Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

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The Power and Promise of California's Multilingual Learners

We can communicate with others, we can help others, and we can make other people's lives better, by just having this one special trait—which is being bilingual.

–Student from the Abraham Lincoln High School Programa Bilingüe de Secundaria/High School Bilingual Program, San Francisco Unified School District

The Power and Promise of Educating California's Multilingual Learners

California is home to a large and richly diverse student population. Over 2.5 million of California's six million K–12 students (roughly two out of every five students) speak a language other than English (LOTE) in their homes, with nearly 70 home languages represented.[1] These numbers are even higher among California's youngest learners: roughly 60 percent of learners ages zero to eight have home languages other than English.

As the statements above suggest, these students have aspirations and a sense of their own promise. They can also face tremendous adversity in realizing their promise while navigating a complex education system. Fortunately, at no other time in California history have there been more

structures in place to help ensure that students feel welcomed at school, where their language, culture, and immigrant status are recognized as assets for learning, and where their connections to their families and communities are maintained because of the opportunities they have to use and develop their bilingualism at school.

As later sections of this chapter will show, California's current educational policies demonstrate its commitment to multilingual learner (ML) students and to an asset-based instructional approach that promotes global competence. This means that all students, and ML students in particular, should be recognized for the special assets they bring to school, because these assets enrich our society and make the state as a whole globally competitive.

To achieve this vision, however, the state must continue to empower its educators with resources and opportunities to support their learning, reflection, and implementation of best practices. Teachers need an understanding of the kind of supports their ML students need, the assets of bilingualism that students bring to the classroom, and the experiences of their students living in and across multiple language worlds.

Almost any educator or administrator will likely say that they spend tremendous amounts of time and energy trying to make all of their students feel welcome and supported in their classrooms. Indeed, the quotations below from California Teachers of the Year echo this sentiment.

My teaching philosophy has been one of continual experimentation and humility when it does not go the way you want. The discovery of what works is incredibly exciting, and quite honestly—empowering.

–Michael Henges, 2019 California Teacher of the Year, Redondo Union High School, Redondo Beach Unified School District, Los Angeles County

I strive to be a status quo disruptor and an agent for social justice, while engaging in a rigorous, standards-based English curriculum.

> –Rosie Reid, 2019 California Teacher of the Year and National Teacher of the Year Candidate, Northgate High School, Mount Diablo Unified School District, Contra Costa County

What greeting each student as they arrive at school allows is for every kid to get noticed. There's nothing more powerful than connection. When we build relationships with kids, it starts with that.

> –Manuel Nunez, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) 2018 Middle Grades Principal of the Year, and former ACSA "Every Student Succeeding" honoree, Seaside Middle School, Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
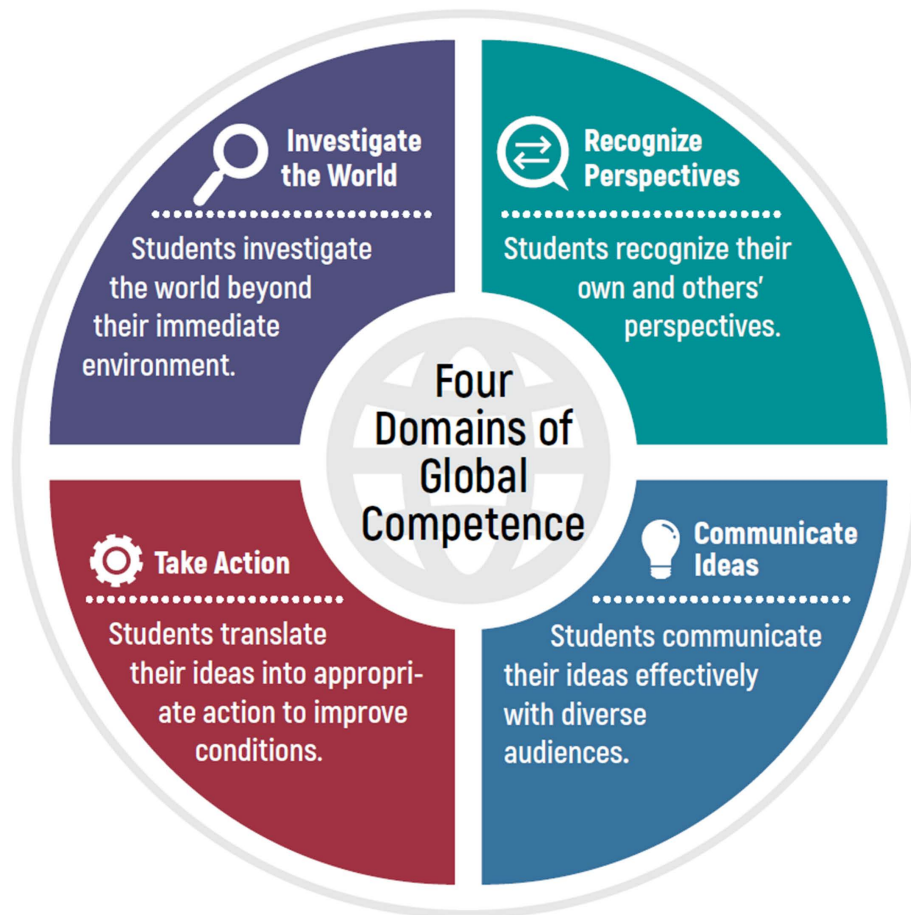
As a state, California has made great efforts in recent years to support every student and every teacher with the opportunities and resources they need to achieve the state's ambitious vision for multilingual education. This book is offered to California educators—particularly classroom teachers, instructional coaches, school and district administrators, and teacher educators—with this goal in mind. It focuses specifically on evidence-based pedagogy and leadership practices to support ML students in California's classrooms, and it was written precisely to help educators disrupt any negative experiences students may have and champion the strength and resilience reflected in the student voices at the beginning of this chapter. The material in this book echos the voices of some of the state's most talented teachers who understand the students in their classrooms, work to disrupt the status quo, and facilitate the kind of teaching and learning that help students achieve their fullest potential.

What Kind of California is Possible?

The future of California—the world's fifth-largest economy—very much rests on the shoulders of its ML students and their teachers. As a state with 300,000 teachers and 2.5 million ML students, the potential for transformative, large-scale change is limitless. The state's diversity is its strength, and it represents

a unique opportunity to promote both individual potential and the realization of a multicultural and multilingual society.[2] At no other time in history has this dual goal been more urgent. Right now, California needs its students to become globally competent citizens with the knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes to improve their communities, state, and world (see fig. 1.1).

Figure 1.1   The Essentials of Global Competence[3]

Investigate the World
Students investigate the world beyond their immediate environment.

Recognize Perspectives
Students recognize their own and others' perspectives.

Four Domains of Global Competence

Take Action
Students translate their ideas into appropriate action to improve conditions.

Communicate Ideas
Students communicate their ideas effectively with diverse audiences.

Long description of figure 1.1

Of course, the case for cultivating students' multilingualism is not merely for economic and international competitiveness reasons. Students' multilingualism strengthens family connections, promotes cultural pride, and enriches the fabric of diverse communities. These benefits are illustrated throughout this book.

How is this Chapter Organized?

Before delving into actionable practices for educating ML students, this first chapter dedicates time to understanding who these students are—as learners, as a group, and as individuals. It is premised on the idea that, in order to effectively educate these students, educators must first understand and appreciate the complex intersection of forces that act upon ML students in the education system. The sections in this chapter will unfold as follows:

- **Who are California's ML students?** First, important terms are clarified and the students this book is focused on are introduced in more detail. This section provides a definition for the term "multilingual learners," along with an explanation of why this term is used in this book. It also introduces other key terms and typologies within the general population of ML students.

- **What is unique about being or becoming multilingual?** This section provides a review of research on the cognitive effects of multilingualism. It summarizes current research on the unique ways ML students learn, as well as the benefits of being or becoming multilingual.

- **What is the California vision for ML students?** This section provides readers with a brief overview of California's current policy context with respect to multilingual learners, with a particular focus on the *California English Learner Roadmap: Strengthening Comprehensive Educational Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Learners (CA EL Roadmap).* It provides additional context for the importance of this book, including how this book fits with other California Department of Education (CDE) resources and initiatives related to ML students. The section closes with a set of recommended universal practices that all educators can use, regardless of the grade level, program type, or content area in which they teach. It includes a description of the systems that support students' assets, and the articulation that needs to occur so educators can use the universal practices when they teach.

- **How to use this book.** The chapter closes with an overview of the content of the remaining chapters, along with suggestions for how readers might engage with them.

Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students: Research to Practice

Who are California's multilingual learners?

ML students can be found in every corner of California's education system: in every grade, in every region of the state, and in every kind of educational program. It is important to note that they are not a uniform group. This means that all teachers need deep understanding about the cultural and linguistic assets and experiences that ML students bring to the classroom and the kinds of specialized support they need. The remainder of this section provides more detail about the diversity within California's multilingual population.

Terminology and Typology

As the title suggests, this book uses the term **multilingual learners** to refer to students who have developed or are developing proficiency in both English and one or more other languages, which may be their home language. Students may be mostly dominant in one language or proficient in both. Many are on a continuum between dominance in one language and full proficiency in two or more. California has championed this term because it acknowledges these students' multilingualism, which deserves recognition as an asset they bring to their schools, classrooms, and communities.[4]

As figure 1.2 shows, however, "ML students" is a broad term that encapsulates several related subgroups of learners:

- **Dual Language Learners:** ML students in the birth to five-year-old age range are generally referred to as **dual language learners (DLLs)**. This is based on the assumption that, at this age, all children with a primary LOTE are continuously learning both their home language and English from birth through early childhood.

- **EL Students:** Students who enroll in California schools with a home language other than English, and with levels of English proficiency that indicate they need programs and services that will support them in becoming English proficient, are formally (by federal civil rights law) called **English learner (EL) students**. Within this group:

  - **Newcomer EL students** are EL students who arrived in the US recently (typically less than a year) before enrolling in school, and
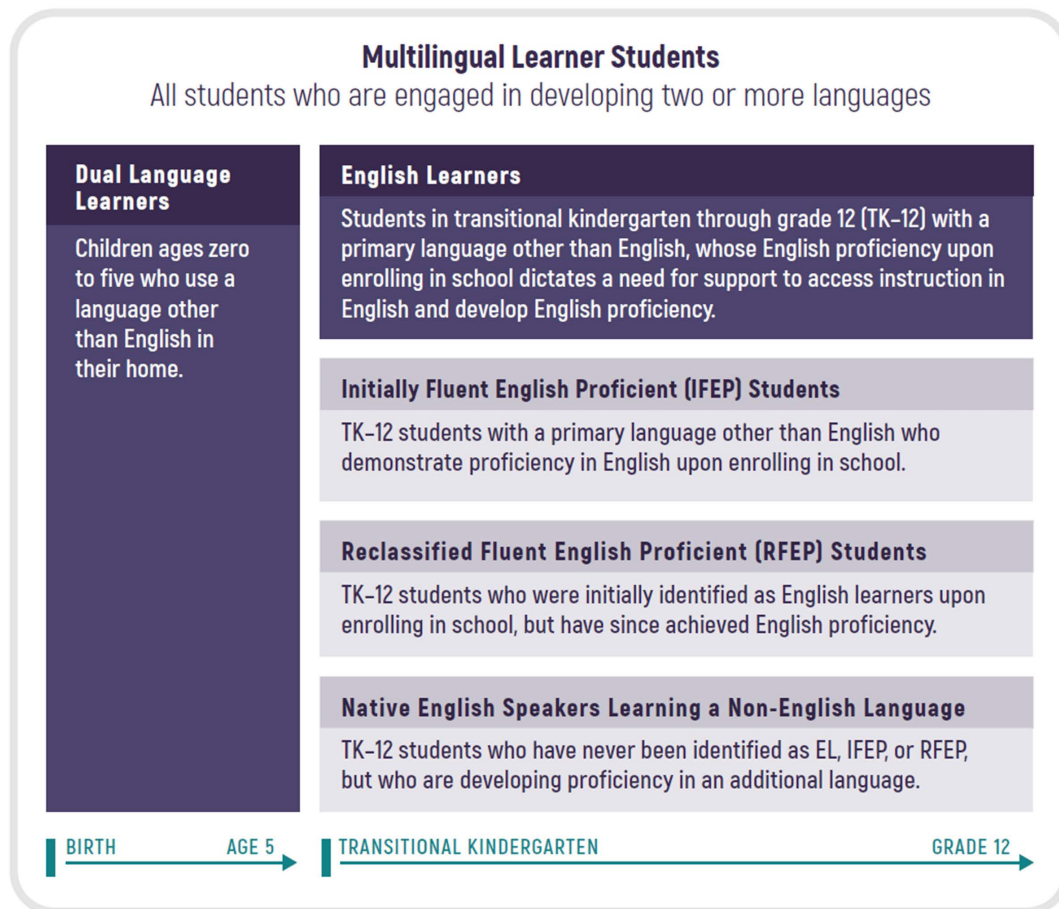
- **Long-term English learner (LTEL) students** (LTELs or LTEL students) are students who have been in California schools for six years or more but have not yet achieved English proficiency.

EL students' right to educational access and supports is delineated by the US Supreme Court in the *Lau v. Nichols* case in 1974 and the *Castañeda v. Pickard* case in 1981, and is further supported by subsequent laws such as the Equal Educational Opportunities Act. Elements of these policies are also woven into more recent reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which is currently reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

- **Reclassified Fluent English Proficient:** EL students exit EL status when four criteria, delineated in the California *Education Code* Section 313, are met. They are: 1) the student meets the standard on the state English proficiency assessment, which at the time of this publication is the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), 2) a teacher reviews the student's classroom performance using a locally determined evaluation, 3) a parent consultation is conducted, and 4) the student meets a locally determined basic skills criteria. EL students then transition to **Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP)** status. RFEP students generally no longer need EL services, though they are still monitored (for at least four years, under ESSA) to ensure they achieve the academic standards.

- **Initially Fluent English Proficient:** Some ML students also demonstrate proficiency in English immediately upon enrolling in school. These students are not English learner students. Instead, they are identified as **Initially Fluent English Proficient (IFEP) students,** and participate in mainstream classrooms and instruction because they have the fluency comparable to students who are native English speakers.

- **Native English Speakers:** Finally, ML students also include **native English speakers who are learning—or learning in—an additional non-English language.** This may include students who are engaged

in dual language (DL) immersion programs that are taught in both English and a partner language, or students who are engaged in coursework to learn a world language. It also includes students who experience multilingualism in their homes or communities without being enrolled in school-based DL programs. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing are often also multilingual, in that their primary language is American Sign Language (ASL) with the partner language being the written language of the hearing community. (As a note, some of these students may actually qualify as English learner students if their partner language to ASL is a non-English language.)

Figure 1.2   California's Multilingual Learners

Multilingual Learner Students
All students who are engaged in developing two or more languages

Dual Language Learners

Children ages zero to five who use a language other than English in their home.

English Learners

Students in transitional kindergarten through grade 12 (TK–12) with a primary language other than English, whose English proficiency upon enrolling in school dictates a need for support to access instruction in English and develop English proficiency.

Initially Fluent English Proficient (IFEP) Students

TK–12 students with a primary language other than English who demonstrate proficiency in English upon enrolling in school.

Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) Students

TK–12 students who were initially identified as English learners upon enrolling in school, but have since achieved English proficiency.

Native English Speakers Learning a Non-English Language

TK–12 students who have never been identified as EL, IFEP, or RFEP, but who are developing proficiency in an additional language.

BIRTH   AGE 5   TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN   GRADE 12

Long description of figure 1.2

Note: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act for funding purposes defines EL students as students between the ages of three and twenty-one, whose native language is other than English, and whose language proficiency may prohibit access to a curriculum delivered in English.

Takeaways from this Section

In this book, the term **multilingual learners** will be prioritized for its inclusiveness and asset-based orientation toward language learning and multilingualism. There are two important caveats to this statement, however. First, whenever early childhood education is discussed, the term **dual language learners** will be used, to align with the established terminology in this field.

Second, although the term "multilingual learners" includes many distinct-but-related subgroups, it must be acknowledged that EL students and RFEP students are a particular focus within this subgroup. All EL students, including those with disabilities, have a right to an education that allows them access to the core curriculum—independent of the language they speak—and schools are legally obligated (via the *Castañeda v. Pickard* federal ruling) to provide support to these students to overcome language barriers and develop full proficiency in English. Therefore, when planning schedules and instruction for ML students, educators should always be aware of these rights and legal requirements. EL students are also highly vulnerable to implicit bias about their abilities. Even individuals with the best intentions may sometimes limit opportunities for EL students, believing that grade-level coursework is too difficult for these students before they have mastered English. Research has shown that this is not the case. EL students are absolutely capable of rigorous disciplinary learning, as the research cited in this book demonstrates. Similarly, RFEP students' rich cultural and linguistic assets should be acknowledged and leveraged for classroom learning. Therefore, this **book prioritizes ML students who are also EL students and identifies the necessary targeted and specialized support to provide these students with the high-quality learning experience that they need.**

Diversity and Trends Among Multilingual Learners

There is no single profile of an ML student or an EL student. Although there are definite trends within the population—for example, 82 percent of EL students in California speak Spanish—there is also tremendous diversity and complexity from individual to individual, school to school, and community to community.

Educators can serve ML students best when they approach them as individuals and learn about their particular experiences and identities, rather than making assumptions or basing their decisions on group-level terms. That said, in order to better understand individual students' needs, it may be helpful for educators to be aware of some of the many subgroups within the ML student population.

California enjoys a rich diversity of languages and cultures. The state collects data on **67 different language groups**; 93 percent of EL students speak just ten of the languages. As noted in the opening paragraph, **Spanish** is the most commonly spoken non-English language in the student population generally, and among English learner students, particularly. The next most prevalent language spoken is Vietnamese at just over 2 percent, followed by Mandarin, Arabic, and Filipino, all at less than 2 percent.[5] Some schools are finding that students speak languages they had not heard of prior to meeting their students, such as Mixtec languages or Mam.

> **Mixtec languages** are indigenous Mexican languages spoken primarily in the Mexican states of Oaxaca, Puebla, and Guerrero. **Mam** is a Mayan language spoken by indigenous peoples in Guatemala and Mexico.

This linguistic diversity is a good reminder that not all students with similar geographic origins share the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds. As shown above, not all students with cultural connections to Mexico speak Spanish (or only Spanish). Similarly, not all Spanish speakers speak "the same" Spanish. Rather, there is tremendous dialectic diversity among speakers of any language (including English!), often tied to speakers' geographic roots. Likewise, not all Spanish speakers share the same cultural backgrounds. There is also a tremendous cultural diversity amongst speakers of any language, and any country of origin.

What do you know about the home languages and cultures of the students in your school? What are some things you could do to support them in developing their multilingualism and stay connected to their home languages and cultures?

This is also a good time to note that the majority of California's EL students (73.5 percent[6]) were born in the United States—potentially a surprise to some readers who think of EL students as synonymous with immigrants. Many LTEL students are, in fact, members of this group—they are students who entered the US school system as young children but have struggled to meet the state's reclassification criteria (see the previous section for definitions of LTEL students and reclassification criteria). LTEL students are often fluent in conversational English but lack the academic English skills and language for successful engagement in school. This can be due to a variety of reasons, but one prominent reason (according to the research of Olsen 2010) is educational programming that has not met their academic and language learning needs. For this reason, a promising practice can be in intentional educational programming designed to meet these needs.

Most EL students do have at least one parent who is an immigrant, however. Often, this means that their family experience and norms are rooted in another nation and culture, and they experience the complexities of being first- or second-generation Americans and forging binational and bicultural identities. In addition, while about 90 percent of the children of immigrants are native-born citizens—with all the rights and privileges of any citizen—about 750,000 of these students have a parent who is undocumented.[7] This can create enormous stress and worry for these students as they wonder what their future holds and if their parents will be at home when they return from school for fear they may have been deported. Teachers, school counselors, and administrators should be aware of these stresses as they try to interpret their students' behavior and create supportive school environments for them.

The 1982 US Supreme Court ruling ***Plyler v. Doe*** established that education systems cannot deny students access to schools (or deny schools funding) on the basis of immigration status. The ruling also established that it is illegal to ask a student questions or put a student in the position of having to reveal information about the legal status of their families or themselves.

It is also true, of course, that more than a quarter of ML students are born outside of the United States. These **immigrant students** come from all over the world, from many cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. They arrive at all ages with different levels of prior education. Some come from rural and isolated communities with fewer people than students may find in their schools in the US. Others arrive from major urban and industrialized centers of the globe. Some come fleeing wars and political or social repression, others are reuniting with family, and still others are accompanying family members seeking work. The assets and needs that are generated from these different circumstances vary greatly. Some students live in the United States for a while, return to their homeland for a period of time, and then come back; they are transnational commuters.

Among ML students who are immigrants, two subgroups that often get special attention are **newcomer English learner students** and **students with interrupted formal education (SIFE)**. Because of their recent arrival in the United States, newcomers are adjusting to an entirely new home country, in addition to adjusting to the US school system in particular. SIFE students, meanwhile, are immigrant students (particularly newcomers) who have experienced interruptions to their schooling—perhaps due to some of the circumstances listed above, such as fleeing persecution or war in their home countries. These students need "survival English" (i.e., foundational language skills to help them navigate their new home both within and beyond school), support with culture shock and orientation, and educational support in aligning and closing gaps between the U.S. school system and the curriculum in their home countries. Additionally, those with educational gaps may need foundational literacy skills and basic content courses, while those who are highly literate and well educated can often make accelerated progress academically while learning English.

The educational programming in secondary settings may prove challenging to provide the support and attention that newcomer students and students with interrupted formal education (SIFE students) need. Whereas elementary students tend to spend all day with the same teacher who will eventually get to know them, secondary students may see multiple teachers in a day, thus making it harder to ensure knowledge sharing and continuity across their instruction. Intentional coordination can help prevent secondary newcomers and SIFE students from "slipping through the cracks."

Another subgroup among ML students are **heritage language learners,** or students who may have missed the opportunity to learn their heritage language (their parents' or grandparents' home language) in the home. These students may be considered native English speakers or IFEP students, considered RFEP students, or identified as DLL students or EL students. Because language is a key to cultural identity, language revitalization programs for heritage language learners that include both language instruction and culture-based education—where students have an opportunity to reclaim the language of their communities and deepen their knowledge of their cultural heritage—are important. For most Native American groups, for example, efforts to revitalize the heritage language by teaching it to young tribal members are important to sustaining and strengthening tribal culture. Through the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, indigenous communities have a legal right to decide how to educate their children, and this may include multilingual education. For children living on tribal lands whose languages are in danger of extinction, language revitalization is a matter of extreme urgency. Other schools and communities, such as Hmong Americans and Vietnamese Americans,

Have you ever had to learn something important in a language in which you were not yet proficient? If yes, what did you learn from this experience? How did it make you feel about your skills and abilities relative to the content you were being taught?

also have made efforts in recent years to provide students with opportunities to learn heritage languages in formal school settings—languages that their parents or grandparents may have felt pressure to abandon as a result of the circumstances they experienced upon arriving in the United States or because they never had the opportunity to formally develop their multilingualism.

Migratory students represent a significant number of California's children and adolescents.[8] These are students whose families meet specific eligibility criteria for the purpose or frequency of relocations within or across states or countries. For example, a migratory student might be one whose family seeks seasonal farm work up the West Coast, or whose family relocates back and forth between California and Mexico with some regularity due to their work in seasonal agriculture, fishery, dairy, or logging. In California, the number of migratory students has declined steadily since 2016. Currently, there are about 82,000 migratory students attending California schools each year. Approximately half of California's migratory students are also classified as EL students. One of the greatest challenges migratory students face is access to and continuity of the services that are intended to meet their unique needs. When families move, migratory students' educational process is interrupted, and this can be exacerbated if the family moves to an area where there is not a migrant education program or if the migrant education program does not identify students as migratory and thus provide them with services. Not only do these children have an interruption in their education, but they also experience the interruption in services designed to help them overcome their unique challenges as migratory students.

It is also important to acknowledge that **race plays a powerful and complex role** in multilingual learners' experiences as well. Powerful, because research clearly shows that bias does exist in the education system

Think about the potential blind spots that our education system may have with respect to, for example, a nonwhite English learner student whose family is relatively wealthy and who received a top-notch education in her home country before im migrating to the United States. How might you help and get to know your own students to help them avoid these kinds of blind spots? What other intersectional multilingual identities have you encountered in your students?

and affects students of color (for example, in terms of discipline [Welsh and Little 2018], teacher judgments of student ability [Copur-Gencturk et al. 2019; Neal-Jackson 2018], and other factors), even when no one is acting intentionally to discriminate against individuals. Complex, because race intersects with multilingualism in untidy and nonobvious ways. For example, the majority of English learner students are nonwhite "students of color," who thus share experiences of racial discrimination and bias with other students of color who may or may not also be multilingual learners. Meanwhile, while the majority of multilingual learners are viewed as and considered to be Latinx, the vast majority of Latinx students are not multilingual learners. The layering of these different experiences—also including economic status—make it easy for well-meaning individuals to make incorrect assumptions if they are not careful, and get to know individuals and understand their backgrounds and perspectives first.

Having highlighted the rich diversity of California's ML and EL students, it is relevant, in closing, to also think about the demographics and diversity of California's teachers. California employs approximately 300,000 K–12 teachers. Of these, more than three out of every five (approximately 60 percent) are white, and more than seven out of every ten (approximately 70 percent) are female. Hispanic and Latinx teacher numbers have been climbing somewhat consistently since 2014, and currently stand at about one out of every five teachers (approximately 20 percent). Asian teachers make up about 5 percent of the workforce (roughly one out of every twenty teachers), while black teachers make up 4 percent. Roughly 1.5 percent of all teachers are Filipino, while groups like American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander all represent less than 1 percent of the teacher workforce.[9]

Unfortunately, California also has a persistent and well-documented teacher shortage generally, and a shortage of teachers of color and bilingual-certified

> Did you grow up speaking a language other than English at home? Were you at one time an EL student? Were you ever in a bilingual program? Did you ever have a teacher who was not white? What did you learn from these experiences (or what could you have learned from them)?

educators, specifically (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond 2017). These shortages disproportionately impact minority, low-income, and EL students, in that these students are more likely to be taught by new teachers and by underprepared teachers, as well as by teachers who do not reflect the students' cultural backgrounds or speak their home languages.

Takeaways from this Section

This section presented a long list of different subgroups and terms within the ML student population generally, and the EL student population in particular. This information was provided because it is important for educators to understand the rich diversity and intersectionality of these populations, and the many overlapping groups that comprise it.

It was not provided, however, to encourage educators to apply labels to their students, or to encourage educators to make decisions or assumptions about their students based on group-level traits or trends. Rather, it is meant to emphasize the important point that there is no single program or pathway that is sufficient to address the needs of this multifaceted group of students. What works in one school may not be sufficient, or even appropriate, for another school. Similarly, what makes sense for one student may be totally inappropriate for another. As stated at the opening of this section: there is no single profile of an ML student or an EL student.

Readers are therefore encouraged to use this information as a jumping-off point to help them recognize important typologies and categories within the ML student population, and then use this information to get to know their students as the complex, resilient, and promising individuals they are—and then use this information to mount responsive services. **Teachers and administrators should strive to know, with district support, not just whether they have EL students in their classes and schools and the English proficiency levels of those students, but also the language backgrounds, the national and cultural identities, and the educational backgrounds of their students.** It is a goal of this book to provide readers with practical and effective ways to accomplish this, whether they teach preschoolers or high school seniors, and whether they are classroom teachers or district-level leaders.

Knowing one's students as humans and individuals is essential to teaching. This knowledge is crucial information for planning instruction and knowing what kind of support and scaffolding will benefit students in order for them to engage with and access the curriculum. It is a requirement for creating the kind of learning environment in which students feel safe and open to learn. It informs curriculum choices and is—for most teachers—at the very heart of the motivation and commitment to teach. In California, knowing who the students are necessarily involves understanding what it means to be an ML student.

What is unique about being or becoming multilingual?

ML students, with their varied—yet often overlooked—assets, are in many ways primed to be excellent students. They come to school with knowledge in their home language(s) and from their home culture(s) that not only enriches their classroom community, but also enriches their own cognition and learning potential.

What goes on in multilingual brains?

For some time, there was the belief that in multilinguals, different parts of the brain were responsible for the different languages. It is now known that the bilingual is not two monolinguals in one brain, but that both languages are activated whenever the bilingual person is using language (Kroll and Navarro-Torres 2018). As students learn and develop proficiency in two languages, their brains are actively engaged in working across the two languages to access all of their linguistic resources and knowledge encoded in each language.

There is also now conclusive evidence that the brain is actually changed by acquiring additional languages (Bialystok 2017). While there continue to be debates about exactly how and under what circumstances this works (Kroll and Navarro-Torres 2018), multilingual individuals appear to have **greater control over the executive function of the brain** than monolinguals (Morales, Calvo, and Bialystok 2013). This greater control over cognitive processes is also associated with heightened attention in learning tasks and greater working memory—two things that can have significant benefits for learning.

Across various tasks that require bilinguals to balance competing tasks, they outperform monolinguals in speed and often in accuracy (Bialystok 2017).

The multilingual brain also makes connections across the languages, greatly facilitating **awareness of how language works.** This awareness brings the unique aspects of each language into focus and helps individuals form generalizable understandings of what is shared across the languages (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM] 2017). This "middle space" between and across the two languages provides powerful support for each of the languages and creates deeper brain flexibility and awareness of how language works. This has been identified as another one of the key benefits of being multilingual.

How does multilingualism develop?

Not all multilingualism develops in the same way, and the trajectory toward English proficiency is not uniform. A common assumption is that most EL students arrive in US schools speaking another language and are introduced to English for the first time in school. This is known as **sequential bilingualism**—a second language is being added onto the first language, which has already been established.

This is less and less often the case: most EL students in California were born in the United States and enroll in school already having prior experience with and exposure to English, as well as their home language. These students are **simultaneous bilinguals** and have a linguistic basis for both languages, although their proficiency in two languages is seldom equally balanced; one is usually dominant. They may be classified as EL students because their English is still not fully developed or is not the dominant language according to assessment results, such as the Initial ELPAC.

What are the advantages of multilingualism?

In addition to the cognitive benefits described above, multilingualism is also associated with **strong academic outcomes**. Evidence of enhanced learning can be found in a number of recent studies comparing students engaged in bilingual education to those in monolingual English education. For example,

EL students who participate in bilingual education programs—particularly DL immersion programs—surpass the academic achievement of English-only program participants by the time they reach high school (Umansky and Reardon 2014; Valentino and Reardon 2015). And, non-EL students (IFEPs and native English speakers) who participate in DL immersion programs perform on par with or above comparable students who do not participate in DL immersion (Steele et al. 2017). Latinx students who develop their home language in addition to English and who are biliterate are also more likely to go to four-year colleges than those who lose or do not develop their home language (Santibañez and Zárate 2014). (More information about the different benefits and characteristics of bilingual programs is available in chapter 3.)

There is also evidence of **significant labor market benefits** for bilingualism and biliteracy. Rumbaut (2014) found that more proficient bilingual and biliterate students (in both languages) tend to have better jobs and earn more. These findings hold for several different language groups. Another study of nearly 300 employers across large multinational businesses as well as small firms located in California found that two-thirds of employers across all labor sectors reported a preference for hiring bilinguals, and that the benefits of bilingualism included more rapid promotions, higher earnings from commissions, and greater job security (Porras, Ee, and Gándara 2014).

Having highlighted the many potential benefits of bilingualism, it is, however, important to emphasize that none of these should be taken for granted as things that occur "naturally" or automatically. Rather, these many positive outcomes must be carefully cultivated and nurtured by educators who both understand how they work and see their inherent value for students and communities. Students who do not experience these opportunities may experience language loss, which not only robs them of their full cognitive potential, but can also have negative repercussions in terms of identity, family, and community relationships, and social–emotional well-being (NASEM 2017). Indeed, a primary aim of this book is to provide local educational agencies with guidance and information to develop educational structures and practices that help prevent language loss, affirm students' home languages and cultures, and nurture students' full linguistic repertoire—even in English-only instructional environments.

Takeaways from this Section

Home language matters! Additionally, home language is intrinsically linked to identity, family connectedness, and cultural pride. For ML students in any classroom, their home language is present and active whenever they are engaged in thinking, learning, or interacting. This is true for all students, and is thus important for all teachers to understand, whether they work in a multilingual program that explicitly builds students' home language skills or in an English-only environment. And, this is ultimately good news, because research makes clear that multilingualism is both an asset in itself and a powerful lever for improved learning and outcomes. Helping students to grow and access their full potential as multilingual learners requires careful, active, and intentional support from educators—even, and especially, in settings where English is the sole or primary language of instruction. **The more students are encouraged and supported in accessing and using their home language as the basis for accessing and learning about academic content, the stronger their learning.**

What is the California vision for multilingual learners?

California leads the nation in providing an ambitious and coherent statewide vision for improving educational outcomes for ML students, especially those who are DLL or EL students.[10] In fact, the state has experienced a tremendous amount of change and progress in the twenty-first century that has transformed its policies and guidance toward ML students and learning. This section provides an overview of some of the major policies and initiatives that have shaped the California vision for ML students and framed the guidance and stories readers will encounter in the remainder of this book.

The California Policy Context in the Twenty-First Century

Figure 1.3 lists major policies and initiatives from the second decade of the twenty-first century, with notable changes for EL and DLL students in particular. Within this timeline, two trends are worth calling out explicitly.

First, in its entirety, the list shows that between 2010 and 2020 California underwent a methodical and almost complete overhaul of its education system. For all students, the development and adoption of new academic content standards (available on the California Department of Education website at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link1) early in the 2010s led to new academic content assessments (starting in 2014). These changes, in turn, necessitated the development of new English language development (ELD) standards (in 2012), and a new English language proficiency assessment (in 2018). New standards (foundations) and assessments were also developed in early childhood education (from 2010 through 2015). This decade was an eventful one for all students in terms of updating the state's vision, policies, and guiding documents that undergird all aspects of education.

Second, within this larger evolution, there is a clear trend of specific decisions that reflect the state's renewed commitment to multilingualism and ML students, even though bilingual education was difficult to implement under Proposition 227 (in effect from 1998 through 2016). In 2012, the California State Legislature passed State Seal of Biliteracy legislation, and the state

> Among other things, the CA Ed.G.E. Initiative authorized school districts and county offices of education to establish language acquisition programs for both native and nonnative English speakers. One of its stated purposes was to ensure that **all children in California public schools have access to high-quality, innovative, and research-based language programs** that prepare them to participate in the global economy.

also supported the translation of the Common Core State Standards into Spanish—both signals of support for the many students and teachers who sought to develop full bilingualism and biliteracy as a part of their education. New guidance and assessments for early childhood included explicit attention to young DLL students—an acknowledgment that many, if not most, California classrooms include linguistically diverse learners. The partial repeal of Proposition 227 and the passage of Proposition 58, the California

Education for a Global Economy (CA Ed.G.E.) Initiative in 2016 further signaled California's commitment to multilingualism for all students, as did the state's adoption of new World Language Standards and the update of the Global California 2030 Initiative in 2019.

Figure 1.3   Timeline of major policies and initiatives in California since 2010

- Adoption of new language intensive K–12 Content Standards and Preschool Learning Foundations (2010–2019)[11]
- Adoption of new ELD Standards (2012)[12]
- Translation and linguistic augmentation of the Common Core State Standards en Español (2012)[13]
- Establishment of the State Seal of Biliteracy (2012)[14]
- Publication of *California's Best Practices for Young Dual Language Learners* (2013)[15]
- Adoption of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) system, including the Smarter Balanced Assessment System for accountability testing (starting January 2014)[16]
- Publication of the *California English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework* (2014)[17]
- Development and implementation of an updated Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP) assessment to be more culturally and linguistically responsive to dual language learners from early infancy through kindergarten entry (2015)[18]
- Publication of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*, including an entire chapter on supporting young dual language learners (2015)[19]
- Federal reauthorization of ESEA as ESSA, including requirements for standardization of identification and reclassification (passed December 2015)[20]
- Adoption of new history–social science, science, health education, arts, and world languages curriculum frameworks with a focus on ELD and asset-based practices (2016–2019)[21]
- Passage of Proposition 58 (California Ed.G.E.) and the repeal of Proposition 227 (November 2016)[22]
- Adoption of the English Learner Roadmap policy by the State Board of Education (July 2017)[23]

- Development and implementation of the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (2018)[24]
- Adoption of the *Spanish Language Development Standards* (2018)[25]
- Publication of the Global California 2030 Initiative in 2018[26]
- Adoption of the *California World Languages Standards for Public Schools* (2019)[27]
- Development and implementation of the California Spanish Assessment, which is aligned with the Common Core State Standards en Español and available in the same grades as the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) English Language Arts assessment (2019)[28]
- Publication of the California Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities (2019)[29]
- Update of the Global California 2030 Initiative (2019)
- Development of the Observation Protocol for Teachers of English Learners (2021)[30]

One other important event that occurred during this period was the state's rearticulation of what language instruction should look like for all English learner students. In 2017, the California Code of Regulations was updated with new definitions of integrated and designated ELD instruction, which appear in figure 1.4. As the definitions suggest, integrated ELD is meant to occur in all content areas as teachers use the *California English Language Development Standards (CA ELD Standards)* in tandem with their content standards to guide their lesson planning, observe students during instruction, and evaluate student work. Designated ELD is a protected time during the regular school day when teachers focus on the specific language learning needs of EL students, based on their English language proficiency levels, in ways that are directly connected to students' content learning. The *Education Code* also makes clear that comprehensive ELD, which includes both integrated and designated ELD, should be provided to all EL students at all English language proficiency levels, at all grade levels, in all

How many of the policies, resources, and initiatives listed above are familiar to you? Are there any that were totally new to you? Are there any that seem particularly relevant to your practice that you would like to explore further?

all grade levels, in all EL programs, and in all schools. It is a fundamental and nonnegotiable service requirement for all EL students, though how it is provided is dependent upon each student's needs and not a one-size-fits-all approach.

Figure 1.4   Legislative Definitions of Integrated and Designated English Language Development

Integrated ELD	Designated ELD
Integrated ELD is instruction in which the state-adopted ELD standards are used in tandem with the state-adopted academic content standards. Integrated ELD includes specially designed academic instruction in English (5 CCR Section 11300[c]).	Designated ELD is instruction provided during a time set aside in the regular school day for focused instruction on the state-adopted ELD standards to assist English learner students to develop critical English language skills necessary for academic content learning in English (5 CCR Section 11300[a]).

Takeaways from this Section

California has implemented a number of important updates and changes to its education systems and policies in the twenty-first century. Most notably, the state has taken active steps to champion and support its vision for multilingual education.

The California English Learner Roadmap: A Vision for High-Quality Education

The CA Ed.G.E. Initiative was followed by the development and passage of the *CA EL Roadmap* in 2018. The *CA EL Roadmap* articulates a vision and mission, and four principles all aimed at guiding the state's education system toward a coherent and aligned set of practices, services, relationships, and approaches to teaching and learning that add up to a powerful, effective, twenty-first century education for all English learner students. It also serves as a central frame for this book. All chapters include explicit tie-ins and references to the *CA EL Roadmap* principles, and all recommended practices represent pathways and opportunities to enact the *CA EL Roadmap's* vision and mission.

In light of the *CA EL Roadmap's* centrality to this volume, the vision, mission, and four principles are restated below in their entirety, for reference.

Vision: English learner students fully and meaningfully access and participate in a twenty-first century education from early childhood through grade twelve that results in their attaining high levels of English proficiency, mastery of grade-level standards, and opportunities to develop proficiency in multiple languages.

Mission: California schools affirm, welcome, and respond to a diverse range of English learner strengths, needs, and identities. California schools prepare graduates with the linguistic, academic, and social skills and competencies they require for college, career, and civic participation in a global, diverse, and multilingual world, thus ensuring a thriving future for California.

Principle One: Assets-Oriented and Needs-Responsive Schools. Preschools and schools are responsive to different EL strengths, needs, and identities and support the social–emotional health and development of English learner students. Programs value and build upon the cultural and linguistic assets students bring to their education in safe and affirming school climates. Educators value and build strong family, community, and school partnerships.

Principle Two: Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access. English learner students engage in intellectually rich and developmentally appropriate learning experiences that foster high levels of English proficiency. These experiences integrate language development, literacy, and content learning as well as provide access for comprehension and participation through native language instruction and scaffolding. English learner students have meaningful access to a full standards-based and relevant curriculum and the opportunity to develop proficiency in English and other languages.

Principle Three: System Conditions that Support Effectiveness. Each level of the school system (state, county, district, school, preschool) has leaders and educators who are knowledgeable of and responsive to the strengths and needs of English learner students and their communities and who utilize valid assessment and other data systems that inform instruction

and continuous improvement. Each level of the system provides resources and tiered support to ensure strong programs and build the capacity of teachers and staff to leverage the strengths and meet the needs of English learner students.

Principle Four: Alignment and Articulation Within and Across Systems. English learner students experience a coherent, articulated, and aligned set of practices and pathways across grade levels and educational segments, beginning with a strong foundation in early childhood and appropriate identification of strengths and needs, and continuing through to reclassification, graduation, higher education, and career opportunities. These pathways foster the skills, language(s), literacy, and knowledge students need for college and career readiness and participation in a global, diverse, multilingual, twenty-first century world.

What Is Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogy?

CA EL Roadmap Principle One focuses on assets orientation and specifically references students' cultural and linguistic assets. A phrase sometimes heard in connection with these ideas is "culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy." But what does this mean? Culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy seeks to address and redress the inequities and injustices that culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially those who are ethnically diverse, and people of color may experience. It teaches to and through the strengths of culturally and linguistically diverse students and is therefore validating and affirming.

As discussed, this book is structured to parallel the four *CA EL Roadmap* principles, which build from a focus on family engagement, asset-based pedagogy, and social–emotional development (Principle One), to a focus on high-quality classroom instruction (Principle Two), and then to a focus on systemic rigor, implementation, and alignment (Principles Three and Four).

Across all principles and settings, however, the vision and mission of the *CA EL Roadmap* position multilingual children and youth as having high academic

and linguistic potential and unique learning needs. As a first step toward realizing this vision, this section will close with a set of universal practices for all educators in all settings to consider and apply.

- **Attention to students' social–emotional learning.** Educators aspire to cultivate classrooms that promote students' social–emotional learning and growth. This includes establishing a warm, empathetic, and inviting classroom environment, intentionally focusing on students' development of social–emotional competence, and fostering students' sense of self-efficacy. The culture and climate of the classroom and school has a positive impact on content and language learning, identity affirmation, and participation and engagement in school. Students feel safe taking risks—including language risks.

- **An assets-oriented and inclusive-minded stance.** Educators recognize the cultures and languages of ML and EL students as assets that are essential for classroom learning. These assets are valued, promoted, and built upon at the policy, program, and pedagogy levels and through strong multilingual and ELD programs. Respect for home languages and cultures is explicit, and the linguistic, cultural, community, and individual assets students bring are recognized, appreciated, and utilized as a contribution to the class community and a resource for learning.

- **Learner-centered and collaborative learning.** Educators prioritize instruction that emphasizes student empowerment, autonomy, and content mastery through interactive activities (e.g., small-group inquiry, collaborative research projects) where students develop as autonomous learners. Teachers focus on cultivating students' curiosity, critical thinking skills, and ability to critique and value evidence, discover and express their own perspectives, and consider and appreciate multiple perspectives.

- **Intellectually rich and culturally relevant curriculum.** Educators engage all ML and EL students, regardless of English language proficiency, in intellectually rich, standards-based, grade-level appropriate curriculum and learning experiences that promote cognitive and linguistic growth. Teachers consider students' cultural assets and interests and strategically design instructional scaffolding to increase

access and full participation. Students have full and meaningful access to a grade-appropriate curriculum. High school students fully participate in coursework that meets A–G and graduation requirements and prepares them to be successful in college.

What about equity?

Educational equity is when each and every student is provided the academic, social, emotional, cultural, linguistic, and other opportunities, resources, and supports that they specifically need, when they need them, to experience belonging in school, achieve academic success, and attain self-actualization. California's commitment to equity and social justice is illustrated in its policies, standards, frameworks, and resources, which are enacted in real world examples throughout this book.

- **Content instruction with English Language Development.** Comprehensive ELD, which includes both integrated and designated ELD, is provided to EL students at all English language proficiency levels. Integrated ELD occurs in all content areas as teachers use the *CA ELD Standards* to guide lesson planning, observe students during instruction, and evaluate student work. Designated ELD is a protected time when teachers focus on the specific language learning needs of EL students, based on their English language proficiency levels, in ways that are directly connected to students' specific subject matter learning.

- **Support for students' full linguistic repertoire.** Educators recognize, affirm, and support students' home languages, even though not all classrooms have the capacity to actually instruct in those home languages or build biliteracy. Even when instruction and assignments are in English, students' use of their home language to think and process is a powerful support for their learning. Teachers design teaching and learning to leverage and promote students' home language for academic and social–emotional learning, and all school staff assert frequent messages about the benefits of bilingualism.

- **Systems that create opportunities for learning.** School policies related to antibullying, anti-immigrant, and cultural and language bias are known, visible, and enforced—establishing the school and classroom as safe and welcoming environments for all. Opportunities for students to learn about and build understanding of each other, pose questions, problem solve together, and engage in respectful, authentic dialogue is a part of all effective diverse classrooms that promote both academic excellence and global competence.

The practices listed above are essential for educators in early childhood, elementary, and secondary settings; for those with many ML students or only one in their classrooms; for those who are fluent in students' home language(s) and those who are not; and for those whose students have been in the US since birth, for many years, or only for a few months.

How do the practices above align with the four *CA EL Roadmap* principles? To what extent do these practices cut across or connect with multiple principles at once?

How to Use this Book

This volume was created to support educators in realizing California's vision and mission for ML student education. A common theme is the idea that ML students are valued and valuable individuals within California's school system, who have as much to offer as they have to gain. All educators share responsibility for including these students and supporting their success; even educators who are already familiar and firmly on board with the central values and ideas presented in this book need support to translate their convictions into effective practice that impacts students. For some educators, the ideas in this book will represent shifts—some drastic—in their current practice and school culture. Quite simply, it will take work, commitment, and collaboration to integrate the ideas offered in this book into existing practice and implement them in ways that are attentive to the academic and social–emotional learning needs of individual students.

In subsequent chapters of this volume, nationally renowned experts—the vast majority of whom come from California and have deep experience working in and with this state—will present real, lived examples of educators throughout the state who are enacting research-based practices to realize the goals of the *CA EL Roadmap* and help their ML students thrive. Each chapter will focus on a different aspect of the education system, with an order that mirrors the progression of the four *CA EL Roadmap* principles:

- Chapter 2 focuses on **asset-based pedagogy**. Authors Francesca López, Maharaj Desai, and Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales share ideas, information, and examples around family and community engagement, social–emotional learning, and critical consciousness.

- Chapter 3 focuses on **multilingual programs and pedagogy**. Laurie Olsen, in collaboration with Martha Martinez, Carla B. Herrera, and Heather Skibbins, provides a comprehensive overview on design, implementation, and instruction in the context of programs designed to support students' development of full bilingualism and biliteracy.

- Chapters 4 through 6 all focus on recognizing, understanding, implementing, and supporting effective, high-quality instructional practices to support content learning and language development across the preschool through grade twelve span.

  - In chapter 4, authors Linda Espinosa and Jennifer Crandell address **early learning and care for ML and DLL students**.

  - In chapter 5, Mary J. Schleppegrell and Alison L. Bailey tackle **content instruction with integrated and designated ELD in the elementary grades.**

  - In chapter 6, Pamela Spycher, María González-Howard, and Diane August share practices, strategies, and vignettes related to **content and language instruction in middle and high school.**

- Finally, chapter 7 focuses on **creating schools and systems that support asset-based, high-quality instruction for ML and EL students**. Authors María Santos and Megan Hopkins present a framework for continuous improvement aligned to the *CA EL Roadmap*

principles, as well as a rich set of detailed examples from districts in various stages of the journey to develop, sustain, and nurture such systems on the ground.

Although the chapters are structured sequentially based on the *CA EL Roadmap* principles, this book is designed for flexible and timely use. Each chapter summarizes the research-based practices on specific topics and shows how these practices have been implemented in California schools and districts. This book can be read chapter by chapter or one chapter at a time in whatever order is useful for the reader. The chapters are designed to provide clear explanations of the successful research-based practices currently in use across the state, with tangible guidance for successful adaptation or replication in new local contexts. And each chapter does touch on all four *CA EL Roadmap* principles—in recognition of the fact that these ideas are all interconnected. Thus, every chapter will include language, practices, and considerations around asset-based pedagogy, high-quality instruction, and well-designed and aligned systems.

In light of this, readers are invited to approach this book in a "choose one's own adventure" way. Pick a chapter that feels urgent now, dive into it, and try out some of the ideas. Readers can work on their own or in a community of practice.

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Endnotes

1 This data, current at the time of publication, was collected by the California Department of Education and can be found on the CDE website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link11.

2 For more on this goal, see the California World Languages Framework, available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link12.

3 Source: Asia Society Center for Global Education: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link13.

4 Readers may have heard other terms used to refer to multilingual students. For example, one is **emergent bilingual**, which emphasizes both languages, not just the trajectory toward English proficiency. The term **language minority students** has also been used in the past, though this term has more of a deficit orientation. These students and their cultures are often negatively "minoritized" even when they represent the greater part of a given school or district's community.

5 Source: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link14.

6 Source: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link15.

7 Source: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link16.

8 A student is considered migratory if they are between the ages of three and twenty-one and meets the federal qualifying criteria for moves and work (viewable on the US Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link17).

9 Source: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link18.

10 When referring to young children up to the age of five in early childhood education programs, the term that is typically used is "dual language learners" (DLLs). When referring to children ages five and older in transitional kindergarten to twelfth grade, the term that is typically used to refer to students who have been legally identified as such is "English learner students".

11 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link19.

12 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link20.

13 Available on the San Diego County Office of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link21.

14 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link22.

15 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link23.

16 More information available on the CAASPP website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link24.

17 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link25.

18 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link26.

19 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link27.

20 More information available on the United States Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link28.

21 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link29.

22 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link30.

23 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link31.

24 More information available on the ELPAC website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link32.

25 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link33.

26 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link34.

27 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link35.

28 More information available on the CAASPP website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link36.

29 Available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link37.

30 More information available on the California Department of Education website at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/ch1.asp#link38.