within-year comparisons across districts are being made by local school boards, local press, and the public. Moreover, one district administrator maintained that the CDE’s annual press release on CELDT results—which regularly highlights the percentage of students statewide reaching the English proficient level on CELDT—confuses parents and policy makers into thinking that the CELDT’s English proficient level is all that is needed or matters for redesignation, and leads to unreasonable comparisons with the district’s redesignation rate.

Moreover, while high-redesignating districts were more likely to continue to redesignate ELs after the state’s Language Census deadline, low-redesignating districts appeared to be less likely to pursue the process with equal intensity once the annual RFEP counts were “frozen” on February 28.

District administrators did not see it is likely that the CELDT test window could be changed, nor that the test publisher would be able to shorten its turnaround time in providing test results to districts. Therefore, several district interviewees expressed support for extending the deadline for reporting EL and RFEP counts from between one month’s time to the end of the school year in order to more accurately count students meeting multiple criteria, and to allow for more stable master-schedule planning at the secondary level.

A few administrators suggested that R30-LC EL and RFEP counts are required in March in part to determine district allocation of State Emergency Immigrant Aid (EIA/LEP) funds for the following academic year. However, as the State “forward-funds” districts using the prior year’s EL counts, they wondered whether there may still be adequate flexibility to allow districts until the end of school year to report their EL and RFEP counts.

Common Concern #3. The current method for calculating redesignation rates distorts the true performance of district progress with English learners, and is methodologically at odds with California’s NCLB Title III AMAO definitions.

Virtually all of the district administrators interviewed expressed their concern about the state’s current method for calculating redesignation rates in strong terms, calling it “unfair,” “meaningless,” and “not useful.” Beyond the issues of non-standardized criteria and variable cutscores used for common criteria discussed above, these administrators maintain that the redesignation rate calculation actually misrepresents the degree of success they’re having with their English learners, and may inherently bias against districts with larger proportions of ELs in the early grades and of more recent immigrants. They also maintained that the state’s Title III AMAO calculation methods could provide insight to a solution that would be accepted by the field and strengthen the meaningfulness of the redesignation rate calculation.

Under current policy, California determines a district’s redesignation rate the following way: It places in the numerator the number of EL students redesignated as reported in the current year’s Language Census, and places in the denominator the *total number* of ELs as reported in the prior year’s Language Census.

Every administrator interviewed expressed concern at including in the redesignation rate those EL students that either could not realistically be expected to meet redesignation criteria (e.g., ELs that just arrived last year and were non-English-speaking), or for whom it would not be possible to redesignate given their age/grade relative to district eligibility and assessment criteria (e.g., ELs in Kindergarten and grade 1, who do not take CST). Almost all interviewed expressed their preference for defining a common EL cohort statewide that is reasonable to consider as being “redesignatable,”

much as California’s Title III AMAO 2 cohort definition does with defining a cohort for calculating the attainment of English-language proficiency on CELDT¹¹).

Specific suggestions offered on redesignation eligibility criteria by interviewees included: ELs five or more years in district; students at a certain level of ELD as measured by CELDT; and students at particular grade levels, in order to exclude those not expected to redesignate (e.g., ELs who were in grades K-1 in the prior year).

Interestingly, administrators in several of the districts interviewed were attempting to or had already set an expected time interval to redesignation—or more accurately, to meeting all the criteria that allows redesignation to occur. Indeed, several of the districts have already set expectations for progress on the two statewide criteria, CELDT and CST-ELA. While expectations for individual EL student’s progress on the former have been made explicit through Title III AMAOs 1 and 2, what constitutes reasonable progress on CST-ELA was less often explicitly defined or monitored for ELs. Several districts noted they are expecting EL students to reach Proficient after five years in the district, and many maintained that the goal for redesignated students should also be Proficient based on the requirement of Title I AYP as well as of Title III AMAO 3 (called the “AYP AMAO” since it is identical to district-level Title I AYP for the EL subgroup). The challenge appears to derive in part from the state’s not having set comparably explicit expectations for progress-over-time in this academic achievement measure for ELs, as it has in English-language development with CELDT under Title III AMAOs 1 and 2.¹²

One low-redesignating district administrator believed that linking their redesignation process with a new, EL student progress-monitoring process, along with ensuring that all of their ELs have access to higher-level courses at upper elementary and secondary levels, was a powerful strategy that would allow them to maintain high redesignation criteria. As she explains it, “Our high criteria have caused us to monitor more closely our kids and the close monitoring has caused us to really develop interventions... If we were reclassifying students who weren’t ready or we couldn’t be certainly positive that they would be successful in the mainstream program, then we’d have more kids in the mainstream classroom who aren’t successful.... You’d be dealing with them there as RFEPs. And then we don’t have the resources to deal with the kids in that group that we do when they’re EL.”

¹¹ For a detailed explanation of how the AMAO 2 cohort is defined and the AMAO 2 rate calculated, see the CDE 2003-04 Title III Accountability Report Information Guide available on the CDE web site at: (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/t3/documents/amao04.doc>)

¹² This issue relates to current policy discussions regarding the possible use of value-added approaches to measuring student academic progress for NCLB Title I AYP. For ELs, these discussions involve considerations of students' ELD level, time in US schools, and academic assessment in the language of instruction.

Common Concern #4. EL students redesignated prematurely may lose needed instructional services and be placed at greater risk of educational failure, while long-term ELs often face segregated track placement and reduced access to courses needed for postsecondary education.

This final common concern in many ways manifests most clearly dilemmas generated by the prior three concerns, and captures a common theme found throughout this examination as well as in many of our case studies and site visits over the past five years.

Several interviewees readily acknowledged that many teachers are reluctant to redesignate ELs that they believe are not yet ready to adequately handle the linguistic and academic demands of classrooms offering no further specialized services or supports. While district administrators expressed concern at being perceived as holding ELs back from redesignation solely for resource-allocation purposes, and repeatedly declared their opposition to such a notion (as one district EL director put it, “It is so ugly to think of, it’s not even spoken of”), they also largely shared their teachers’ reluctance.

“My concern is related to academic achievement,” explained one administrator whose district uses the state’s minimum cut points. “What does redesignation tell me about the child? That he has succeeded in something, being a fluent English speaker. But I want to know more than that, like how is the student doing academically, and now with the California [High School] exit exam, is the student in line to be able to graduate from high school?”

Another administrator whose district also uses the state’s minimum cut points expressed her exasperation this way: “I’m tired of hearing that they should be performing commensurate to the lowest performing English speakers...What difference does it make when you analyze it whether they’re sitting in...classes as an EL in an ELD-style program or if they’re sitting at the lowest level of the English-Only classes, rock-bottom and failing.... Failure is failure, it doesn’t matter what the label is. [In this district] they’re more likely to get good instruction by still being EL and having a CLAD-certificated teacher.”

At the same time, virtually all those interviewed expressed deep concerns about disadvantages faced by long-term ELs: Those reaching middle and high school levels who have been in the district for many years—often since kindergarten—without having met the linguistic and academic criteria to be redesignated. Administrators openly acknowledged that these ELs usually face greatly-reduced opportunities to access and engage with grade-level instruction, and to participate in electives, honors, and AP courses, and especially UC/CSU required “A-through-G” courses. Some also doubted whether their schools offer the kinds of intensive support needed to help accelerate these students’ progress. Several were focusing local accountability and professional development and intervention efforts to better support these students. “The heart of our [redesignation] challenge,” explained one administrator, “is the issue of rigorous and consistent ELD and access to the core, particularly in elementary.” Another sample district had established a policy of allocating extra resources to schools using a weighted

funding formula by how long the student has been EL, in order to better address these students' needs, and then holding schools accountable for accelerating these students' progress.

A number of sample district administrators struggled to define with sufficient certainty the point at which they're confident students can succeed without further specialized support. As one administrator explained, "We want to make sure that these kids are really going to be able to be competitive, to get jobs, and go to college and so the whole idea of redesignation to me needs to be how we figure out a method to tell us that these kids are truly at the right level to be able to be competitive, to go to college and to work... that is where they need to be focusing redesignation criteria, not on 'that's good enough,' because it's not."

In part reflecting this concern, another district had established a local policy of allocating resources to schools from its district EIA/LEP funds—typically used only for EL students—for newly-redesignated students, in order to continue funding specialized services to address any ongoing linguistic and academic needs these students may have during the two years after redesignation that they are required under state law to be monitored. As an administrator from this district reasoned, "We need to be sure that people understand that just because they're redesignated it doesn't mean that they need to stop getting strong, engaging and appropriate instruction."

Summary and Conclusions

The foregoing examination of a sample of high- versus low-redesignating districts has found notable differences with respect to districts' RFEP criteria and chosen cut points; the procedures and systems that are in place to carry out redesignation; and the degree and kind of importance placed on redesignation in local accountability systems. These differences are at least in part related to current state policy regarding the redesignation of ELs.

First, sample districts within and across the two groups used a differing array of local assessments, and applied different cut scores on common measures. These differences, along with varying eligibility criteria for which ELs are considered, and unusual alternative RFEP policies and idiosyncratic EL-identification practices, all appear to be important factors contributing to different outcomes between and within high-and low-redesignating districts.

Secondly, processes and systems that sample districts use in redesignating ELs are also substantially different, and are likely to be contributing a great deal to the variation in outcomes between high-and low-redesignating districts. Moreover, the processes and systems in high-redesignating districts appear to be connected to larger, systemic efforts based on explicit, measurable goals for EL students, and integrated with progress-monitoring systems that the districts used to support all students and school sites.

Thirdly, redesignation's importance in local accountability policies and systems appears to be contributing to differences between high-and low-redesignating districts in

our sample. Particularly, district leadership, sometimes in combination with NCLB requirements, legal action or community advocacy, appears to place greater emphasis on setting expectations for English learners' progress toward redesignation, while also using systems and supports that extend from district to school sites. Most of the sample districts have set a 5-year-in-district goal for ELs to redesignate, while acknowledging that this is more a goal pursued than achieved. How carefully and regularly progress is monitored, and whether the locus of accountability is placed only on schools and teachers, appear to distinguish high- from low-redesignating districts

Equally important, our examination of current state guidelines, and common concerns expressed across sample districts point out serious issues in current state policy that directly affect local policymaking and practice. These include ambiguous and possibly contradictory guidance on redesignation criteria and cutscores, especially as these relate to NCLB goals for ELs; unrealistic reporting timelines that are out of sync with assessment and school-year calendars; and arguably flawed redesignation-rate calculation methods that are likely under-representing progress and that risk misplacing where the emphasis needs to be — monitoring the progress over time of ELs across the entire spectrum of academic performance. Related to and underscoring all of these concerns is the very real challenge of ensuring that redesignated students can progress and succeed without further specialized services, while at the same time preventing students from remaining in EL status so long that it undermines their educational opportunities.

Since redesignation is neither the whole story nor the end of the story for ELs, the state needs to more clearly define what redesignation means; exactly what components and standards constitute it; to what extent it is to be used as a measure of accountability; and how it fits within the larger accountability context, particularly in relation to NCLB Title I and Title III requirements. The state also needs to help districts define expectations for EL students' academic progress-over-time much as it has already done for their progress in English-language development. Toward these ends, we make specific recommendations in Chapter 7.

Chapter VI. Evaluating CBET Programs

Highlights

- The Community-Based English Tutoring (CBET) program is part of California’s Proposition 227. CBET provides funds to local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide free or subsidized English instruction to parents and other community members. In turn, these individuals are expected to provide English language tutoring to English learners (ELs).
- Any LEA that enrolled at least one EL in the previous school year is eligible to apply for CBET funds. The funds available for this program are \$50 million per year for ten years, contingent on budget approval by the legislature and governor.
- Evaluating CBET was required as a subcomponent of the larger Proposition 227 evaluation. Derived from a variety of research methods, syntheses of data over the five years of this evaluation uncovered several common themes. A predominant one was ambiguous legislative language regarding goals of the program, resulting in varying implementation at the local level.

Introduction

Overview of CBET

The Community-Based English Tutoring (CBET) program is part of California’s Proposition 227. CBET provides funds to local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide free or subsidized English instruction to parents and other community members. In turn, these individuals are expected to provide English language tutoring to English learners (ELs). California Education Code 315 details the CBET rules and provisions:

In furtherance of its constitutional and legal requirement to offer special language assistance to children coming from backgrounds of limited English proficiency, the state shall encourage family members and others to provide personal English language tutoring to such children, and support these efforts by raising the general level of English language knowledge in the community. Commencing with the fiscal year in which this initiative is enacted and for each of the nine fiscal years following thereafter, a sum of fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) per year is hereby appropriated from the General Fund for the purpose of providing additional funding for free or subsidized programs of adult English language instruction to parents or other members of the community who pledge to

provide personal English language tutoring to California school children with limited English proficiency.

Evaluating CBET was required as part the larger Proposition 227 study. As in any evaluation, a necessary first step is to examine the goals of the program as a basis for determining whether or not they are being met. However, a substantial challenge in evaluating this particular program is the ambiguity of the CBET legislation. Is the primary objective of this program to “raise the general level of English language knowledge in the community” or to provide “special language assistance” to EL children? The general design of the program, as cited in the education code section above, seems to suggest that the former will automatically produce the latter through participant tutoring. In observing the range of program implementation practices throughout the state, it is clear that many programs are primarily designed to foster improved English in the community overall, while others are much more attuned to linking community English language improvement to direct assistance for children. Thus, a major undercurrent of this evaluation has been an attempt to clarify CBET’s purpose and to assess the extent to which implementation across the state is aligned with this purpose. We will address this issue further later in this chapter.

CBET Evaluation in Context of the Broader Study

This chapter presents a culmination of findings from all of the Proposition 227 evaluation’s data collection efforts over the past four years pertaining to CBET. Because CBET focuses on parents, caregivers, and other adult ELs in addition to K-12 EL students, in this chapter we frequently use the term “adult EL” to describe the adults receiving CBET services and we use the term “school-age EL” to describe the students that are referred to simply as ELs elsewhere in this report. The research we performed addresses the following questions:

1. How are CBET programs being implemented?
2. What have been the effects of CBET programs on the adult participants and on school-aged ELs?
3. What are the barriers and facilitating factors affecting the successful implementation of the program?
4. Should the state continue to support the CBET program, and if yes, what changes are needed to strengthen the program?

Over the course of this five-year study, the project team performed the following research activities in which CBET was at least a partial focus (For further details, final yearly reports of the project are available at http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx):

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- Year 1: Interviewed district administrators and conducted case study site visits to eight districts, which included district- and school-level interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations.
 - Year 2: Surveys sent to district CBET directors, other school and district administrators, and teachers.
 - Year 3: Site visits included interviews with CBET directors in some districts.
 - Year 4: Collaborated with CDE on their annual CBET survey and “mined” previously collected CBET data from all past data collection efforts.
 - Year 5: Sent CBET surveys to all districts receiving funds in the 2003-2004 school year (N=573 and 85 percent response rate). Analyzed results of the surveys and synthesized all data for this final report. Please see Appendix E, Exhibit 1 for this year’s survey.

CBET Descriptive Analysis

CBET Eligibility and Allocation of Funds

Any local education agency (LEA) that enrolled at least one EL in the previous school year is eligible to apply for CBET funds. The funds available for this program are \$50 million per year for ten years, contingent on budget approval by the legislature and governor. LEAs are given considerable license in how CBET funds may be used. Potential uses include direct program services, background checks of tutors, and acquiring classroom space. Districts, in turn, are required to maintain evidence that program participants have pledged to provide personal English language tutoring to California students with limited English proficiency. Exhibit VI-1 presents CBET allocations by year.

Exhibit VI-1. Amount of CBET Funds Received by Districts and Total CBET Funds Allocated

School Year	Total CBET Funds Allocated	Number of Districts Receiving Funds
1998-99	\$50,000,000	454
1999-2000 ¹	\$100,000,000	402
2000-01	\$49,986,723	485
2001-02	\$49,991,808	518
2002-03	\$49,995,519	545
2003-04	\$49,990,668	568
2004-05	\$49,990,665	585

The Application Process and Timeline

Exhibit VI-2 presents the timeline of the application process for CBET funds. Proposition 227 was passed in June of 1998, and implementation of the CBET program commenced the following school year (1998-99). The first notification letter was sent in October of 1998 to LEAs informing them of the available funds, with applications for funding due the following month. Award notifications and funds were first sent to districts in January of 1999.

In each subsequent year of funding, the CDE sent notification letters of funding to districts in the spring, with applications due in the summer for the next year's funding. Award notifications were then typically sent in late summer or fall.

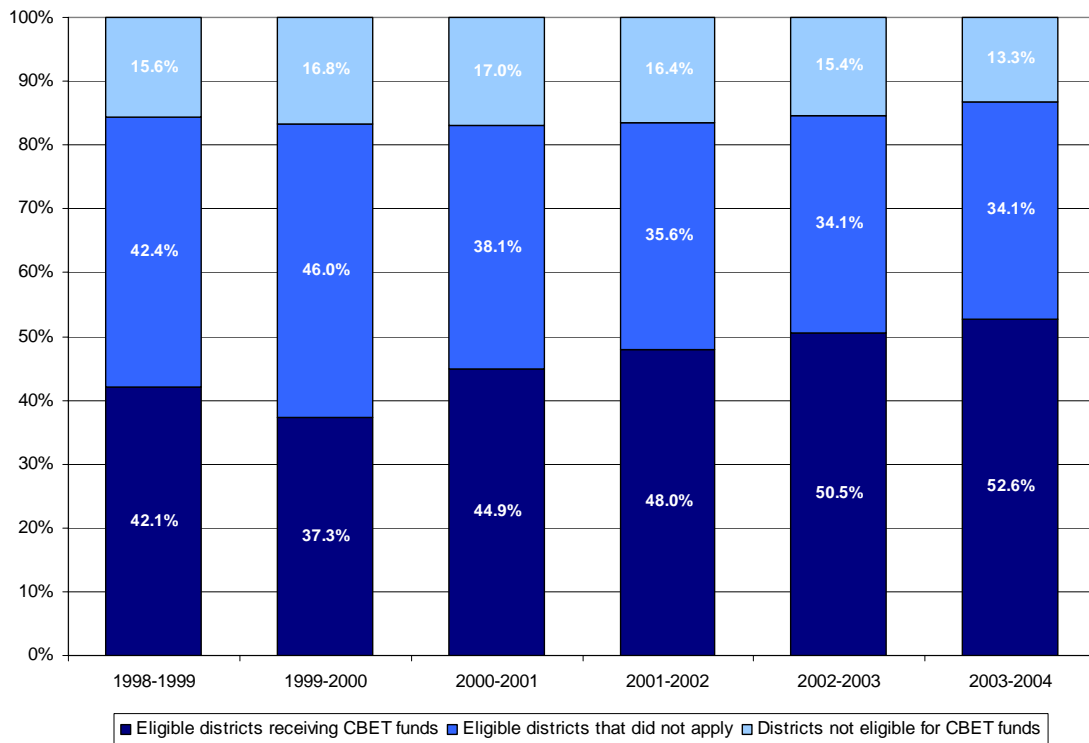
¹ Districts that applied for 1999-2000 CBET funds were double-funded. This is because the legislation was passed in June of 1998, which is included in the 1997-1998 school year. Although CBET was not implemented until the 1998-1999 school year, the state was still required to fund districts for the 1997-1998 school year. Thus, those districts that applied and were eligible for funds in the 1999-2000 school year were awarded for 1997-1998 as well.

Funding Patterns Over Time

To be eligible for CBET funds, districts only need to enroll one or more English learners. The percentage of districts that met this requirement remained fairly consistent over the first six years of the program, ranging between 83.0 percent and 86.7 percent of all California districts.

Although the application process for CBET is straightforward, many eligible districts did not apply.² Exhibit VI-3 shows that in 1998-99, the first year of CBET implementation, only half of eligible districts applied. The percentage of eligible districts applying and receiving funds dropped slightly in the second year, but then rebounded in the third year. It continued to edge upward over the last three years, with about 53 percent of eligible districts receiving CBET funds in 2003-04.³

Exhibit VI-3. Percentage of Districts by Eligibility and Receipt of CBET Funds (N=1,079)



² Many of these were districts enrolling too few ELs to generate sufficient funding to create a CBET program. For example, a district may be eligible for CBET funding even if they enroll only one EL. However, with an average funding amount of only \$35 per student, districts with very low enrollment may have determined that the funds available were insufficient to create a CBET program.

³ Data for the 2004-05 school year is not included in this table because at the time of this report, reliable statewide EL data for this school year were not yet available.

We analyzed the characteristics of eligible districts that did not apply in an attempt to assess statewide information about actual implementation of the program (see Exhibit VI-4). The total number of districts that were eligible for at least \$30,000 decreased from 25 in the first year to 9 in the last, with a general downward trend over the six years (with the exception of 1999-2000). Across the first three years of the program, seven districts were eligible for more than \$150,000, but did not apply for funds. By the 2001-02 school year, there were no districts eligible for \$100,000 or more that did not apply.

Exhibit VI-4. Districts Eligible for at Least \$30,000 That Did Not Apply for CBET

School Year	Eligible for \$30,000 to \$50,000 CBET funds	Eligible for \$50,000 to \$100,000 CBET funds	Eligible for \$100,000 to \$150,000 CBET funds	Eligible for more than \$150,000 CBET	Total
1998-99	10	12	1	2	25
1999-2000	16	14	1	4	35
2000-01	7	5	0	1	13
2001-02	2	5	0	0	7
2002-03	4	5	0	0	9

Note: The amounts above are estimates and are imprecise because an increase in the number of districts applying would decrease the amount received by each district. Estimated amount was calculated using an average of \$35 per student.

While a relatively large percentage of districts were eligible for CBET funding, an even larger percentage of school-age ELs benefited from the CBET funds. This is because the districts that applied for and received the funds were those enrolling the greatest number of English learners. Over 90 percent of English learners were enrolled in districts receiving CBET funds from 1998-99 through 2003-04, with more than 97 percent of English learners enrolled in districts receiving CBET funds in the final two years (2002-03 and 2003-04).

Common Themes of the CBET Program

Syntheses of data over the five years of this evaluation uncovered several common themes, described in this section.

Ambiguous legislative language regarding goals of the program, resulting in varying implementation at the local level. As mentioned, the core purpose of CBET, as described in the California Education Code Section 315, appears ambiguous. One component of this section states that CBET funds are allocated for the purpose of “providing additional funding for free or subsidized programs of adult English language instruction to parents or other members of the community.” However, the overriding basis for this program arguably comes from the state’s “constitutional and legal requirement to offer special language assistance to children coming from backgrounds of limited English proficiency.” In support of this, a requirement of the CBET program is that “participants pledge to provide personal English language tutoring to California school children.”

As a result of this ambiguity, districts have adopted varying perspectives on the primary purpose of CBET. Some districts have adopted teaching adults English as their primary goal, whereas others are much more focused on the added goal of English enhancement for school-age ELs. Some districts say they have changed their focus over the years. For instance, one district director believed the focus of the law had changed from tutoring children in the beginning years to adult English as a Second Language (ESL), and altered the focus of his program accordingly.

We collected data on district goals for the CBET program through interviews and observations during case study site visits in Years 1 and 3, and through survey responses from CBET coordinators in Year 2 and 5. During the Year 1 site visits, district administrators reported that their goals for CBET were to either teach adults English with no tutoring component at all, or to teach adults English with the purpose of *eventually* having the adult English students tutor English Learner students.

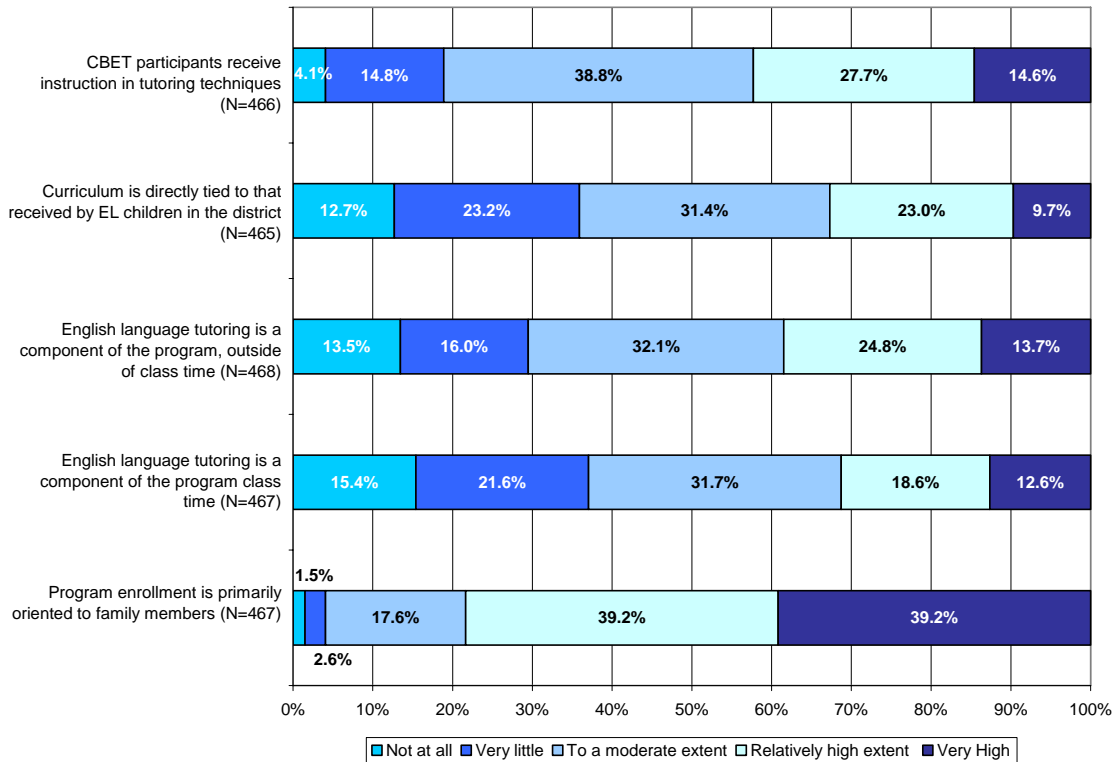
In response to both surveys, providing ESL to adults was ranked the most important goal by the greatest number of respondents. Helping support school-age EL academic achievement was ranked the second most important goal. In both years, incorporating the tutoring component was the least important goal selected by respondents.

Of the 11 district administrators interviewed during the Year 3 case study site visits, 3 stated that the primary focus of their CBET program was to teach English to adults. CBET coordinators from the remaining eight districts all stated that their goals for CBET were twofold: to provide English classes for adult ESL students and to incorporate some sort of tutoring component to the program (whether formal or informal).

In the 2003-04 CBET survey, we questioned CBET directors about the extent to which they connected the adult ESL component of their programs to the tutoring component of CBET, if at all. As shown in Exhibit VI-5, the greatest connection between the two is in primarily orienting the program to family members of students enrolled in the district, with almost 80 percent of respondents indicating that this occurs to a relatively high or very high extent. Less than half of the programs incorporate any connection with tutoring in their programs to a very high extent, whether this connection is through teaching tutoring techniques to adults, tying adult ESL curriculum to that given to school-age ELs, or including tutoring as a component either within or outside of class time.⁴

⁴ At the very most, 51 percent of the districts may incorporate tutoring to a very high extent, although it is not entirely possible to decipher this from the data.

Exhibit VI-5. Extent of Connection between Adult ESL and School-Age EL Tutoring Components in CBET Programs Across the State, 2003-04



Wide variation in overall program implementation. Data obtained through the case study site visits and survey efforts indicate wide variation in overall implementation of CBET programs across the state. This variation is likely due to the ambiguous language of the law, as districts understandably created programs around their interpretation of the legislation, as well as what they perceived to work best in their local contexts. However, we also discovered marked similarities among the more detailed components of programs.

In order to analyze the substantial amount of implementation data we collected over the past four years, we have compiled the data into several subcategories:

- Type of providers
- Instructional staff
- Participation
- Resources
- Tutoring component

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- Articulation and alignment of CBET classes with instructional programs for school-age ELs
 - Record keeping, assessments, and evaluation efforts

This section focuses on the first four of these categories, with the last three being discussed later in the chapter.

Type of providers and instructional staff

CBET surveys show that most LEAs are the sole provider of their CBET program, either at schools, district-funded community centers, district-run adult schools, or a combination of these. Most collaborate with their district adult school to administer the program. Some districts pay contractors to teach ESL; for example, one district hired a contractor to provide ESL classes in a nearby migrant labor camp. Others collaborate with neighboring districts to devise a suitable program for their districts' needs.

CBET programs are most likely to be held at elementary or secondary school sites. The next most common location for CBET programs is in the district adult school.

The most frequent type of instructional staff member assigned to the CBET program is a teacher with any ELD authorization. This number doubled from 1999 to 2000, just as all types of staff members increased in numbers between 1999 and 2002. The largest increase of staff occurred among teacher/instructional aide teams, with 174 percent more of these teams teaching CBET courses in 2002 than three years earlier. A jump in these teaching teams occurred between 1999 and 2000, indicating that after the initial two years of the program, more districts began to hire aides to assist CBET program class teachers.

Participation

Participation in the CBET program has grown tremendously since its inception. Approximately 24,000 adults participated in the CBET program in 1998-99. The number of participants has grown each year since, to 188,000 participants in 2002-03. However, there may be additional demand for the program. One district coordinator stated that more participants sign up than they can possibly serve. She believes they could double the number of adult ESL classes and still not run out of applicants.

Districts report that participants include have parents, relatives, caregivers, and other community members attending their classes.

Many of the districts have learned to be flexible in when they offer classes, varying the time of year, time of week, and time of day. Some programs' participants are farmworkers and come to classes during the off season. Some participants are workers in "24-hour" communities, as they work for hotels, casinos, or other types of employers in the never-closing tourist industry; therefore, they are only available for classes during nontraditional hours. Others were said to participate in CBET classes when they are in between jobs or looking for jobs.

Resources

Reported uses of CBET funds varied widely, including bus tokens for participants' transportation to the CBET site, computer programs/labs and mobile computer labs, bilingual aides, child care, materials such as books and notebooks, teacher resource materials, teacher salaries, clerical support for data entry, contractors/community-based organizations, family resource centers, adult education programs, and after-school parent/child ELD classes.

Tutoring. Of the eight Year 1 case study site visit districts, only two indicated that they had developed and implemented an official tutoring component. A common sentiment expressed among the districts who had not yet formally implemented tutoring was that they felt they needed to emphasize the ESL portion of the program before beginning tutoring children.

After the Year 1 case study site visits, the degree to which tutoring could be incorporated remained a question. When asked about various challenges related to the implementation of the CBET program in the Year 2 survey, the most common barrier (cited by 90 percent of respondents) was that many CBET participants had not yet reached the level of English proficiency considered necessary to be competent tutors. About two-thirds of the respondents (68 percent) also reported difficulties in monitoring the hours of tutoring that CBET participants are providing. Whereas 94 percent of the districts responded that they currently kept records of participant pledges to tutor students, only 62 percent indicated they had some form of tutoring occurring in their districts.

During the Year 3 case study site visits, several administrators stated that they do not keep records of the extent to which tutoring occurs because the legislation does not require it or because not much, if any, formal tutoring is actually occurring. A couple of administrators stated that only a few adults are sufficiently comfortable in English to tutor children. One of these districts divided adults into English proficiency levels, which helped them prepare more advanced adults to become tutors, while the less advanced students focused solely on learning English.

In the Year 5 survey, 67 percent of responding districts reported that they maintain evidence that children are receiving English tutoring as a result of the CBET program. However, we also asked about the extent to which CBET administrators were able to follow-up to ensure that this tutoring actually occurs. About 36 percent of the respondents replied they conduct little to no follow-up, 41 percent said they are able to follow up to a moderate extent, and 23 percent said they are able to follow-up to a high or very high degree. One CBET coordinator explained, "we're on the honor system [that tutoring is actually occurring]."

Varying degrees of alignment between adult CBET classes and instructional programs for school-age ELs. As reported by a number of districts, their adult ELs may not be in a position to assist school-age EL students. Of course, the parents and other caregivers of school-age ELs are in a position in which they are expected to help EL

students whether they are ready or not. However, less than 40 percent of district respondents reported a very high CBET orientation to family members and only 10 percent of responding districts reported a high degree of alignment between the CBET curriculum and that received by the school-age ELs in the district (see Exhibit VI-5).

Among the eight Year 1 case study districts, two of the CBET programs visited were not linked with a school in any way. In two other districts, CBET was linked with school programs in some way due to the programs being provided on school property. In one of these two districts, the CBET classes were directly linked to the instruction school-age ELs received at each school. In this district, the CBET coordinator regularly meets with the EL coordinators at each site to make sure this is happening. The other four case study site districts appeared to be confused regarding this aspect of CBET, with little to no communication occurring between the CBET coordinator and the EL coordinator or other associated school administrators.

In Year 2, 58 percent of those surveyed reported that their program activities were aligned with the instructional programs received by school-age ELs in any way. Of these, most (85 percent) indicated that the alignment was through common themes and instructional materials.

By Year 3, interviews revealed that articulation between the program and schools continued to vary. Most sample districts said they attempted to link the program to their school in *some* way—only one clearly did not. One district that clearly created strong ties between CBET and individual schools viewed the program as part of the district-wide family literacy program. According to the CBET coordinator, “there is close articulation between the district and school sites, as well as strong collaboration among other community outreach programs for families. The [district’s] family literacy program is comprised of Even Start, CBET, Title I, and a local program.”

In Year 5, almost half of respondents (43 percent) reported aligning tutoring with the K-12 EL instructional program to very little or no extent, with only eight percent reporting a very high degree of alignment.

Varying degree of accountability. During Year 1, none of the case study districts maintained data on adult participation and only one kept track of school-age EL achievement. It is worth noting, however, that this is not a specific requirement of the legislation, so any districts that attempt to collect evaluative information are going beyond what the law currently requires.

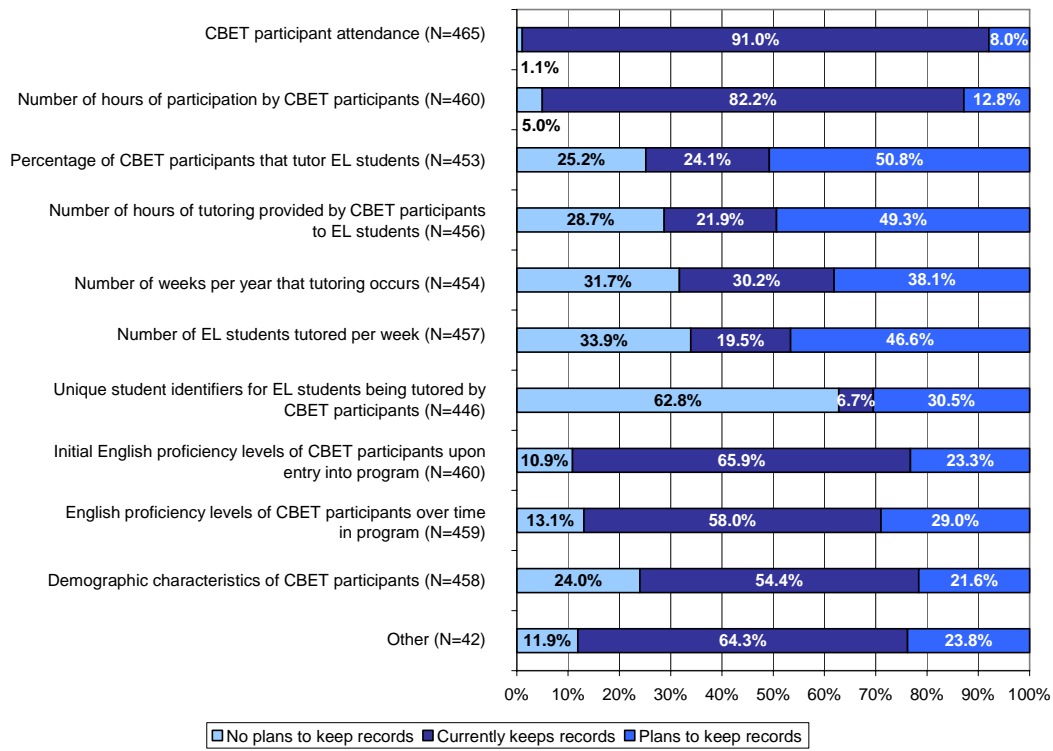
Results from the following year’s survey revealed widespread record-keeping on the adults participating in the program, but almost no records on the school-age ELs being tutored. When asked what aspects of the program their district either currently keeps or has plans to keep records on, a large majority of the CBET coordinators reported that records are kept on participant attendance, pledge cards, and hours of participation. More than half of the respondents also indicated that records are kept on the CBET

participants' levels of English proficiency upon program entry and on their progress in gaining proficiency over the time they are enrolled in the program.

During Year 3, the case study visits revealed a greater number of districts attempting to track adult progress. For example, three of the sample districts conduct pre- and post-tests to assess adult participants' English proficiency levels using local writing tests and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). In another district, CBET is part of the annual family literacy evaluation process, for which annual evaluation reports are submitted to the management offices of the literacy programs. They give the CASAS test to adults to check their English achievement and they perform informal evaluations of student performance. The parents complete a survey of the CBET program and staff review the outcomes to see what can be done to improve.

In the Year 5 survey, almost all districts reported keeping records of CBET participant attendance and their hours of participation. Over half of the districts reported keeping records of initial English proficiency of adult CBET participants, English proficiency levels of adult participants over time, and demographic characteristics of CBET participants. Less commonly recorded data involve the tutoring component of the program, such as the number of school-age ELs tutored per week and the number of hours of tutoring provided. Only seven percent of the respondents kept records with unique student identifiers for school-age ELs being tutored by CBET participants, with only about a third planning to ever collect these data. About 76 percent of districts receiving CBET funds reported keeping pledge cards on file and about 24 percent said they keep a database of participants who have pledged to tutor.

Exhibit VI-6. Record-Keeping of CBET Data, 2003-2004

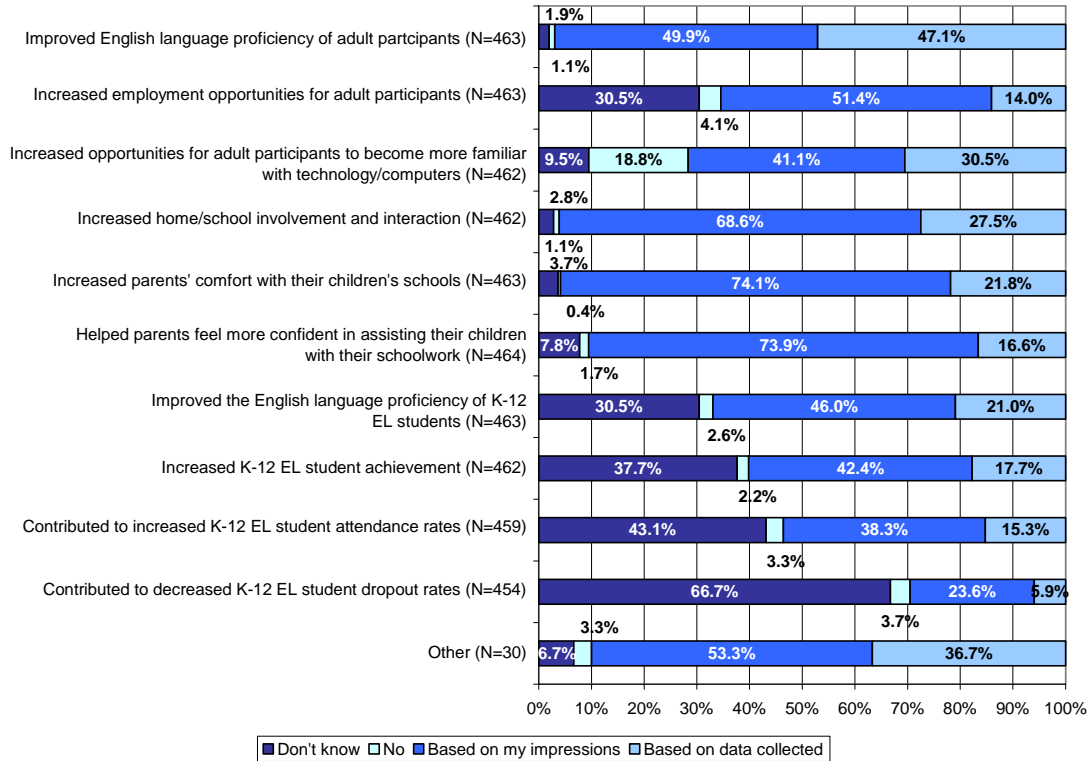


Districts report that CBET has value, based on evidence as well as perception. One of the most clear and consistent themes from our research is the perceived value of the program for adult participants. Districts reported that CBET has contributed to increased English language proficiency for adult participants. A number of other benefits are said to spring from this growth in proficiency, from increased employment opportunities to greater comfort in conducting daily activities such as going to the grocery store and making doctor’s appointments. Responding districts reported that the adults’ sense of community has increased, and they have gained a sense of confidence and comfort in being involved with their children’s schools. Participants are said to be more comfortable in visiting schools and speaking with their children’s teachers, and are more likely to attend parent conferences, meetings, or other school events.

Parents are also more comfortable in helping their children with homework, enabling them to be more involved in their children’s learning experiences as well as modeling good study skills. One CBET administrator, who was interviewed during a Year 1 case study site visit, stated, “I have a friend who says that the program has helped her very much. Now that she and her husband go to CBET, everyone in that home is a student. They all sit at the table and work on their homework. The children see their parents studying and working hard to learn English.” A CBET coordinator in one large district told us that CBET is a stepping stone to more formal ESL classes and even to

obtaining a GED for many of the parents. Exhibit VI-7 presents reported benefits from the CBET program, and whether they are based on impressions or actual data.

Exhibit VI-7. Benefits of CBET Program, 2003-2004



Perceived popularity among administrators, teachers, parents, and community. Across the five years of our evaluation, we found widespread praise for the CBET program from most respondents. One administrator described CBET as “one of the more helpful parts of 227.”

In Year 3 and Year 5 of our study, we examined effective practices for school-age ELs based in part on research by August and Hakuta (1997).⁵ According to their research, one element of effective practices with English learners is incorporating family involvement into their school lives—when clearly aligned to schools, CBET appears to be creating confidence by encouraging participating family members to help their children with homework, attend school events, and talk with teachers. Many CBET directors, teachers, and administrators have noticed a positive change in atmosphere at their schools due to the CBET program. In a recent interview with a principal at a school which appears effective in teaching school-age ELs (based on statewide academic achievement data), she noted that although her school had many other programs in place,

⁵ Chapter 4 outlines the study approach to this analysis and presents findings.

“CBET was the missing piece” to their success. She said that “CBET has turned our school into the center of learning in our community.” This seems to emphasize an important side benefit of basing CBET at school sites, as opposed to more centralized, community-based facilities.

Widespread belief (based primarily on anecdotal evidence) that CBET benefits school-age ELs. As shown in Exhibit VI-7, above, almost a fourth of the Year 5 survey respondents believe that CBET has contributed to decreased school-age EL dropout rates, about 38 percent believe CBET has contributed to increased school-age EL attendance rates, and about 42 percent believe CBET has increased school-age EL achievement. However, these largely seem to be impressions, with little data to support them.

Two districts have reported attempts to measure the progress of school-age ELs with parents in the CBET program. According to one CBET director interviewed in Year 3, they have “begun a pilot program at two school sites to determine if children with parents in the program do better overall than children who do not have parents in the program.” In another district, SAT-9 test scores were tracked for those school-age ELs whose parents participate in CBET. According to the CBET coordinator, “SAT-9 scores of students with parents participating in CBET did better than students whose parents did not participate. [There is a] strong positive correlation between test scores and number of hours of tutoring. Both results could be an effect of having parents who are more engaged.”

Little guidance from the state. The final common theme is that little guidance has been provided to districts by the state in regard to CBET implementation. This was especially noticeable during our Year 1 site visits in 2000-01, since Proposition 227 was still fairly new at that point. During that school year, districts were struggling with what exactly to do with the CBET funds, and were fearful of spending them in ways that might not be allowed by the legislation. For example, in this year many districts were not sure whether they were allowed to spend funds on administration of the program. They subsequently learned that administration was indeed an allowable expense. “Everyone is having to guess” about how to administer and implement the program, indicated one respondent, due to the lack of communication, solid guidelines, and clear expectations from the state. Although many coordinators said it was great that they had so much flexibility in creating programs suitable for their localities, they also needed recommendations and guidance on what works. It is important to bear in mind that there has been an absence of funds allocated for state-level administration of CBET. Moreover, ambiguity in the law, which does not clearly stipulate whether the state has the authority to establish and implement additional guidelines or recommendations for the program, has likely contributed to the lack of state guidance.

Recommendations

The following six recommendations are derived directly from the findings detailed in this chapter on the CBET program. These are included in detail here (in addition to being in the larger discussion of recommendations later in this report) because this chapter also serves as the most comprehensive evaluation summary of the CBET program submitted throughout this study. The recommendations are based on the study team's research over the past five years.

1. ***Primary recommendation: Clarify the goals and the primary purpose of the program in the state legislation.*** This would include language that more clearly specifies the primary target and ultimate beneficiary of the CBET program, which to our understanding, is school-age EL students.
2. ***Enact legislative changes that encourage articulation between local CBET programs and instructional programs for school-age ELs at neighborhood schools.*** Given the evidence of the importance of the link between parent involvement and school-age EL engagement and achievement, we believe that an important opportunity is missed when CBET programs are not linked to neighborhood schools. The most positive CBET programs we observed specifically tied the goal of family members learning English with their increased connection to the school community and greater involvement in their students' linguistic and academic development.
3. ***Include accountability requirements at the local level.*** Whether the legislature finds that the ultimate purpose of CBET is to increase the English proficiency and academic performance of school-age ELs or simply the English proficiency of adults, districts should structure their programs so that accountability occurs naturally. An example of this is to structure CBET classes so that tutoring occurs during CBET class time, so that tutoring is monitored and overseen by a CBET teacher.
4. ***Include monies for state-level administration of the CBET program.*** This will facilitate cohesion, alignment, and accountability across participating districts. As stated previously, many districts had difficulty in implementing their CBET programs due to the lack of guidelines from the state.
5. ***Continue independent evaluation of the program*** in order to measure indicators of program success and ensure efficient use of funds.
6. ***Continue funding the CBET program, yet only if alterations are made to the current program structure.***

Example of a Model CBET Program

Although we realize that no two districts are alike, and that all of the elements of this program may not always fit in other districts, this profile is provided as a general description of our concept of an effective CBET program, which is based on our beliefs regarding the primary purpose of the law, as well as findings and impressions from five years of investigating this program.

In Year 5, we visited one of the state's larger CBET programs in operation, at Long Beach Unified School District and run by Long Beach School for Adults. This district has won a state award for its effectiveness and success.⁶ This program has several of the key components of what we consider to be "effective" implementation, which we have highlighted throughout this chapter, including:

- **School site-based approach.** 90 percent of CBET classes are held at the K-12 school sites, while 10 percent attend the district-run adult school.
- **Active tutoring component.** All CBET adult participants tutor for ½ hour of each two-hour CBET class meeting. (If an adult participant has not yet reached the level of English proficiency necessary for tutoring, they are paired with another adult who tutors and models English for them.)
- **Explicit instruction in tutoring skills.** Tutoring skills are taught during the CBET class time, in addition to English language instruction.
- **Strong articulation between CBET classes and K-12 EL curriculum.** CBET curriculum at the school site is aligned with that which K-12 EL students receive, with common instructional materials and themes used.
- **Accountability and record keeping.** Each school site submits an accountability report three times each year to the Long Beach School for Adults CBET office, which includes the number of children tutored during each session. Records are also kept on adult CBET participants, such as attendance, percentage tutoring, number of tutoring hours, demographic characteristics, and benchmarks of English literacy through the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) test (initial and over time).

⁶ For further information, visit the Golden Bell Web site at <http://www.csba.org/PA/GoldenBell/2004/03winners.htm>

Example of a Model CBET Program (cont.)

- **Strong babysitting component.** Babysitting component is similar to preschool and includes learning activities.
- **Gateway to further education for adults.** CBET is considered a bridge to continuing education for adult participants, as many go on to the community college, take GED classes at the adult school, etc.
- **Evidence of success.** Adult participants at school sites in this CBET program tend to attain benchmarks at a rate 40 percent higher on the CASAS test than their counterparts at the adult school sites, where no tutoring is occurring.

Chapter VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Meeting the Needs of California's ELs

As described in the chapter on achievement, while we see evidence of improved academic success with ELs in California, substantial gaps in achievement remain. As noted earlier in this report, ELs represent one-fourth of all students in California and one-third of the state's Kindergarteners through third graders. This is not a minor sub-population of students—they represent the future of our state. As such, ELs must be fully incorporated into statewide academic planning, school reform in regard to how the state will support low-performing schools (many of which enroll large percentages of ELs), and a comprehensive funding system that clearly acknowledges the impact of EL concentration on school performance.

At the same time that the needs of ELs are fully incorporated in all education planning in the state, their specialized needs must be fully acknowledged. They are more likely to live in poverty, which appears to be the strongest predictor of academic under-performance, than their native English-speaking peers. In addition, California has very high academic standards for English learners, who face the extraordinary challenge of learning academic English while also mastering the same core content standards (in English) expected of all students. The challenges for these students and the state are formidable, and although there is evidence of progress, much remains to be accomplished.

In prior reports we recommended greater state leadership in such areas as clarifying what “overwhelmingly in English” means, providing additional guidance on best practices in structured English immersion, and in increasing technical assistance to districts and schools to help them better define, implement, and evaluate instructional programs and services for EL students. While there is evidence that the state has provided additional guidance in some of these areas, it is unrealistic to expect the state to serve as the sole source of guidance and assistance on such challenging issues. Moreover, the state often lacks legal authority to set specific definitions, policies, and criteria.

Our recent work has led us to conclude that schools and districts that are demonstrating unusually high levels of success in bolstering EL achievement can provide vital insight into what works for ELs. California has a large percentage of the nation's ELs and far more than any other state. While we are learning as a state how to best educate ELs, there is likely as much knowledge in California about effectively educating ELs as anywhere in the nation. With 937 districts and 8429 schools serving this population, California is in effect one of the largest laboratories for educating ELs in the world. Across this broad range of schools, we believe it is wise to acknowledge those

who rise to the top in achieving academic success with ELs, and to find and foster ways to have other schools learn from them. We will discuss this conclusion in further detail later in this section, first we turn to discussion of our conclusions in regard to Proposition 227.

Proposition 227: the “Bottom Line”

We have been charged to answer the “bottom line” question of whether we find, given all the sites visited, the people interviewed, and the data analyzed, that the public was wise to enact Proposition 227. This is difficult given the intense debate surrounding its passage—which still often dominates discussions of EL instruction in California today. Very little evidence can be found in the empirical analyses conducted during this study that its basic premise was correct (i.e., that immersion methods of instruction are uniformly superior to bilingual methods in enhancing educational outcomes for ELs). It is not possible to unambiguously resolve the question of the relative superiority of immersion versus bilingual approaches given the shifting definitions associated with various instructional approaches for ELs in state data over the years, and the inability to track individual student-level data over time. Nevertheless, the best analyses we have been able to conduct given data limitations indicate that differences across models of instruction—holding constant such critical factors as student demographics—are minimal or nonexistent.

In short, it appears that we have been arguing all these years over slight, or no, differences between bilingual versus immersion approaches, the ambiguity about exactly what these labels represent in practice notwithstanding. Yet based on our overall achievement findings, we conclude that Proposition 227 focused on the wrong issue. It is not the model of instruction employed, or at least not the name given to it, but rather other factors that are much more operative in distinguishing between failure and success with ELs. We describe the factors that do appear to be important in this report, and argue that the state should now focus its attention on further study what makes a difference for ELs in varying contexts, and providing support for their dissemination and replication.

However, our conclusion that some of the basic premises underlying Proposition 227 were flawed does not necessarily imply that the state’s ELs would have been better off without it. It is interesting to note that many of the educators we interviewed concluded that the overall effect of the proposition on the ELs in their school had been positive—although it should be noted that these were schools with demonstrated success with ELs. These included respondents from schools relying on immersion methods, schools using bilingual instruction, and schools offering multiple instructional approaches.

EL academic performance across the state has clearly improved since the passage of Proposition 227. Although this is also true of non-ELs, the fact that the EL/EO gap has remained relatively constant at a time when EL test participation markedly increased suggests that California has made progress in the education of ELs since the passage of Proposition 227. Many respondents pointed out that Proposition 227 cast a spotlight on

ELs as an important sub-population and on the methods of instruction used for these students. ELAP, which soon followed, provided resources for the provision of supplementary EL services. In addition, the state legislature's mandate for ELD standards, and an annual ELD assessment, clearly focused instructional attention on ELs. It is likely that these factors, coupled with state and federal accountability measures and concomitant resources, have made a significant contribution in bolstering EL academic performance across the state.

A New Paradigm for EL Educational Improvement Efforts

At the same time, we are still not close to where we want to be in regard to statewide EL academic performance. A new paradigm, shifting away from the immersion/bilingual debate, is needed to focus more on the larger array of factors that make a difference for EL achievement. Therefore, it is imperative for the state, counties, and districts to learn as much as possible from our vast experience with EL instruction statewide—to identify success, to gain better understanding of what drives it, to learn from it, and to disseminate it to others. This new orientation would concern itself less with the labels associated with varying instructional methods, and focus more on bottom-line evidence that learning is occurring. When it is occurring, we need to find out more about the particular mix of resources and methods of instruction that are being used to bring about enhanced academic performance for ELs in a variety of local contexts so that this knowledge can be shared with others. When success is not occurring, regardless of the label given to the model of instruction being used, the state, counties, and districts should work together to adopt more new comprehensive strategies that can be shown to be more efficacious.

Are changes needed to Proposition 227 to allow this to happen, especially if we find over time that well-designed and administered alternative bilingual programs prove to be more effective for certain populations of students? Since the law currently allows such flexibility under certain conditions, it seems that change in the law is not needed as much as interpreting it and carrying it out so that provisions such as parental waivers are more clearly understood and less idiosyncratically applied. Given the findings of this study, we support allowing this flexibility in schools with demonstrated success. For other schools, the findings of this study seem to clearly suggest that it will take much more than just the rigid application of Proposition 227 to turn things around.

With comprehensive assessment and accountability systems in place, the state now has the opportunity to create a foundation of EL services that is based on evidence of success. We believe the state should continue to examine what methods work best with various types of EL populations in differing contexts. This should be coupled with a program of technical assistance, organized and supported by the state, for districts and schools in which ELs fail to make academic progress. It is not clear that changes in Proposition 227 are needed to allow this to happen. On the other hand, strict adherence to the premises of this proposition will not provide the panacea promised by its most ardent supporters. While the basic provisions of Proposition 227 do not hinder the statewide changes needed to further bolster academic success with ELs, its underlying emphasis on

the immersion/bilingual debate may simply distract from the work that needs to be done to allow the state to develop a more viable foundation for EL services.

Learning from Success

Our most underutilized opportunity to continue improving EL performance may lie in fostering ways for schools and districts to learn from one another. Current state accountability methods identify schools that are underperforming or failing in some way. We believe it is important for the state to place equal, if not greater, emphasis on districts and schools that are realizing authentic, lasting success with their ELs. To do this, the state will need to establish criteria for identifying successful districts and schools in regard to EL performance, publicly acknowledge them, and create vehicles for disseminating what is occurring in these successful sites to others.

The state's focus on results for ELs, as with all students, can also provide the latitude for schools to pursue what they demonstrate to be best practices within their particular local context. The school-selection tool used in this study allows outcome criteria to be set to those considered most important, and critical parameters to be varied to better match local context and conditions. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the 1981 *Castaneda v. Pickard* federal court decision required that English learner programs receiving federal funds must (1) be based on sound educational theory or principles; (2) effectively implement this theory, and (3) evaluate its results to demonstrate that it is working and if not, modify the program accordingly. While debate is likely to continue within the first two criteria, the third clearly fits with current state and national emphasis on local education accountability. *Castaneda* seems very pertinent today in the guidance it provides. As Proposition 227 allows latitude for variation in local practice and the state and federal accountability systems clearly define the results schools must pursue and how to measure them, an important remaining element to foster statewide improvement with ELs is to create better structures for learning from the successes we are realizing in selected schools and districts throughout the state.

Thus, as mentioned earlier, a major policy implication of our study is that the vast variability associated with local conditions in regard to the education of ELs—such as the overall mix of students, level of poverty, concentration of ELs, number of languages, teacher qualifications and community preferences and values—must be acknowledged and, accordingly, that reasonable variation in instructional methods should continue to be allowed. These variations in local conditions and instructional methods are clearly evident in the mix of successful schools featured in Chapter 4 of this report.

In sites demonstrating less success, greater definition of structure and support may be needed. What all of the schools featured in this report have in common, and what we should expect of all schools, are strong academic results. Thus, we believe the state is on the right path in bolstering EL performance by keeping the accountability spotlight clearly focused on ELs.

The importance of choice in instructional method was captured by one successful school respondent for this study, who said that one of the most valuable things the district provided was “allowing me, as the site principal, the flexibility to determine what my kids, my teachers, my site needs and then working with me to come up with the solution.” Important context for this latitude in method, however, is that the ELs at this school were showing considerable academic success. It is important to allow the freedom for the systemic infrastructure found in schools like this to develop as well as to foster its replication in similar sites.

In summary, it is imperative that we embrace this challenge. ELs are a large, growing, and vital component of California’s future. Learning how to be more successful with this large population of students is clearly essential to our state and national well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings detailed in this report, derived from the study team’s research over the past five years, we offer several recommendations. These recommendations are directed primarily to state and local educational leaders and policymakers.

- 1. The state should identify school sites and districts that are successfully educating ELs at all grade levels, and create opportunities for their educational peers to learn from them.** The state should continue to acknowledge the great variability of local conditions in educating ELs, and accordingly to permit reasonable variation in instructional methods as allowed under Proposition 227. At the same time, all districts and schools should continue to be held accountable for the same general performance objectives. Within this context, we believe the state should develop criteria for identifying districts and schools with especially strong EL linguistic and academic performance, publicly acknowledge them, and develop mechanisms for encouraging the transfer of knowledge regarding effective methods from these successful sites to others statewide. When English acquisition and content knowledge growth is considered over time, our analyses indicate that strong school performers including English-only and alternative bilingual program models will likely be found.
- 2. The state should take steps to standardize and clarify alternative instructional program waiver provisions of Proposition 227.** We have found considerable evidence for concern over the past five years regarding uneven district understanding and implementation of alternative instructional program waivers. Current legal statute specifies that parents should be the primary initiators of the waiver process, with final approval left to school officials based on their best educational assessment of the needs of the child. However, it appears that parents’ understanding of their wavier rights and schools’ acceptance or rejection of waiver requests are often governed by

prior practice and the predisposition of providers toward particular instructional programs. Evidence of this was found in schools we visited in which virtually all ELs are in waiver programs, as well as those in which no child has ever been granted a waiver. In many other schools we visited, parents either did not have a good understanding of program waivers, or had their waiver requests categorically denied or placed in a file cabinet without serious consideration. These practices denigrate these provisions of the law and miss an important opportunity to better engage parents in their child's learning. In sharp contrast, in some of the effective schools we visited, parents were fully informed of their waiver rights and in some cases were offered clear instructional program alternatives for their children. This should be the rule rather than the exception, and state clarification and enforcement will help make that change. To cite just one example, one school we visited was successfully operating three different programs simultaneously for ELs, and clearly responded to parental choice.

- 3. The state should focus monitoring efforts to ensure that language status does not impede full, comprehensible access to core curriculum.** A major concern in the education of ELs that has surfaced throughout this study is that, in some cases, language status hampers access to grade-level instruction in the core curriculum, and may impede attaining academic English language as well as grade-level performance standards. Throughout this study, we have heard from elementary teachers and administrators at elementary schools about the importance of redesignating their ELs before entering middle school so that “they won’t be precluded [from] access to equivalent EO courses.” At the middle and high schools we visited, we sometimes heard from EL students, as well from their parents, concerns raised that they were “stuck in the EL track,” that this track of courses was not preparing them for college. We also heard from some of the older students concerns that retention in this track was precluding them from the kinds of interactions with English speakers they felt were needed to develop higher-level English language skills. Finally, we heard from educators themselves who worried that ELs not meeting the criteria to be redesignated by the time they went to middle and high school would be tracked, receive diminished educational opportunities, and face greater risk of not completing school. We believe that the state must hold districts responsible for ensuring that ELs not be inappropriately tracked and that districts should be vigilant about preventing and reversing these practices in their schools.
- 4. Schools should limit prolonged separation of ELs from English-speaking students to cases of demonstrated efficacy.** Many of the concerns from prolonged student separation emanate from the tracking issues described above. Throughout this evaluation we have observed, or been informed of, programs that are ostensibly designed to improve the English acquisition and academic achievement of ELs, but which offer them a narrower range of less challenging coursework, and which are often characterized by low

expectations. Such programs occur primarily in secondary schools, which feature departmental, as opposed to self-contained, curricular programs. ELs that have been functioning with reasonable fluency in mainstream classrooms in elementary school often find themselves placed in “EL tracks” upon entry to middle school, based not on their English proficiency or academic performance, but simply as a result of their EL status. Some are grouped together with newly-arrived immigrants with little or no English fluency. Such treatment often leaves these students with a sense of failure and demoralization. While the separation of ELs for targeted support is sometimes justified, such segregation should be strategic and limited to cases justified by specific instructional purposes and demonstrated success in relation to commonly accepted goals for ELs, e.g., intensive ELD instruction for “zero-English” students, or native language instruction in grade-level academic subject matter in carefully-designed bilingual programs. While we clearly recommend that ELs continue to receive appropriate services through reclassification, these services should be monitored to ensure that they are indeed facilitating progress toward this goal.

- 5. While maintaining redesignation as a locally determined milestone, the state should specify clear performance standards for key statewide measures of EL student progress and achievement.** Because there are significant variations in local context, the state should continue to allow local districts to make their own redesignation decisions. However, the state should also set explicit, empirically-based expectations for EL students’ *steady progress toward and attainment of* statewide academic achievement performance standards required under NCLB Title I, as it has already done with statewide ELD performance standards required under NCLB Title III. Moreover, the state should seek the legal authority to require that both these linguistic and academic achievement performance standards be used to validate and justify local decisions to redesignate. This will help to standardize redesignation performance criteria on the two required statewide assessments.

To do so, the state should establish a uniform performance standard on CST-ELA for defining ELs’ grade-level academic achievement, as it has already done in defining English-language proficiency for AMAO 2¹ using CELDT. This performance standard should empirically demonstrate the academic success of students who have attained it *at least for the two years following redesignation that federal law requires their academic performance be monitored*. Moreover, the chosen performance standard should allow a range of score results around the cutpoint that respects the standard error of measurement for the assessment.

¹ AMAO 2 is the annual measurable achievement objective for increasing the percentage of ELs attaining English language proficiency, as measured by CELDT.

Equally important, the state should also define expectations for EL students' *steady academic progress-over-time* and establish methods for measuring and reporting that progress, as it currently does for English learners' progress in English-language development under Title III AMAO 1.² To do so, the state should convene a technical advisory group to review empirical data and make recommendations on ELs' expected progress as a function of their time in U.S. schools, ELD level, language of instruction, and age/grade. This will help to identify sooner those students at risk of becoming long-term ELs, and emphasize the importance of ELs' steady progress toward attaining grade-level academic achievement standards. This will also help put redesignation in proper perspective—as a meaningful indicator of the attainment of rigorous linguistic and academic achievement criteria within a reasonable time – while placing new emphasis on ELs' steady progress toward that goal.

The state should also revise its redesignation-rate calculation method. Specifically, it should explicitly define which ELs are within a “redesignatable” range on both statewide standardized measures, as it did in defining which ELs were within range of reaching English-language proficiency using the annual CELDT for Title III AMAO 2. Criteria delimiting the subgroup of ELs for whom redesignation is considered reasonable should be tested empirically, use specific cut points on statewide ELD and academic achievement measures, and consider English learners' time in California schools and grade level.

Finally, the state should allow school districts more time to submit counts of EL and RFEP students for the Language Census, since they need to review late-arriving CELDT results and carry out procedures including parent consultation. This may place pressure on the state in tabulating statewide figures for state and federal funding purposes, but it will allow districts to more fully utilize that year's assessment results to make redesignation decisions and more accurately report how many EL students they have succeeded in redesignating in a given school year.

- 6. The state and districts should foster data use to guide EL policy and instruction.** The ongoing use of data to guide EL policy and to provide information regarding the efficacy of instructional methods offers great potential as a mechanism for promoting continuous improvement and targeted instructional intervention for ELs and former ELs who have been reclassified. This was a prevalent theme heard from the successful schools and districts featured in this report, and is a relatively straightforward area in which the state can assist districts, and in which districts can help schools. As described by a respondent from the successful larger, urban districts featured in this report, “intensive data review and analysis has been the most critical element to [my] district's success with ELs.”

² AMAO 1 is the annual measurable achievement objective for increasing the percentage of ELs making progress in English language development, as measured by CELDT.

In addition, fostering ongoing data use and accountability in districts and schools is one approach to tackling the concerns outlined above. When individual student progress is not being made, a change in approach is needed. The state should continue to facilitate both its own and local districts' longitudinal monitoring of individual progress for EL students and former ELs who have been reclassified. One key way this can be done is by ensuring that the database being constructed for CALPADS continues to retain instructional settings and service information from prior years for both current ELs and former ELs who have been redesignated. Moreover, linking such data as students' CELDT results and CST performance (as well as primary language assessment results for students in alternative bilingual programs), by grade and time in U.S. schools, is critically important to evaluate the effectiveness of school and district instructional programs. While California continues to build its data infrastructure, it should foster these practices and capacities at the district level.

- 7. District leaders need to ensure that their plan of instruction for ELs is carefully articulated across classes within grades, across grades within schools, and across schools within the district.** As described by one successful district respondent, the particular plan adopted for educating ELs is less important than its being carefully thought out, coordinated, and articulated. A coherent set of performance expectations for ELs as well as a carefully designed plan to guide their progress through the grades and create coherent instructional transitions across schools is essential to their success. The detrimental consequences of the lack of well-articulated programs within districts were seen in a number of case study sites as ELs transitioned from elementary to secondary programs. We recognize that districts and schools must be allowed to group for instructional purposes as appropriate to the needs of their students. Nevertheless, our interviews and site visits indicate that the substantial change in approach which ELs commonly experience in the transition from elementary to secondary levels of schooling seemed more reflective of the structure of the school (i.e., more integrated self-contained instruction as opposed to more departmentalized secondary instruction) than of a well thought out and articulated plan across schools designed to best meet the needs of individual ELs.
- 8. The state and districts should support the professional development necessary to promote ELs' English language development and academic achievement, ensure appropriate deployment of skilled teachers to schools where they are most needed, and foster development of ELD curriculum and instructional plans aligned to the state's ELD standards.** The necessity of having qualified staff with competencies in instructional approaches that help ELs develop English language skills and master academic content is obvious. However, the state's schools enrolling the largest percentages of ELs have significantly lower percentages of

certificated teachers as compared to the state average (87% as compared to 93%). Moreover, teachers holding special credentials for serving ELs are disproportionately distributed to schools enrolling lower percentages of these students. Certainly, schools serving the most EL students need higher percentages of qualified teachers rather than less.

Principals of schools demonstrating usually high levels of EL achievement who were interviewed for this study also emphasized teachers' knowledge and skills in working with ELs as vital to the quality of their EL programs. These respondents most commonly ranked staff capacity to address EL needs as the most critical factor contributing to their success. Teacher credentials, certifications to teach ELs, and years of experience were most frequently mentioned, with many principals pointing out that the majority of their teachers are fully credentialed and have the CLAD or BCLAD. At the same time, many principals highlighted technical assistance and professional development on sound pedagogical principles and practices for ELs as areas in which they would like to see increased district support.

The state has, in recent years, committed substantially more effort to the support of improved teaching and learning for ELs in both ELD and core academic subjects. The state should continue to make this a priority. In addition, district leaders should take steps to enhance appropriate training in preparation for teaching, as well as training that is ongoing and job-embedded at the local level, to ensure that teachers are equipped to provide appropriate instruction to students at all levels of EL proficiency.

Another major theme underscored by the school and district respondents selected on the basis of their strong performance with ELs is the importance of a rigorously structured, standards-aligned plan for offering ELD services which is designed to serve students with varying levels of English proficiency. Models used by successful schools to provide appropriate ELD services ranged from school-wide integration of ELD across subjects to the provision of ELD during a specific class period where students were grouped by proficiency level. While the approaches to appropriate ELD instruction are diverse, systematic attention to ELD instruction guided by an articulated plan for ensuring its implementation was a prevalent theme across many responding schools and districts.

State support for a well-defined program of ELD instruction in schools is reflected in the adoption of ELD standards, development of the CELDT, a standards-based ELD assessment, and the recent set-aside specifically allocated for the purchase of supplementary materials for ELs. However, we believe the state must also undertake the development of an ELD curriculum framework based on the state's ELD standards, so that standards-based curriculum materials are produced and adopted in every district serving ELs. While local circumstances should continue to guide plans developed for

provision of ELD instruction, the state and districts need to ensure that adequate resources and support are in place to foster systematic, standards-based ELD curriculum and instruction, including support for careful planning and coordination on utilizing appropriate strategies for EL students with varying levels of English proficiency.

9. The state and school districts should acknowledge the added learning expectations and demands placed on English learners by allocating additional resources that truly supplement equitable base funding.

Additional challenges, and therefore costs, are associated with teaching EL students English while at the same time ensuring that they are learning the core curriculum expected of all students. It is broadly acknowledged that additional resources are needed to educate ELs as evidenced by such supplemental funding provisions as federal Title III, California's EIA-LEP, ELAP, and CBET, and the categorical supplements based on the number of ELs found in 30 states. Also, the state in recent years has committed substantially more funds to support improved teaching and learning for ELs in both ELD and core academic subjects.

However, when base funding in schools with high percentages of ELs is substantially lower than that found statewide, supplemental funds may be insufficient to bring the districts educating high numbers of ELs up to an even footing with their counterparts.

As described by one stakeholder, "These are the most vulnerable children, and although they are as good, capable, bright, and talented as every other child, they're seriously being left behind because they have needs that are not being met." Nearly one-half of our teacher survey respondents reported that they did not have adequate support to address the needs of their ELs.

Exactly how much more it costs to appropriately educate ELs in relation to EOs is not clearly known. However, a study in California currently funded by a consortium of foundations, headed by Hewlett, will be systematically considering the funding needed for public education given the state's specified academic goals and the composition of students in districts and schools, including the percentage of English learners.

The state should also carefully evaluate all policies that may unintentionally penalize schools and districts with successful EL programs. The state's current categorical programs are based on the number of students designated as EL. Funding is lost to the district when ELs are redesignated even if some of their students are being monitored because they have not yet reached proficiency. This is problematic in that it creates a fiscal disincentive for success through redesignation, and is further complicated by the considerable local discretion allowed in redesignation decisions in districts across the state and the large ensuing variation in observed rates of redesignation across

districts, as described in this report. The state should consider addressing this potential redesignation disincentive by creating financial rewards for schools and districts whose EL students attain agreed-upon levels of proficiency. These additional funds could also be used to address lingering or re-emerging linguistic and academic needs that students may have as they face more challenging content and performance standards at higher grade levels.

- 10. The legislature should clarify CBET goals, and continue funding with ongoing evaluation.** The CBET program’s primary goal should be clarified, and in order to receive CBET funds, districts should be required to describe how their proposed program design will specifically benefit EL children as well as the community as a whole. More detailed recommendations are found in Chapter 6 of this report.

- 11. The state should continue ELAP funding with added flexibility.** Reprising major recommendations from the ELAP evaluation conducted in Year 4 of this study, evaluation requirements for the ELAP funding should be bolstered and made a state—not district—responsibility. Although ELAP is a funding source rather than a program per se, these funds are allocated by the state with the intention that they will make a difference in EL performance. The current requirement that each district evaluate itself to determine the extent to which ELAP is impacting EL performance should be dropped and replaced with ongoing reporting by districts of how ELAP funds are being used, as well as some form of state-level analysis of whether these funds are making a difference. The analyses conducted as a part of this study, as documented in our Year 4 ELAP report illustrate how this might be done.³ Rather than limiting the use of ELAP funds to grades 4 through 8, the state should consider giving districts flexibility in using these funds, while holding the local agency accountable for improved services and results for all ELs and former ELs who are reclassified to FEP but who have not met the proficiency level on state academic assessments. More detailed recommendations are outlined in our Year 4 report.

³ The full report on our evaluation of ELAP, including recommendations, is available at http://www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx

Glossary

Academic Performance Index (API):

Cornerstone of California's Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA), with the purpose of measuring the academic performance and growth of public schools. The numerical index (or scale) ranges from a low of 200 to a high of 1000. Each public school, including charter schools, receives its own API each year. Results from English learners (ELs) are included in a school's API.

Achievement test: A test that measures the extent of a student's learning of the material presented in a particular course, textbook or instructional program. SAT-9 is an example of an achievement test.

API see *Academic Performance Index*

BCLAD see *Bilingual Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development*

Bilingual Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development (BCLAD):

Education Code §§ 44253.3 and 44253.4 require the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to issue certificates to teachers authorizing them to provide instruction to limited-English proficient students. One type of credential is the BCLAD. This certificate requires the applicant to take the following tests: Test 1—Language Structure and First and Second Language Development; Test 2—Methodology of Bilingual, English Language Development, and Content Instruction; Test 3—Culture and Cultural Diversity; Test 4—Methodology for Primary Language Instruction; Test 5—The Culture of Emphasis; and Test 6—The Language of Emphasis. Teachers who pass all six tests receive a BCLAD certificate in one of the following languages of emphasis: Armenian, Cantonese, Pilipino, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish or Vietnamese.

Bilingual Programs: Programs that use the students' native language, in addition to English, for instruction. Students are grouped according to their home language, and teachers are proficient in both English and the students' language. [see also

Early-Exit Bilingual Programs, Late-Exit Bilingual Programs and Two-Way (or Developmental) Bilingual Programs]

California Professional Development

Institutes (CPDI): Established in January 2000, CPDI is a discipline-based project in the professional development network of California jointly administered by the University of California, California State University, Independent Colleges & Universities, California Department of Education and the K-12 community. CPDI is aiming to serve over 70,000 teachers statewide to improve student achievement in core content areas.

CALP see *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*

CBET see *Community-based English Tutoring*

CLAD see *Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development*

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

(CALP): The language ability required for academic achievement in a context-reduced environment. Examples of context-reduced environments include classroom lectures and textbook reading assignments.

Communicative-based English as a Second

Language: Approach based on the theory that language acquisition occurs as a result of exposure to meaningful and comprehensible messages, rather than through formal study of grammar and vocabulary.

Community-based English Tutoring

(CBET): Program that provides funding for local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide free or subsidized programs of adult English-language instruction to parents or other members of the community who pledge to provide personal English-language tutoring to English learners. In accordance with Education Code Section 315 and Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations Section 11305, LEAs may use these funds for direct program services, community notification processes, transportation

Glossary (continued)

services, and background checks required of the tutors who volunteer in public schools settings. CBET was established by Proposition 227.

Content-based English as a Second

Language: Approach using instructional materials and learning tasks from academic content areas as a vehicle for developing language, as well as content skill. English is the language of instruction.

CPDI see *California Professional Development Institutes*

Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD): Education Code §§ 44253.3 and 44253.4 require the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to issue certificates to teachers authorizing them to provide instruction to limited-English proficient students. One type of credential is the CLAD. This certificate requires to applicant to take the following tests: Test 1—Language Structure and First and Second Language Development; Test 2—Methodology of Bilingual, English Language Development, and Content Instruction; and Test 3—Culture and Cultural Diversity. Teachers who pass all three tests receive a CLAD certificate.

DELAC see *District English Language Advisory Committee*

District English Language Advisory Committee (DELAC): District-level committee comprised of at least one representative from each school. Members are parents, teachers, and classroom aides who represent parents of children who are ELs and limited-English proficient learners. Many members are also part of the school site-level of this committee, which is called the English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC).

Dominant Language: The language in which the speaker has greater proficiency and/or uses more often.

Dual Language Programs see *Two-way (or Developmental) Bilingual Programs*

Early-Exit Bilingual Programs: Provide initial instruction in the students' home language, with rapid transition into all-English

instruction. Students are mainstreamed into English-only classes by the end of first or second grade.

EL see *English learner*

ELAC see *English Language Advisory Committee*

ELAP see *English Language Acquisition Program*

ELD see *English-language development*

English as a Second Language (ESL):

Teaches English to ELs; may be used with students with different native languages in the same class. ESL teachers have training in principles of language acquisition and in language teaching methods, but are not fluent in the home languages of their students. Teachers for this instructional service should possess a CLAD certificate.

English Language Acquisition Program

(ELAP): Funding program with the aim to improve the English proficiency of California pupils and to better prepare them to meet the state's academic content and performance standards. Funds may be used to supplement activities such as regular school programs, newcomer centers, tutorial services, mentors, purchase of special materials, or other related program services. Any local educational agency (LEA): school district, county office of education, or charter school, that enrolled one or more English learners in grades four through eight in the previous school year is eligible to apply for funds.

English Language Advisory Committee

(ELAC): A committee comprised of parents, teachers, and classroom aides who represent parents of children who are ELs and limited-English proficient learners. ELACs exist at the school site-level and also at the district-level [see *District English Language Advisory Committee*].

English-language development (ELD): This term is used interchangeably with ESL (English as a Second Language).

Glossary (continued)

English learner (EL): Student whose first language is not English and who is in the process of learning English.

English mainstream classroom: Described as “a classroom in which students either are native English-language speakers or already have acquired reasonable fluency in English.” In the Language Census Form (R-30), this setting is represented by two categories: students placed in a mainstream classroom who meet criteria (i.e., are native or reasonably fluent English speakers), and students placed there by parental request. Note that the law does not describe what services are provided in an English mainstream classroom. The Language Census Form, however, indicates an assumption that ELs in a mainstream English classroom will receive “additional and appropriate services.”

English-only: A student who is determined through the administration of the Home Language Survey, and other assessment procedures when appropriate, to have English as their primary language.

EO see *English-only*

ESL see *English as a Second Language*

ESL Class Period: Provides a regular class period for (middle school) students devoted to ESL instruction.

ESL Pull-out: Removes (elementary school) students from their regular mainstream class for a portion of the day to receive ESL instruction.

FEP: see *Fluent-English Proficient*

Fluent English Proficient (FEP): A term applied to students whose primary language is not English and who have met district criteria for proficiency and literacy in English either upon entry into the school system or through the district’s redesignation process. [see *Initially Identified as Fluent English Proficient Redesignated* and *as Fluent English Proficient*].

IFEP: see *Initially Identified as Fluent English Proficient*

Initially Identified as Fluent English

Proficient (IFEP): A term applied to students whose primary language is not English, but who were identified as initially proficient in English when they entered the school system.

Instructional Services: Labels describing methods used in teaching students to listen, speak, read, and write in English and in delivering content in other core academic areas. Categories of instructional services are ELD/ESL, primary language instruction, and primary language support.

Instructional Settings: Labels for the organization of instruction aligned with the language of Proposition 227. The law states that (subject to parental exception waivers) “all children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English. In particular, this shall require that all children be placed in English-language classrooms. Children who are English learners shall be educated through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally to exceed one year. Local schools shall be permitted to place in the same classroom English learners of different ages but whose degree of English proficiency is similar. Local schools shall be encouraged to mix together in the same classroom English learners from different native-language groups but with the same degree of English fluency. Once ELs have acquired a good working knowledge of English, they shall be transferred to English-language mainstream classrooms.”

L1: The first language a person acquires.

L2: The second language a person acquires, sometime after the acquisition of the first language has begun.

Language Census Form (R-30): An annual school-level count of English learners and redesignated Fluent English Proficient students enrolled in California public schools, by primary language within grade level. The census form asks for a total accounting of the instructional service categories into which the ELs fall and of the instructional settings to which the ELs are assigned. It also collects information on the school personnel who are teaching the

Glossary (continued)

ELs—in particular, the state authorizations for teaching ELs that they hold. It also asks for the number of students redesignated as fluent since the previous count and whether the district is using a state-approved instrument for assessing Oral English Proficiency.

Language proficiency: Level at which an individual is able to demonstrate the use of language for both communicative tasks and academic purposes.

Late-Exit Bilingual Programs: Use the students' home language more and longer than early-exit programs. Late-exit programs may use home language instruction 40 percent or more of the time, throughout the elementary school years, and even for students who have been reclassified as Fluent English Proficient.

LEA see *Local Education Agency*

LEP see *Limited English Proficient*

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Term used to identify those students who have insufficient English to succeed in English-only classrooms.

Local Education Agency (LEA): A district or county office of education

Mainstream classroom see *English mainstream classroom*

NABE see *National Association for Bilingual Education*

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE): Professional association of teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers and others concerned with securing educational equity for language minority students.

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE): Organization funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) to collect, analyze and disseminate information related to the education of linguistically and culturally diverse students.

NCBE see *National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education*

NEP see *Non-English Proficient*

Newcomer: Students who have recently immigrated; these students tend to have no fluency in English and varied educational backgrounds. Also referred to as “new arrivals” or “newly-arrived students.”

Non-English Proficient (NEP): Students who come to school with no or minimal English proficiency.

OBEMLA see *Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs*

Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA): Established by the U.S. Congress in 1974 to help school districts meet their responsibility to provide an equal education opportunity to limited English proficient students. This office is part of the U.S. Department of Education.

Parental exception waivers: Parents and guardians may choose to remove their children from a SEI program and enroll them in an alternative course of study. According to California law, parents and guardians must be informed of this right and provided with full written descriptions (or upon request, spoken descriptions) of the SEI program and any alternative course of study and materials. Sometimes this alternative course of study is not offered at the school site and requires the child to receive instruction at another site.

Primary-language instruction: Instructional service where content is delivered in the student's primary language by a teacher with a BCLAD certificate.

Primary-language support: Any use of the primary language enabling students to understand terms and content and directly supporting content instruction in the second language.

Pull-out instruction see *ESL Pull-out*

Realia: Real objects and materials related to a lesson that are brought into the classroom as examples or instructional aids. Realia help clarify the meaning of new words and structures by enabling students to make connections to their own lives.

Glossary (continued)

Redesignated as Fluent English Proficient (RFEP): refers to students who entered the school system as ELs but were reclassified after meeting district criteria for proficiency and literacy in English.

Redesignation: reclassifying an EL student as a fluent English speaker based upon the meeting of district criteria for proficiency and literacy in English.

RFEP see *Redesignated as Fluent English Proficient*

SABE see *Spanish Assessment of Basic Education*

SDAIE see *Specially designed academic instruction in English*

SEI see *Sheltered English Immersion and Structured English Immersion*

Sheltered English Immersion (SEI): Programs that use English adapted to the students' level of comprehension, along with gestures and visual aids, to provide content area instruction. This approach is often used for a class of students from varied native language backgrounds. In the law, "sheltered English immersion" and "structured English immersion" are used interchangeably.

Spanish Assessment of Basic Education (SABE): Series of norm-referenced tests for grades one through eight. Designed to measure achievement in the basic skills of reading, mathematics, spelling, language and study skills for students for whom Spanish is the language of instruction. Measures the skill level of Spanish speaking students in bilingual programs and assesses Spanish speaking immigrant students entering American schools from foreign educational systems.

Specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE): The teaching of grade-level subject matter in English specifically designed for speakers of other languages. It is most appropriate for students who have reached an intermediate or advanced level of proficiency in English (speaking, comprehension, reading and writing) and who possess basic literacy skills in their own language. Enacted on January 1,

1995, Senate Bill 1969 authorized a 45-hour combined training program in SDAIE/English-language development for teachers with nine or more years of full-time teaching experience in California public schools. A teacher may complete an equivalent three-semester-unit or four-quarter-unit college class as an alternative to the 45-hour SDAIE training requirement.

Structured English Immersion (SEI): Programs that use English as a medium of instruction for content areas. Structured English immersion teachers have a bilingual education or ESL credential and understand the students' first language. In the law, "sheltered English immersion" and "structured English immersion" are used interchangeably.

Transitional Bilingual Programs see *Early-Exit Bilingual Programs*

Two-way (or Developmental) Bilingual Programs: Use English and another language to provide instruction to classes composed of approximately half language minority students from a single language background and half language majority (English-speaking) students. Both groups of students develop their native language skills while acquiring proficiency in a second language.

Waivers see *Parental exception waivers*.

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