



Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE



California Department of Education
Sacramento · 2020

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Message from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction

The strength of California as the world's fifth-largest economy is dependent upon the success of our students. Our priority for student success begins with improving educational outcomes for students of color, multilingual students, and English learner students. Now is an opportune time in California's history to collectively impact the lives of these students by building on the rich social and cultural assets they possess, which will help lead them to become active global citizens.

Of California's 6.2 million students, 1.1 million are English learners, and 2.6 million have a language other than English in their background. Many of our students bring to school a vital cultural heritage, values, and the ability to communicate in their home language—all assets. The collective responsibility for providing equitable opportunities to our students lies with everyone in the school community.

The California Department of Education (CDE) engages stakeholders and advocates as partners in addressing major barriers in education focused on closing the opportunity gap, improving literacy/biliteracy, reducing chronic absenteeism, and advancing initiatives as a means to improve education for all students.

Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students: Research to Practice will help realize the goals of these educational initiatives. This publication presents current evidence-based pedagogy and practices in the areas of developing multilingualism, early education, assets-based environments, English language development, and the creation of systems that support the implementation of these practices. Further, the publication provides a deeper dive into accessing actionable examples of how evidence-based pedagogy and practices may be implemented in districts, schools, and classrooms to positively impact multilingual and English learner students.

This volume will be an important resource within the California System of Support by assisting local educational agencies in building local capacity to sustain improvement and effectively address outcomes for multilingual and English learner students. This publication complements the English Learner Roadmap Policy and Guidance, the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative, the Global California 2030 Initiative, the State Seal of Biliteracy, the World Languages Standards, the Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles, and the statewide content standards and curriculum frameworks.

The CDE and I are grateful to the expert authors who participated in writing this publication. We invite researchers, educators, stakeholders, and advocates to continue your dedication to equitable education for multilingual and English learner students to meet their goals and make their dreams a reality.

Sincerely,



Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Biographical Sketches

Veronica Aguila, Ed.D., is the director of the English Learner Support Division at the California Department of Education (CDE). The division oversees the Language Policy and Leadership Office, the Technical Assistance and Monitoring Office, and the Migrant Education Office. The division also coordinates the CDE's efforts to address the needs of English learners in California. Previously, Dr. Aguila served as the administrator of the Southern Field Service Office in the Early Education and Support Division and the administrator of the Curriculum and Adoptions Office, and held various leadership roles in the department. Her career in education includes 34 years in the California public school system as a biliterate English language development teacher, a reading specialist, a school district and county administrator, and a lecturer for the California State University system. Her work has been recognized nationally and internationally. She received her Ed.D. from St. Mary's College in educational leadership and organizational change. Her passion for addressing the needs of English learners comes from her personal experience as an immigrant, former migrant worker, and English learner.

Diane August, Ph.D., is principal at D. August & Associates. Dr. August brings 40 years of experience in the many aspects of educating language minority children. Most recently, she served as a managing researcher at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), where she directed the work of the

Center for English Language Learners. Previously, she was a senior research scientist at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), where she directed federally funded research studies related to literacy development in dual language learners. At CAL she also served as coprincipal investigator of the National Research and Development Center on English Language Learners, where she developed, implemented, and evaluated innovative science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs for secondary school second language learners. Earlier in her career, Dr. August served as a senior program officer at the National Academy of Sciences, where she was study director for the Committee on Developing a Research Agenda on the Education of Limited English Proficient and Bilingual Students. Recently, she was a member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAEM) Committee on Fostering School Success for English Learners and served as a reviewer for the consensus study report of the *NAEM Committee: English Learners in STEM Subjects*. She is published widely in journals and books.

Alison L. Bailey, Ed.D., is professor and division head of Human Development and Psychology in the Department of Education, University of California, Los Angeles. As a developmental psycholinguist, her expertise includes developing language learning progressions with multilingual and English learners and supporting teachers' academic language pedagogy and assessment practices. She has published widely in these areas, most recently in *Language and Education*, *Language Testing*, *Theory into Practice*, *The Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *Teachers College Record*, and *Educational Researcher*. Her latest book is *Progressing Students' Language Day by Day* (2019, Corwin Press) with Margaret Heritage. She is currently principal investigator of the two US Department of Education funded ExcEL Peer Network projects focused on teacher professional learning with English learners. She is a coauthor of the National Academies of Sciences STEM and English Learners report, a member of the NAEP Reading Standing Committee, the NCME Classroom Assessment Task Force, and several state and other assessment technical advisory committees.

Jennifer DiBara Crandell, Ed.D., is an educator with expertise in early language and literacy development, cultural and linguistic responsiveness in early childhood settings, and dual language development. Dr. Crandell has led the development of resources for the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning and the National Center for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness. She was a lead developer of the Planned Language Approach, a comprehensive framework for supporting language and literacy development in culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood settings. Dr. Crandell has published in *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Early Education and Development*, and *The New Educator*, and has presented at numerous professional conferences. She is a consulting editor for the *National Association for the Education of Young Children*, was on the editorial board of *Reading Research Quarterly* and has been a peer reviewer for many publications. She consults with states, school districts, and other educational organizations. Dr. Crandell has a doctorate in human development and education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Maharaj “Raju” Desai, Ph.D., is a scholar whose work crosses the disciplines of ethnic studies, education, Philippine studies, mixed race studies, and second language studies. His research explores participatory action research in educational spaces as ways to challenge colonially constructed narratives and identities. He has taught in schools for over 12 years and has worked with students ranging from sixth grade through university level in both Honolulu, Hawai‘i and San Francisco, California.

Linda M. Espinosa, Ph.D., is professor emeritus of early childhood education at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and has served as the codirector of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University and vice president at Bright Horizons Family Solutions. She was most recently coprincipal investigator for the *Getting on Track Early for School Success: Effective Teaching in Preschool Classrooms* project at the University of Chicago and for the Center for Early Care and Education Research—Dual Language Learners at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. Dr. Espinosa’s latest book, *Getting it RIGHT for Young Children from Diverse Backgrounds* (2015) focused on quality education for dual language learners.

She was a contributing author to the 2017 report *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*, and contributed content related to dual language learners and English language development to the *California Early Learning Foundations*, the *California Preschool Curriculum Frameworks*, and the *Desired Results Developmental Profile* (2010). Dr. Espinosa served as the lead consultant for the LAUSD Transitional Kindergarten program development team and is a member of the Council for Professional Development Governing Board.

Elena Fajardo is the program administrator for the Language Policy and Leadership Office. She has served at every educational level from instructional assistant to district administrator, county external consultant, and now administrator for the California Department of Education. Ms. Fajardo taught numerous subjects and grade levels including at the university level, and designed a variety of program models for English learners. Her training and 48 years of work built her expertise in system reforms. She brings a wide range of experience to her role and continues to support Superintendent Thurmond's vision for highly effective English learner programs.

Molly Faulkner-Bond, Ph.D., is a senior research associate at WestEd, where her work focuses on English learner (EL) students, policy, and assessment. In this role she collaborates with educators, researchers, and communities to strengthen the field of education research, increase the use and utility of educational research results, substantively impact teaching and learning, and improve educational outcomes for linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Prior to joining WestEd, Dr. Faulkner-Bond was a grant program officer at the Institute of Education Sciences, where she provided technical assistance and monitoring to applicants and recipients of multiyear research grants focused on improving educational opportunities and outcomes for EL students. She has coauthored a book on federal policies affecting EL students, coedited a book on educational measurement and assessment, and coauthored several articles on assessment validity and score reporting for both EL students and the general population. She earned her doctorate in research, educational measurement, and psychometrics from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Patricia Gándara, Ph.D., is research professor and codirector of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is also director of education for the University of California–Mexico Initiative. Dr. Gándara is an elected fellow of the American Educational Research Association and the National Academy of Education. In 2011 she was appointed to President Obama’s Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, and in 2015 received the Distinguished Career Contribution Award from the Scholars of Color Committee of the American Educational Research Association. She is also a fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center in Lake Como, Italy, the French-American Association at Sciences Po Graduate Institute in Paris, France, and the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey.

Gina Garcia-Smith is an education programs consultant in the English Learner Support Division at the California Department of Education. The programs she supports include the California English Learner Roadmap and the State Seal of Biliteracy. Ms. Garcia-Smith is a former middle and high school English teacher and mentor teacher with the Stanford Teacher Education Program. She earned a bachelor of arts in American studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz and a master of arts in education from Stanford University.

Gustavo Gonzalez, Ph.D., is an education programs consultant in the Language Policy and Leadership Office at the California Department of Education (CDE). His work involves supporting the implementation of state English learner initiatives and providing technical assistance to the field. His experience with language policy and educating English learner students spans 25 years of service as a classroom teacher, teacher educator, and state-level professional. He received his Ph.D. in education from Claremont Graduate University in 2010 with a focus on language policy and educational access for English learner students. Upon completion of his degree, he worked for two years as an assistant professor at Arizona State University, then returned to California where he joined the CDE in 2012.

María González-Howard, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education at The University of Texas at Austin. A former middle school science teacher in the Rio Grande Valley in southern Texas, she completed her doctoral studies in science education at Boston College. Her research explores the intersections of teaching and learning science with multilingualism development. Specifically, Dr. González-Howard investigates teaching practices and ways to foster learning environments to best support multilingual students' scientific sensemaking, as seen through their engagement in science practices. Currently, she is the multilingual specialist for OpenSciEd—a free, high-quality science curriculum aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards—and is helping to identify and develop strategies to embed in the OpenSciEd learning materials to support multilingual students. Furthermore, she is principal investigator on a National Science Foundation Discovery Research PreK–12 grant titled *CAREER: Developing elementary preservice teachers' understandings and abilities to support emerging bilingual students' scientific sensemaking*.

Carla B. Herrera has been a bilingual teacher and program specialist since 1975. She specializes in biliteracy program implementation and development, two-way immersion in Spanish/English and Portuguese/English, and technology integration in multilingual settings. Her passion and life's work has been English learner education at site, district, county, state, postsecondary, national, and international levels for preschool, elementary, secondary, and future teachers. In 1989, the California Association for Bilingual Education recognized Ms. Herrera as the first CAFE Teacher of the Year; she went on to be recognized as the National Association for Bilingual Education Teacher of the Year as well. She was also the first English learner (EL)/dual language learner regional lead and advisory member for the California Preschool Instructional Network. Following retirement from ABC Unified School District in 2013, she became a Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) model trainer while completing her term on the Instructional Quality Commission Executive Committee. Presently, Ms. Herrera continues EL student advocacy and bilingual teacher support through the English Learner Leadership and Legacy Initiative and as an all-district coach for the SEAL Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program.

Megan Hopkins, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Education Studies at the University of California, San Diego. She is a former bilingual elementary school teacher, and has conducted extensive research examining how schools and school systems organize for equity, with a particular focus on the education of immigrant and multilingual students. In studies funded by the US Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, the Spencer Foundation, and the W. T. Grant Foundation, she has investigated the implementation of language policies and English language development course placement policies, as well as content-specific curricular reforms. She has also engaged in context-embedded teacher professional development focused on fostering science learning opportunities for multilingual learners in the early elementary grades. Her scholarship has appeared in several top-tier journals, including the *American Educational Research Journal*, *Educational Researcher*, and *Journal of Teacher Education*. She is also coeditor of the volumes *Forbidden Language: English Learners and Restrictive Language Policies* and *School Integration Matters: Research-Based Strategies to Advance Equity*. She was a 2016–17 National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow, and holds a Ph.D. in Education from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Francesca López, Ph.D., is the associate dean of the College of Education, professor of educational policy studies and practice, and director of the Educational Policy Center, all at the University of Arizona. She began her career in education as a bilingual (Spanish/English) elementary teacher, and later served as a high school counselor, in El Paso, Texas. After completing her doctorate in educational psychology at the University of Arizona in 2008, she served on the faculty of the Educational Policy and Leadership department at Marquette University from 2008 to 2013. Her research is focused on the ways asset-based pedagogy promotes achievement and identity for Latino youth and has been funded by the American Educational Research Association Grants Program, the Division 15 American Psychological Association Early Career Award, the National Academy of Education/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship, and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. Dr. López is a National Education Policy Center Fellow, and was a visiting fellow at the Program for Transborder Communities at Arizona State University.

Martha Martinez, Ph.D., has over 15 years of experience researching programs and policies designed to improve educational outcomes for underserved populations, and over 10 years of experience examining English learner (EL) issues specifically. As the director of research and evaluation at Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL), Dr. Martinez oversees SEAL's current research and evaluation activities, and leads SEAL's future research agenda. This includes supporting and directing investigations of the efficacy of the SEAL model specifically, as well as high-quality EL instruction in general. Prior to joining SEAL in 2017, Dr. Martinez worked at the Oregon Department of Education where she served as coprincipal investigator on two research–practice partnerships focused on the state's EL programs and outcomes. She received her doctorate in educational methodology, policy, and leadership from the University of Oregon.

Laurie Olsen, Ph.D., founded and now serves as strategic advisor to Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL); she also served as cochair of California's English Learner Roadmap policy. She has spent the last five decades researching, writing, advocating, and providing leadership development and technical assistance on educational equity with an emphasis on immigrants, English learners, bilingualism, and language access. In hundreds of school districts across the nation, Dr. Olsen has designed, demonstrated, and evaluated powerful English learner programs and services for students from prekindergarten (PK) through grade twelve. She has published dozens of books, policy briefs, videos, and articles on English learner education. For 23 years, she directed California Tomorrow's work in PK–12 education with a focus on immigrants and English learners. Dr. Olsen holds a Ph.D. in social and cultural studies in education from the University of California Berkeley. She was a founding board member and currently serves as president of Californians Together—a coalition to protect the rights of English learners.

Marcela Rodríguez is an education programs consultant in the English Learner Support Division (ELSD) at the California Department of Education. The work of the ELSD addresses the needs of English learner, immigrant, and migratory students. Ms. Rodríguez provides support to the ELSD director. Her 34-year career in education began with a bilingual teacher assignment,

then several special education assignments after the completion of a master's degree in special education, and continued on to other various English learner support positions in a school district for 23 years. She completed an assignment in Region 2 of the migrant education program where, as the early childhood education (ECE) specialist, she provided professional development to ECE staff in six counties. Her passion for the education of English learner, immigrant, and migratory students, and students with disabilities is evidenced in her contributions to addressing student needs.

María Santos served as director for school and district services in the Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd until 2020. She is also the cochair and senior advisor for leadership at Understanding Language, Stanford University. From 2010–2014, she served as deputy superintendent for instruction, leadership, and equity-in-action for the Oakland Unified School District. Until 2010, she was the senior instructional manager and superintendent for the Office of English Language Learners (ELLs) at the New York City Department of Education. In that capacity, she led the office in ensuring that Children First reforms were raising academic rigor through quality teaching and learning citywide. Early in these reforms, she led the restructuring of New York City's Early Childhood, ELL, and Instructional Technology departments. Ms. Santos has designed and developed strategic initiatives and resources for several nonprofit organizations that provide state and national support, setting trends in the educational agenda nationwide. Before going to New York City, Ms. Santos spent 20 years in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). As associate superintendent, she supervised the development of major instructional improvement initiatives such as SFUSD's Professional Development Initiative and gained SFUSD the recognition of an Exemplary Site by the US Department of Education's National Award for Professional Development. Education Week profiled her as a national 2014 Leader to Learn From and she is the lead author of *Preparing English Learners for College and Career: Lessons from Successful High Schools*.

Mary J. Schleppegrell, Ph.D., is professor of education at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research focuses on the challenges of language across school subjects and the language development of students who are learning English as an additional language. She was an elementary school teacher in California and was professor of linguistics at the University of California, Davis, for 13 years, where she directed the writing program for English as a second language. She is the author of *The Language of Schooling: A Functional Linguistics Perspective* (2004) and numerous research reports, and served on the National Research Council's Committee that synthesized research to write *English Learners in STEM Subjects: Transforming Classrooms, Schools, and Lives* (2018).

Heather Skibbins is a program manager and bilingual education lead at Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL). Prior to joining SEAL, she worked as a bilingual educator in the Bay Area for 15 years. In addition to supporting SEAL districts, Ms. Skibbins presents regularly at conferences about English learner development instruction and best practices in dual language classrooms. She is passionate about helping districts, teachers, and families create and sustain bilingual programs that enact the research and best practices for dual language education. Ms. Skibbins majored in community studies and graduated with a bachelor of arts from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Pamela Spycher, Ph.D., is a senior research associate at WestEd. Over her 30-year career in education, her focus has been improving educational experiences and outcomes for multilingual learners, especially students from immigrant backgrounds and economically underresourced communities. Dr. Spycher recently led two large federally funded research projects aimed at educational equity for multilingual learners: *Leading with Learning—Systemically Transforming Teaching for English Learners* and *College Ready English Learners—Preparing Teachers to Foster English Language Development with the Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum*. She was a lead author of *California's English Language Development Standards* (2012), *English Language Arts/English Language Development (ELA/ELD) Framework* (2014), *Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities* (2019), and

Arts Standards (2019), as well as a contributing author to *California’s Science Framework* (2016) and *Health Education Framework* (2019). In the first part of her career, Spycher served as a first grade bilingual teacher, an ELD specialist, and a high school ELA/ELD and world languages teacher.

Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, Ph.D., (she/her/siya) was born and raised on Ohlone land (Fremont, California) with parents who were immigrants from the Philippines—womb (Batangas) and seed (Tarlac). Since 2000, she has been a professor in the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University and an affiliated faculty member in the Educational Leadership doctoral program. She is also the cofounder and director of Community Responsive Education (CRE), a nationwide firm that supports the development of responsive, equitable, and justice-driven educators and ethnic studies curriculum. She has provided direct support to schools, districts, and organizations in San Francisco, Daly City, Oakland, New York, and Boston. In 2001, she founded Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP), a “barangay” that focuses on providing schools with ethnic studies courses and curriculum, developing radical educators, and creating resources for Filipina/x/o communities and similarly marginalized people. She has authored four books of curriculum and many articles focused on the applications of critical pedagogy and the development of ethnic studies curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Improving Multilingual Education: Accelerate Learning

Veronica Aguila, Marcela Rodríguez, and Gina Garcia-Smith
California Department of Education

The context of education in California for English learner students has changed with the implementation of the Statewide System of Support (SSS), the Every Student Succeeds Act, the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative, and the California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy: Educational Programs and Services for English Learners. The scaffolding and bridging created by the SSS provide educators with the best practices necessary to assist all students through a tiered system of support. The SSS provides three levels of support for local educational agencies (LEAs), in which all other supports are contained: supports for all, including tools and resources that improve student performance and increase equity across student groups; differentiated assistance for some, focusing on significant disparities in performance among student groups; and intensive interventions for the few experiencing persistent performance issues with a lack of improvement over a specified time period. Since English learner students make up 18 percent of the student population in California, it is imperative to accelerate learning English for the 1.1 million English learner students enrolled in California public schools. This research-to-practice publication supports the goal of accelerating learning for California's English learner students.

Within the SSS, designated networks address diverse state priorities. These networks include

- Geographic Lead Agencies that build county office of education (COE) capacity to achieve full equity and access,
- Statewide Multi-Tiered System of Support lead that has trained all 58 COEs and more than half of the state's LEAs in a new approach to supporting all students,
- Community Engagement Initiative that works to build the capacity of communities and LEAs to facilitate difficult conversations about improving student outcomes,
- Special Education Local Plan Area Resource Leads that assist LEAs to improve outcomes of students with disabilities,
- COE Regional English Learner Specialists that provide guidance to reduce inequities for English learner students, and
- California's Equity Performance and Improvement Program that builds LEA capacity to address barriers to equity and access.

The resources provided within the SSS are far reaching in that teachers, administrators, and others involved in the everyday education of students in California receive targeted professional development. This tiered approach is a different way of serving students, enhancing programs, and extending the reach of statewide support. Resources are made available for the SSS through the collaboration of various agencies. Multilingualism is a priority in our state and will be emphasized throughout this publication. Capitalizing on the assets that our English learner students bring to our vision of a multilingual society is vital for bringing this vision to fruition. The goal is to cultivate English learner students' language skills and also ensure they meet the high academic expectations that are held for all students, so that they can use their biliterate/multiliterate skills to thrive and lead in a multilingual state. The English Learner Roadmap Policy is embedded in the SSS. This policy will be described in more depth in the upcoming chapters.

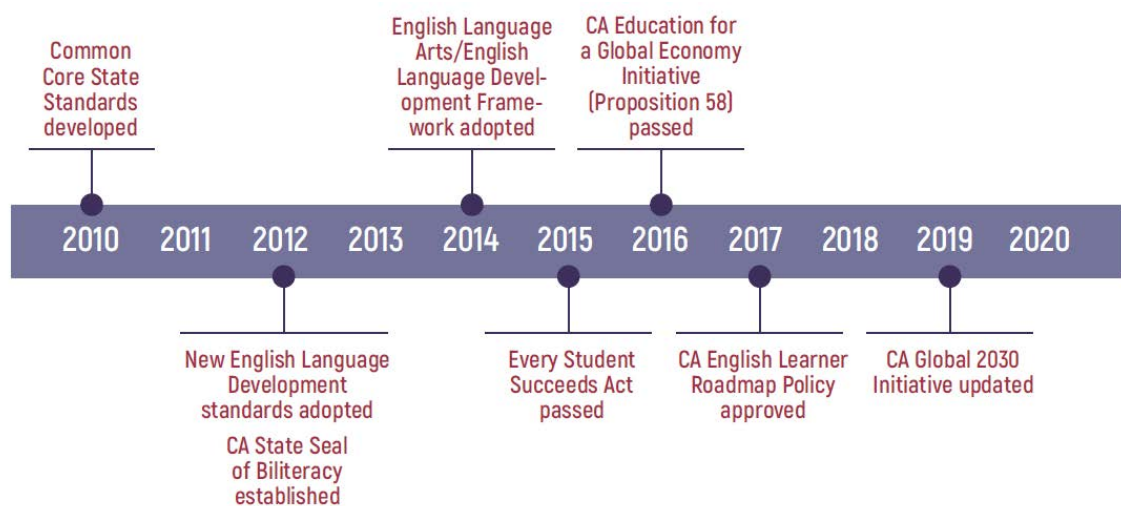
Every act of human learning is rooted in history. For this reason, this publication begins by offering an overview of the historical context in which California’s English learner students find themselves. This account provides an overview of important markers of policy history and notes milestones in research on human learning, language development, bilingualism, and educational policies, practices, and programs that advance English learner success (*California English Learner Roadmap: Strengthening Comprehensive Educational Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Learners*, page 14).

Historical Timeline of Events in English Learner Education

This historical overview begins in 2010 when the California Common Core State Standards were adopted. The California Common Core State Standards focus on deeper, richer, more applicable learning that will help California continue to be a center for innovation and leadership in education. In 2012, the English Language Development (ELD) Standards were adopted and the State Seal of Biliteracy was established. The adoption of the ELD Standards maintained California’s commitment to providing English learner students with a high-quality program that enables them to attain proficiency in English and to develop the skills and confidence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing that are the foundation of achievement inside and outside the classroom. The State Seal of Biliteracy was established to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English and, by doing so, emphasizes California’s commitment to the importance of the twenty-first century skill of biliteracy/multiliteracy. In 2014, the first-ever *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework* was adopted. By aligning these two sets of standards, the framework formed the basis for remodeling California’s instructional practices and promoting literacy through critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication. In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) amended the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 nationwide. Among other changes, the ESSA advanced equity and required—for the first time—that all students in America be taught

to high academic standards that prepare them to succeed in college and careers. In 2016, voters overwhelmingly approved the Education for a Global Economy Initiative (Proposition 58), authorizing school districts and county offices of education to establish language acquisition programs for both native and nonnative English speakers and requiring school districts and COEs to solicit parent and community input in developing language acquisition programs. Shortly after this, in 2017, the California State Board of Education unanimously approved the California English Learner Roadmap Policy, which established an assets-oriented vision and mission to guide California in educating English learner students. And finally, the Global California 2030 Initiative was updated in 2019. The goal of this initiative is to equip students with world language skills to better appreciate and more fully engage in the rich and diverse mixture of cultures, heritages, and languages found in California and the world, while preparing them to succeed in the global economy. Taken together, these events set California on the path toward embracing the English learner students enrolled in its public schools and preparing them to learn and lead as engaged members of California's diverse community.

Timeline of Events in English Learner History



[Long description of Timeline of Events](#)

Snapshot of English Learner Students in California—Demographics

California English learner demographics illustrate the reason for this publication. Additional English learner student data resources are available on the CDE School Dashboard, California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, and DataQuest web pages.

Top Five Languages

The top five home languages that English learner students and multilingual students bring to California schools over the last 10 years have changed slightly with Spanish and Vietnamese maintaining the top two positions, although both languages have seen decreases in the past 10 years. Recently, Mandarin overtook Filipino (Tagalog) in the third position. Cantonese and Hmong are no longer in the top five languages.

Language	2009–2010	2014–2015	2018–2019
Spanish	84.7%	83.7%	81.56%
Vietnamese	2.5%	2.34%	2.21%
Filipino (Tagalog)	1.4%	1.37%	Mandarin (Putonghua) 1.87%
Cantonese	1.4%	1.3%	Arabic 1.53
Hmong	1.1%	Arabic 1.20%	Other 1.4%

Number of Long-Term English Learner Students (LTELs) (2016–2018)

The success of LTELs is of utmost importance statewide. From 2015 to 2017 the number of students classified as LTELs began to show a slight decline. In 2018, however, there was a significant one-year increase in the numbers, due to the fact that only one year of English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) data were available to make LTEL determinations.

Year	Number of LTELs
2015–16	238,572
2016–17	230,119
2017–18	218,135
2018–19	342,983*

**The 2018–19 determinations of LTELs reflect a significant one-year increase in LTEL counts from previous years. These changes stem from having only one year of ELPAC data available in the 2017–18 academic year required for making LTEL determinations.*

Number and Percent of Reclassified English Learner Students in California (2005–2018)

Overall, the number and percentage of reclassified students has increased. The ESSA requires states to standardize reclassification criteria. California currently uses four criteria for reclassifying students:

1. ELPAC overall level 4
2. Teacher evaluation of pupil mastery
3. Parent/Guardian opinion and consultation
4. Comparison of performance of pupil in basic skills

Education Code Section 313(f) and California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 11303

The ESSA also requires four-year monitoring after students are reclassified. The following table shows the number and percentage of reclassified students from 2010–2018.

Year	Number of English Learner Students Reclassified	Percentage of English Learner Students Reclassified
2010–11	167,854	11.4%
2011–12	172,803	12.0%
2012–13	168,960	12.2%
2013–14	169,573	12.0%
2014–15	154,959	11.0%
2015–16	155,774	11.2%
2016–17	183,272	13.3%
2017–18	193,899	14.6%
2018–19	175,746	13.8%

California School Dashboard: Academic Performance Comparison

And finally, a comparison of academic performance between English learner students, reclassified students, and English-only students from the 2018–19 School Dashboard shows that, as expected, reclassified students outperform English-only students. This comparison of the performance on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments reaffirms the need to continue to implement systems of support to accelerate English learner students' progress in learning English. This is especially vital because English learner students comprise 18 percent of California's student population; their academic progress is therefore vital to California's success.

English Language Arts Data Comparisons: English Learners

Additional information on distance from standard for current English learners, prior or Reclassified English learners, and English Only students in English Language Arts.

Current English Learners	Reclassified English Learners	English Only
90.9 points below standard	3.2 points above standard	8.8 points above standard
Maintained 1.7 Points	Maintained 2.1 Points	Maintained 2.6 Points
Number of Students: 502,424	Number of Students: 465,653	Number of Students: 1,818,185

Mathematics Data Comparisons: English Learners

Additional information on distance from standard for current English learners, prior or Reclassified English learners, and English Only students in mathematics.

Current English Learners	Reclassified English Learners	English Only
106.7 points below standard	27.3 points below standard	22.7 points below standard
Maintained 0.2 Points	Increased 3.2 Points Ⓢ	Maintained 2.7 Points
Number of Students: 502,095	Number of Students: 465,057	Number of Students: 1,813,063

[Long descriptions of the English Language Arts and Mathematics Data Comparisons](#)

Looking forward, chapter 1 will set the stage for the remainder of the groundbreaking publication, including more generous insight into the California context for multilingual learners.