

## ENGLISH LEARNERS

*Data from several statewide assessments suggest there is a significant gap between the academic achievement of English learner (EL) students and their English-speaking peers. We recommend the Legislature fund an evaluation to identify “best practices” in educating EL students. We also recommend improving the state’s assessment system so EL student progress can be measured and tracked.*

Roughly one in four children in California’s public K-12 system is classified as an EL student, defined in statute as “a child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English.” As discussed in a previous section, “A Proposition 98 Roadmap,” a significant performance gap exists between EL and English-speaking students. The state faces considerable challenges in closing this gap and addressing the needs of its 1.6 million EL students.

In this section, we first summarize EL students’ demographics and academic performance and then provide an overview of major EL issues. This EL overview examines various issues relating to funding, instructional approaches, instructional materials, teacher quality, and assessment and accountability. It also contains various recommendations for some next steps the Legislature can take to help improve student outcomes.

### EL STUDENTS IN CALIFORNIA

Below, we provide information on the state’s EL students. Specifically, we discuss available data regarding EL students’ primary language, socio-economic status, age, the school districts they attend, and their performance on state assessments.

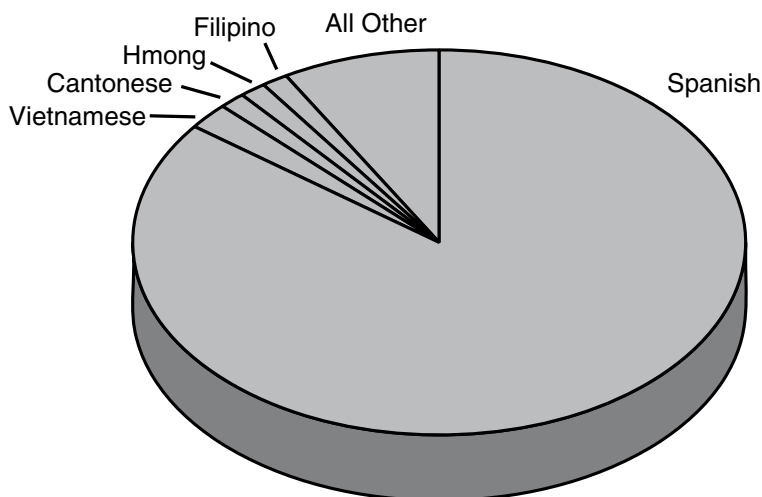
## EL Student Demographics

Figure 1 summarizes some basic facts about the state's EL student population.

<b>Figure 1</b>	
<b>Facts About California's EL Students</b>	
2005-06	
✓	<b>25 percent</b> (1.6 million) of California's K-12 students are English learners.
✓	<b>85 percent</b> speak Spanish as their primary language.
✓	<b>85 percent</b> are economically disadvantaged.
✓	<b>11 percent</b> receive special education services.
✓	<b>At least 6 percent</b> have attended California schools less than 12 months.
✓	<b>8 percent-10 percent</b> are redesignated as "Fluent English Proficient" each year.
✓	Of all EL students, <b>61 percent</b> are in elementary school (grades K-5), <b>20 percent</b> are in middle school (grades 6-8), and <b>19 percent</b> are in high school (grades 9-12).

*Most of State's EL Students Speak Spanish as Their Primary Language.* Figure 2 shows the distribution of EL students by primary language. Roughly 85 percent, or 1.3 million students, speak Spanish. This group accounts for about 21 percent of all students in the state. The second largest EL student group speaks Vietnamese (34,000 students, or 2 percent of all EL students). The next largest language groups are Cantonese, Hmong, and Filipino, each with roughly 1 percent of EL students. The remaining 8 percent speak one of 51 other languages. While Spanish is the language spoken by most EL students, Figure 2 helps to highlight why state- and local-level EL policies should not focus exclusively on this group—there are 230,000 other EL students in the state who have differing needs and characteristics.

Figure 2

**Spanish Is Most Common Primary Language Among EL Students**

***Significant Majority of EL Students Are Economically Disadvantaged.*** Roughly 85 percent of EL students are economically disadvantaged (as measured by participation in the state’s Free and Reduced Meal Program). This compares to 41 percent of the non-EL population. This data suggests most EL students face multiple challenges. Not only do they confront the difficulties of learning a new language (often without English-speaking support at home), they also must cope with the academic challenges typically associated with poverty. As discussed in “A Proposition 98 Roadmap,” students identified as both EL and economically disadvantaged perform more poorly on state assessments than students with just one of those risk factors.

***Majority of EL Students Are Elementary School Age.*** The majority (61 percent) of EL students are in elementary school. Middle and high schools each serve about 20 percent of the state’s EL student population. This distribution is significant because the most effective approach to educating an EL student likely will vary depending on the student’s age and associated factors—such as literacy in the primary language, previous exposure to English, and specific grade-level content standards.

***Redesignation Likely Accounts for Some Decrease in Older EL Students.*** Nearly 40 percent of the state’s kindergarteners and roughly

one-third of the state's elementary school students are classified as EL. By comparison, only 19 percent of all ninth graders and 12 percent of all twelfth graders are classified as EL. Some of this decline in the upper grades is due to redesignation. Each year 8 percent to 10 percent of the state's EL students meet their local school districts' criteria for attaining proficiency in English and are redesignated as "Fluent English Proficient" (FEP). (It is important to note this is a statewide statistic. Redesignation rates at individual districts may be much higher or lower.) The change in EL population due to redesignation is partly offset each year by new ELs entering the state—typically around 6 percent of all EL students.

*Lack of Data Makes Understanding Trends Difficult.* Anecdotal data suggests that some of the decline in the proportion of EL students in upper grades also might be due to EL students dropping out of school or moving out of California. Because the state currently does not have the capacity to track individual students' progress across grades, developing a clear understanding of the driving factors behind EL student trends is difficult. Later, we discuss this issue in greater detail and make recommendations for how the state can develop the capacity to measure EL student progress.

*Many EL Students Concentrated Within Small Number of Districts.* Figure 3 shows the 20 districts in the state that serve over 10,000 EL students. The figure also shows the proportion of the statewide EL population concentrated in these districts. In total, these districts serve over 600,000 EL students, or about 40 percent of the state EL student population. Fourteen of these districts are among the state's 20 largest school districts. Additionally, the figure shows the proportion of EL students compared to total district enrollment. The EL concentrations vary significantly across the districts—from around 60 percent of the student body in Coachella, Anaheim and Santa Ana, to around 20 percent in Long Beach and Elk Grove. A district's size and concentration of EL students can make a difference in the amount of resources and special programs dedicated to EL student needs.

## **EL Student Performance**

As discussed in "A Proposition 98 Roadmap," EL student achievement consistently trails that of English-speaking pupils. Here we discuss EL student performance on three state assessments: (1) the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), which is administered to all EL students every fall; (2) the English language arts (ELA) portion of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) examination, given to all students every spring; and (3) the California High School Exit Examination

(CAHSEE), a prerequisite for all students to graduate from high school. (Students take the CAHSEE for the first time in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. If they do not pass, they may retake the exam in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.)

**Figure 3**

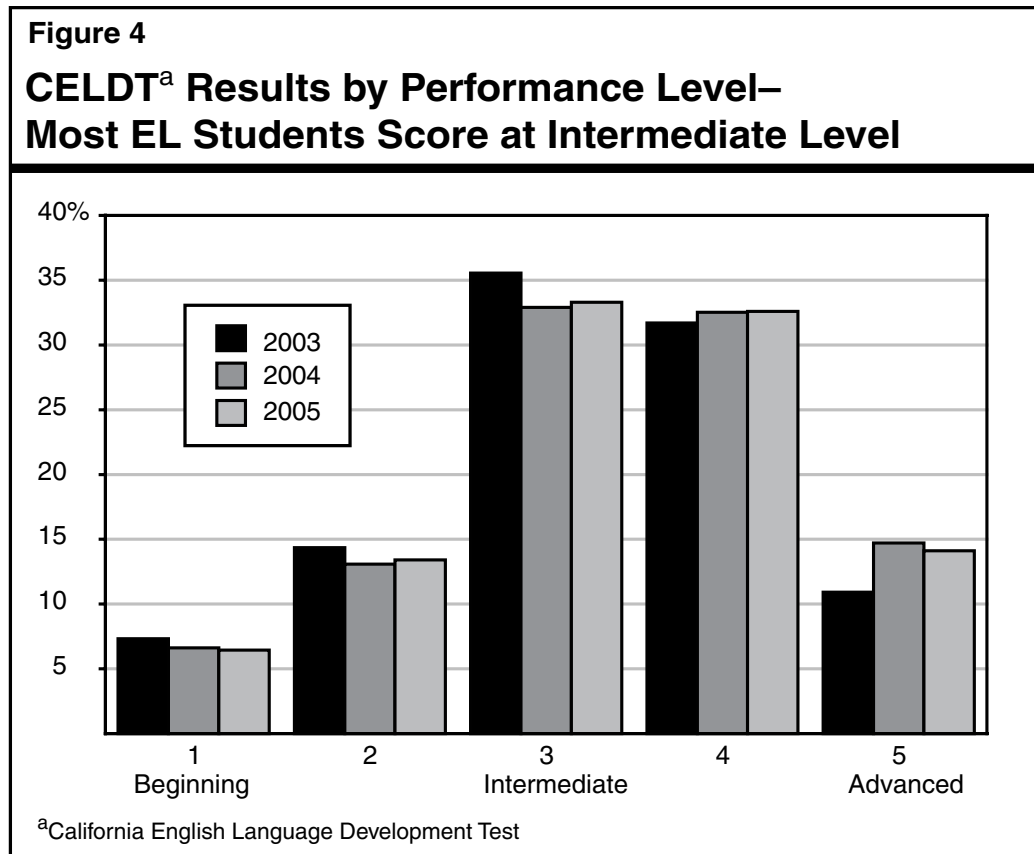
### Roughly 40 Percent of State's EL Students Attend Just 20 Districts

District	Number	Percent	
		EL Students In State	District Enrollment
Los Angeles	283,861	18.6%	41%
San Diego	32,674	2.1	27
Santa Ana	32,552	2.1	58
Garden Grove	23,133	1.5	47
Fresno	22,081	1.4	29
Long Beach	21,785	1.4	24
San Bernardino	18,920	1.2	33
Fontana	16,971	1.1	40
Compton	16,338	1.1	54
San Francisco	16,068	1.1	30
Pomona	14,804	1.0	44
Sacramento	13,363	0.9	29
Montebello	13,245	0.9	38
Anaheim	12,255	0.8	59
Ontario-Montclair Elementary	11,956	0.8	47
Oakland	11,348	0.7	27
Moreno Valley	11,110	0.7	30
Sweetwater Union High	10,437	0.7	25
Elk Grove	10,363	0.7	17
Coachella Valley	10,246	0.7	62
<b>Totals</b>	<b>603,510</b>	<b>39.6%</b>	

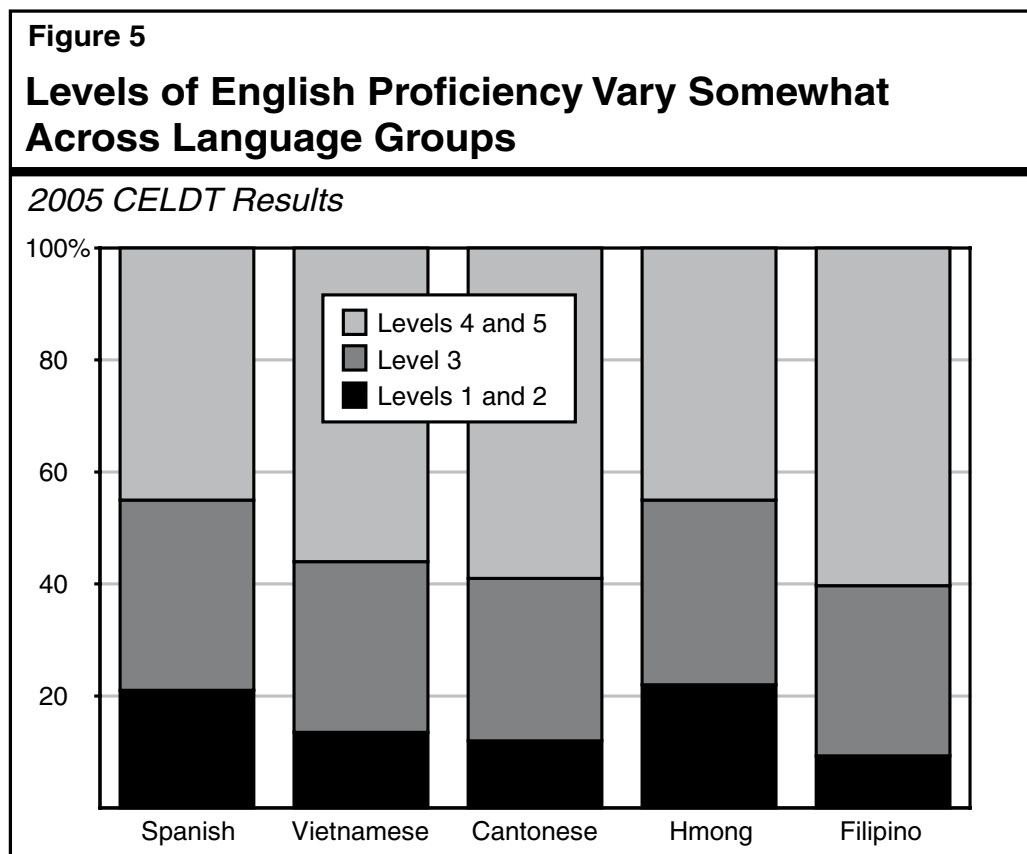
### CELDT Results

*Majority of EL Students Score at Intermediate or Early Advanced Level.* Figure 4 (see next page) displays EL student performance on the CELDT from 2003 to 2005. This test measures proficiency in English. Scores are grouped into 5 levels, with Level 1 reflecting “beginning” EL students and Level 5 reflecting “advanced” EL students. The figure shows that in each year most students score at levels 3 and 4—“intermediate” and

“early advanced.” These results tend to differ by grade level, with more elementary-age students scoring at lower levels and more older students at higher levels.



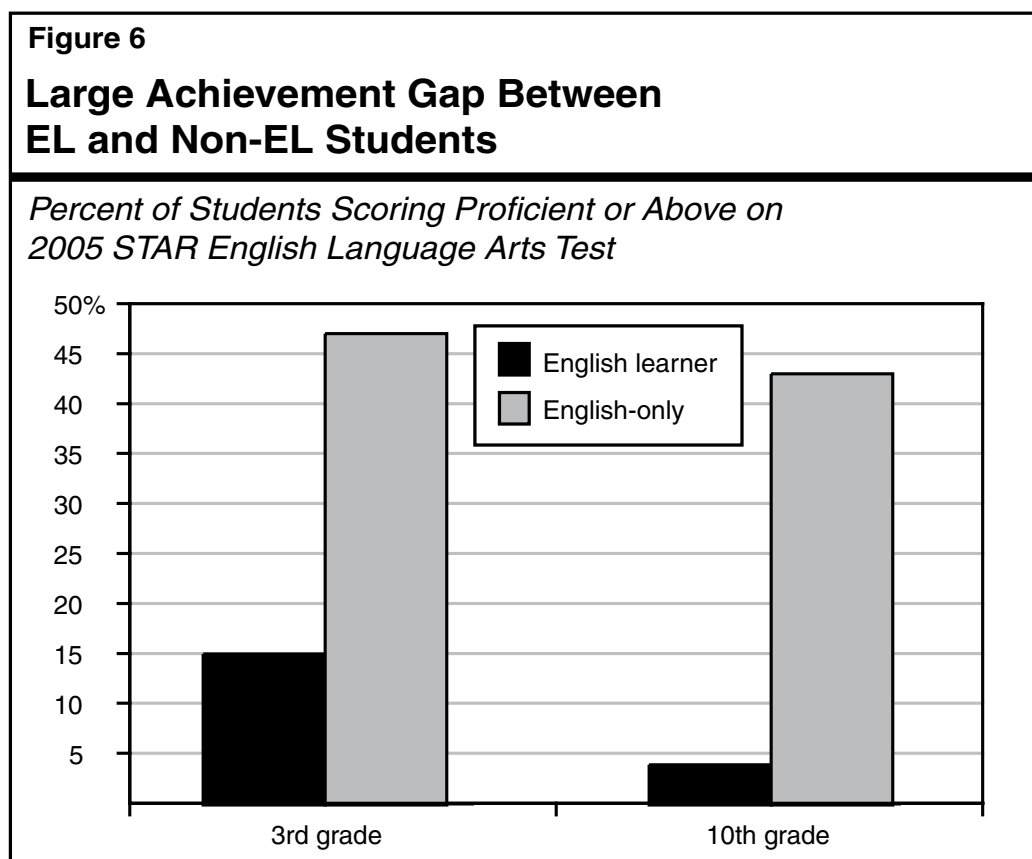
*EL Student Performance on CELDT Differs by Language.* Figure 5 displays 2005 CELDT scores for the five largest primary language groups. It shows that the distribution across English proficiency levels varied considerably among different languages. Of the EL students who speak Spanish as their primary language, 21 percent scored in levels 1 and 2 whereas 45 percent scored in levels 4 and 5. By comparison, a higher proportion of EL students speaking Vietnamese displayed advanced or early advanced proficiency on the CELDT—56 percent—while only 13 percent were in the beginning two levels. These data suggest the experience of learning English may differ based on a student’s background. Correspondingly, a school or teacher may also need to vary their instructional approaches to be effective for students who speak different languages.



*Analyzing Individual Student Progress Yields More Meaningful Comparison.* In previous publications (*A Look at the Progress of English Learners* [February 2004] and *Progress of English Learners: Update 2002-2004* [January 2006]), we have argued that in addition to identifying how many students score at each level every year, the state should measure student progress on the CELDT. Unlike the STAR tests, CELDT does allow for comparing student progress across years (albeit for only two years). Our analyses of CELDT scores suggest that overall EL student progress is slow. Specifically, we used CELDT data to simulate the experience of EL students who begin attending California schools in kindergarten. Our projections suggest it takes about six years before half of these students are reclassified as FEP. About 40 percent are still not proficient in English when they begin seventh grade. Our look at the progress of EL students also showed that a notable number of students score at the two advanced levels for several consecutive years. These data suggest that while many EL students may make gains in attaining English proficiency, they still lack the academic skills required by their local districts to be reclassified FEP.

## STAR Results

*EL STAR Results Significantly Trail Non-EL Peers.* Figure 6 compares EL and non-EL student performance on the ELA portion of the 2005 STAR assessment. Specifically, it shows the percentage of EL and non-EL third and tenth graders scoring proficient or above (the state's goal for all students). The figure shows that while only a minority of each group score at proficient or above on the exam, a significantly smaller percentage of EL students do so (15 percent of EL third graders and 4 percent of EL tenth graders) compared to non-EL students (47 percent and 43 percent, respectively).

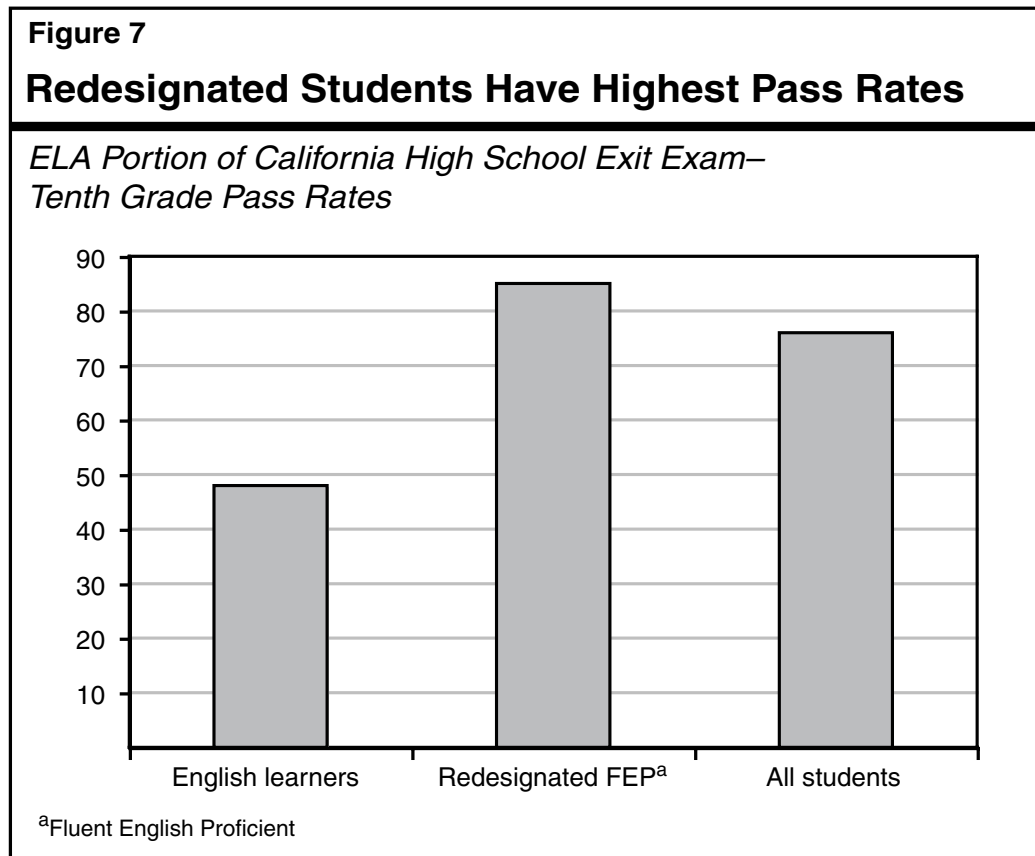


*State Unable to Track EL Student Progress Across Years.* Although a larger percentage of third graders scored proficient than did tenth graders (15 percent compared to 4 percent), we cannot conclude from Figure 6 that EL students perform more poorly as they progress through the grades. This is because the individual students labeled as ELs change every year due to immigration and redesignation. Without the capacity to track individual student progress and compare assessment results across years, the state cannot accurately measure EL student progress on STAR. Later, we discuss this problem in greater detail.



### CAHSEE Results

*Around Half of EL Tenth Graders Passed English Portion of High School Exit Exam in 2005-06.* Figure 7 displays the performance of EL tenth graders on CAHSEE. This figure compares current EL student passage rates on the ELA portion of the 2005 exam to those of former EL students who have been redesignated FEP and to all tenth graders in the state. The figure shows that just under half (48 percent) of EL tenth graders passed the ELA portion of the test. This compares to 51 percent of all students. Redesignated FEP students did significantly better, with a passage rate of 76 percent.



## OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ISSUES AND RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

*State decisionmakers can influence the education of English learner (EL) students through the funding structures, instructional approaches, instructional materials, teacher preparation and professional development programs, and assessment and accountability systems they*

*support. Yet, in each of these areas, the state lacks adequate data to make informed decisions about which approaches are likely to improve student outcomes. Below, we make various recommendations for how the Legislature could acquire additional information to better serve EL students. Most importantly, we recommend the Legislature fund evaluations to identify effective practices and upgrade the state assessment system to better measure EL student progress.*

While the state has created several programs and funding streams specially designed for EL students, it still lacks a strategic approach to EL education. The size and diversity of California’s EL population make developing an approach that would work for all students a difficult exercise. Research on the topic of EL offers some direction but provides no conclusive path toward a cohesive statewide policy. Nonetheless, as ELs make up a quarter of the state’s student body and are performing significantly worse on state assessments than other students, we think the state needs to seek improvements.

## **Funding**

*We recommend the Legislature adopt a more strategic approach to funding English learner students.*

The Governor’s budget includes around \$68.6 billion for K-12 education from all sources. The majority of these funds go to support all students. Proportionally, only a small amount—roughly \$1.3 billion—is targeted specifically for EL students or EL instruction. Below, we discuss how these funds are spent, compare the “weight” at which the state funds EL students compared to mainstream students, and identify steps the state could take to improve its approach to funding ELs.

### **Current State Approach to Funding EL Students**

Figure 8 (see page 132) summarizes the EL programs included in the Governor’s budget proposal. The figure shows that total support for EL programs in 2007-08 is roughly \$1.3 billion—around \$1.2 billion in state support and around \$160 million in federal funds. (The largest program, Economic Impact Aid, or EIA, supports both EL and economically disadvantaged students. However, districts report they use around 85 percent of these funds for EL services.) The figure also shows the three EL initiatives funded with one-time monies in the current year—instructional materials for EL students (\$30 million), a best practices pilot project (\$20 million), and translation of commonly used documents (\$450,000).

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***Most EL Funds Provided to Districts.*** The figure shows that the bulk of funds—\$1.2 billion—flow to districts and is somewhat discretionary. (That is, districts’ only requirement is to use the funds to supplement the core academic program for ELs. The \$63 million provided through the English Language Acquisition Program is further restricted for use with EL students in grades 4 through 8.) The remaining funds go to either districts or the California Department of Education (CDE) for various activities including professional development programs, testing, and outreach to parents. (See box on page 134 for a discussion of the Community-Based English Tutoring program.)

***California Provides 13 Percent More Funding for EL Students Than Other Students.*** Altogether, state and federal support in current programs designed to assist EL students totals around \$860 per English learner. State funding alone accounts for about \$750 of this per-student amount. Comparing the state rate to the average revenue limit amount (or base general purpose funding) provided for *every* student, the state spends around 13 percent more per EL student. That is, for every \$1 the state invests in the base education program for all students, it invests an additional 13 cents in EL programs.

***State’s Weights for EL Students Implicit, Not Intentional.*** Some states use a “weighted student” funding approach, whereby they provide schools with additional funding based on the level of resources they believe is required to educate special populations (such as EL, poor, and special education students) relative to the general student population. By comparison, California distributes supplementary funding for ELs through various categorical programs. Under such an approach, EL funding decisions remain largely disconnected from overall funding decisions and cost determinations. That is, the state has not expressly determined that it costs 13 percent more to educate an EL student. Rather, the state has created a series of EL programs over the years that have resulted in a comparative funding weight for EL students of 1.13.

***State’s Weights for Economically Disadvantaged Students Also Not Intentional.*** Because such a high percentage of EL students are economically disadvantaged, we also calculate the state’s implicit funding weight for this demographic group. Depending on the measure of poverty used in the calculation, we estimate the state provides between 11 percent and 26 percent more for poor students. (This analysis compared EIA and Targeted Instructional Improvement Grant funding to revenue limits.) As is the case for EL student funding, these weights are implicit. That is, the state did not make a strategic decision that economically disadvantaged students require this amount of additional funding. Rather, the state allocated funding for certain categorical programs targeting poor students, and these are the weights that resulted.

*California's Weights Appear Low Compared to Other States.* Our cursory review indicates that California's implicit weight for EL and economically disadvantaged students is lower than the weights used by other states. Florida, for example, funds EL students at a weight of 1.275. Maryland is increasing funding—over a period of years—to weights of

**Figure 8**  
**Current Programs and Funding for EL Students**

(In Millions)

Program	2007-08 (Proposed)	Description
<b>Discretionary Funds</b>		
Economic Impact Aid	\$1,012.7	Funds districts to provide supplementary services to EL and economically disadvantaged students.
Title III Limited-English Proficient	158.6 <sup>a</sup>	Funds districts to provide supplementary services to EL students.
English Language Acquisition Program	63.4	Funds districts to provide supplementary services to EL students in grades 4-8.
<b>Professional Development</b>		
Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program—EL component	\$25.0	Funds districts to provide teachers of EL students with professional development in reading and mathematics.
Bilingual Teacher Training Program	2.1	Funds county offices of education to assist K-12 teachers in attaining the training and authorizations necessary to teach EL students.
<b>Assessment/Accountability</b>		
CELDT <sup>b</sup>	\$9.7 11.9 <sup>a</sup>	Funds state-level contract and administration costs. Also provides \$5 per EL to assist districts with local administration.
<b>Parent Outreach</b>		
Community-Based English Tutoring program	\$50.0	Funds schools to provide free or subsidized English language instruction to parents or other adult members of the community who pledge to tutor EL students.
Clearinghouse for Multi-Lingual Documents (CMD)	0.3 <sup>a</sup>	Funds the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop an electronic clearinghouse for districts to access and share translated documents.
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$1,333.7</b>	

*Continued*

2.1 for economically disadvantaged and 2.0 for EL students (including federal funds). Oregon has identified target weights of 1.5 for EL students and 1.25 for poor students (although the state budget has not yet supported these levels of funding). The discrepancy among these states indicates the need for reliable studies on the cost differences associated with educating different types of students. Some states, including Oregon and New York, have undertaken studies to determine such cost differences.

### Revisiting State’s Approach to Funding EL Students

*State Should Adopt a More Strategic Approach to Funding EL Students.* Regardless of what level of overall support the Legislature decides to provide, we recommend the state adopt a clear strategy for funding EL students. Rather than continuing to create a series of disconnected categorical programs that result in an implicit weight, we recommend the Legislature determine an *explicit* weight at which EL students should be funded. Specifically, we recommend the state set a target weight, and a timeline for reaching it. Funding could then be distributed through a weighted student formula, a large EL block grant, or existing categorical programs—the method for distributing dollars is less important than developing an underlying rationale for determining the funding level. This type of strategic approach would provide the Legislature with a framework to help guide annual budget decisions.

*Upcoming Studies May Provide Insight.* The question of just what the state’s EL funding weight *should* be remains difficult to answer. As mentioned in the “Proposition 98 Roadmap” section of this chapter, researchers in California are conducting a series of studies examining school finance and governance that are to be released in spring 2007. One of these studies, entitled “Resource Needs for California’s English Learners,” intends

One-Time Funds	2006-07 Budget	
EL instructional materials	\$30.0	Funds districts to purchase materials for EL students to supplement the core instructional program.
Best practices pilot project	20.0	Provides three-year competitive grants to schools to support or expand successful programs for EL students. Corresponding evaluation (unfunded) is intended to identify best practices for the state.
Document translation	0.5 <sup>a</sup>	Funds CDE to translate commonly used documents into multiple languages and post them on its CMD Web site.
<sup>a</sup> Federal funds.		
<sup>b</sup> California English Language Development Test.		

to address the “estimated costs for providing education for California’s ELs that will prepare them to meet the goals California has set for them.” This research may provide the Legislature with some additional insight into funding EL students.

***Funding Reform Should Be Coupled With Accountability Reform.***

In addition to rethinking how much funding to provide for EL students, we believe the state should ensure proper accountability is in place for monitoring the progress of ELs. Without the ability to measure student outcomes, the state has no way of knowing whether funding increases are making a difference or if additional reform is needed. Moreover, an effective accountability system helps clarify goals and improve incentives for districts to serve EL students. While our current assessment program is a solid foundation for monitoring student outcomes, we believe additional reform is needed. Specifically, we recommend the state revise the

### **Community-Based English Tutoring (CBET) Program**

The Governor’s budget proposes spending \$50 million to extend the CBET program. This program was originally created in 1998 as part of Proposition 227. Since that year, the state has spent \$50 million annually for school districts to offer free or subsidized English language instruction to adults. Adults who receive English tutoring through the CBET program are in turn expected to tutor English learner (EL) students in grades K-12. Proposition 227 required the program be funded through 2006-07. Moving forward, the Legislature may decide to continue the program or redirect funding for another education purpose.

***Lack of Clarity Regarding Program’s Primary Goal Leads to Uneven Implementation.*** The goal of the CBET program, as defined in statute, is to “encourage family members and others to provide personal English language tutoring [to EL children], and support these efforts by raising the general level of English language knowledge in the community.” A recent evaluation of the CBET program found notable differences in its implementation, due largely to inconsistent interpretations of the program’s goal. While some program sites were focused on helping support school-age EL children, many other programs reported their primary goal was providing English as a second language classes (ESL) to adults in the community. Thus, programs were found to vary considerably in the degree to which they supported adult tutoring of K-12 EL students and were aligned with the district’s

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STAR assessment system so that it measures annual student-level gains in achievement. Later, we discuss this recommendation in further detail.

## ***Instructional Approach***

*We recommend the Legislature fund an evaluation of the recently established best practices pilot program to identify effective approaches to educating English learner students.*

While most ELs in the state receive instruction in English, educators use a wide variety of specific EL instructional approaches. Prior to 1998, primary language instruction (often referred to as bilingual instruction) was the most common model used to educate the state's EL students. Proposition 227, approved by California voters in 1998, required students to be taught "overwhelmingly in English" (although parents can apply to have their children participate in an alternative program). Not surprisingly,

K-12 EL instructional program. Furthermore, the CBET evaluation found that while the program was popular, there was no evidence that the program had improved EL student achievement.

*If CBET Program Continues, Improving EL Student Achievement Should Be Primary Goal.* Chapter 632, Statutes of 2006 (SB 368, Escutia), made substantive changes to CBET accountability requirements. Specifically, the new legislation requires districts to annually adopt a plan that outlines both their objectives for the CBET program and how they will measure program results. Should the Legislature continue funding the CBET program, it may want to consider further modifying statute to emphasize that K-12 EL students—not adult participants—should be the primary beneficiaries of the program. This would clarify to program providers that offering ESL classes to adults is intended as a means to an end, that end being improved K-12 student proficiency in English. School districts also could be required to include improved EL student proficiency (measured by CELDT) as a measurable objective in their local CBET plans.

*Legislature May Want to Consider Other Uses for These Funds.* The Legislature is not required to continue funding the CBET program beyond the current year. Given the state's limited resources and EL students' considerable needs, the Legislature may want to consider whether the \$50 million proposed for extending the CBET program might serve EL students more effectively in another way.

an independent evaluation found that one of Proposition 227's primary effects was to decrease the proportion of EL students receiving bilingual instruction. Between 1997-98 and 2005-06, the proportion of EL students in primary language programs dropped from around 30 percent to 7 percent. As shown in Figure 9, most EL students currently are educated in structured English immersion classrooms (47 percent) or mainstream classrooms (41 percent).

<b>Figure 9</b>				
<b>EL Students by Instructional Setting</b>				
<i>2005-06</i>				
<b>Instructional Setting</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Structured English immersion	Setting is specially designed for EL students but all instruction is in English.	737,243	47%	
Mainstream class	No EL-specific setting, although sometimes special EL services are provided.	656,657	41	
Alternative course of study	Waiver has been granted to use alternative instructional methodologies (mostly bilingual education).	105,833	7	
Other	Any other instructional setting.	70,721	5	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>1,570,454</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*Instructional Setting Not the Most Important Factor in EL Student Success.* The Proposition 227 evaluation concluded that instructional setting might not be a primary factor in determining EL student outcomes. Specifically, the evaluators found little to no evidence of differences in EL performance by model of instruction. Rather, the report suggests that certain local factors have a greater effect on EL student outcomes than the instructional setting employed, including: staff quality, schoolwide focus on English language development, systematic and ongoing assessments, and data-driven decision making. In addition, the concentration of EL students, students' primary languages, parents' experience with and attitudes toward education, and students' previous exposure to English and American culture are all factors that might affect how schools and districts go about educating their EL students.

*Recently Established Pilot Project Intended to Identify EL Best Practices.* While no one approach will fit the needs of all districts, schools,



and EL students, enough commonalities exist that educators should be able to learn from each other to help improve EL services across the state. Chapter 561, Statutes of 2006 (AB 2117, Coto), implements one of the primary recommendations of the Proposition 227 evaluation by creating a pilot project to identify “best practices” of schools where EL students are demonstrating successful outcomes. The project intends, at a minimum, to identify best practices in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and staff development. The *2006-07 Budget Act* provided \$20 million over three years to support or expand these practices at selected schools.

***Fund Evaluation to Help Disseminate and Replicate Successful Approaches.*** Although Chapter 561 requires CDE to contract with an independent research organization to evaluate the project, funding for this purpose has not yet been provided. We recommend the Legislature provide a total of between \$500,000 and \$800,000 in one-time monies for the evaluation (to be conducted from 2007-08 through 2011-12). Federal Title III carryover funds likely will be available to cover this cost. We think the evaluation is a critical part of the pilot project and is needed to ensure a rigorous assessment and comparison of existing practices. We also think the evaluation can play an important part in helping to share information on successful approaches among districts and to replicate these best practices around the state. Thus, we recommend the Legislature require that the final evaluation report include practical suggestions for disseminating its findings across the state.

## ***Instructional Materials***

***We recommend the instructional materials component of the best practices evaluation include a rigorous assessment of the effectiveness of different types of materials on English learner student performance.***

The State Board of Education (SBE) has ruled that EL students must have access to the same standards-aligned instructional materials as all other students. The *2007-08 Governor’s Budget* includes almost \$420 million for instructional materials. Districts may spend these funds on state-adopted, standards-aligned textbooks and materials for use with all of their students. The budget proposal does not set aside funding specifically for EL materials.

***Districts May Select Additional Materials to Supplement Core Curriculum.*** Although districts are required to provide EL students equal access to the core standards-aligned curriculum, they can opt to provide *additional* instruction (beyond the required 120 to 150 minutes per day) using other materials. The Legislature provided \$30 million in one-time funds in both 2004-05 and 2006-07 specifically for districts to purchase

supplemental materials to help EL students improve their English reading, writing, and speaking skills. To ensure these materials were aligned to state standards, districts had to get approval from CDE prior to purchasing them.

***Debate Over EL Students and State-Adopted Instructional Materials.*** In 2006, SBE developed the criteria that publishers will use in developing new reading and language arts (RLA) instructional materials. Publishers will submit these materials to SBE for state adoption in 2008. Because all districts in the state will have to use these materials, the framework discussion included considerable debate over what kinds of materials would best meet the needs of EL students. Whereas teachers currently are required to use the same core curriculum materials for EL students as they do for mainstream students, some parties believed that publishers should be able to develop a separate curriculum option specially designed for EL students. This proposal was referred to as “Option 6.” The debate over Option 6 led the Legislature to eliminate funding for SBE in 2006-07.

***The SBE Decides EL Students Must Continue to Use Core Instructional Materials.*** Because EL students are held accountable for meeting the same academic standards as all other students, SBE ultimately ruled they should be educated using the same standards-aligned instructional materials. That is, the finalized RLA core materials adoption criteria do not allow publishers to develop separate materials for EL students, as proposed by Option 6. The new RLA criteria, however, do require core materials to include an English language development (ELD) component designed to meet the special needs of EL students. Specifically, the curriculum must provide adequate materials so that 30 to 60 minutes of the required 120 to 150 minutes of RLA instruction per day may be ELD.

***Unclear What Kinds of Materials Actually Lead to Positive Outcomes for EL Students.*** Despite the heated debate, it is still unclear which approach to instructional materials is most effective at improving EL students’ performance. Should materials integrate academic and language instruction, or must these skill areas be taught separately to be taught well? Are materials most effective when differentiated based on English proficiency, or does such differentiation dilute content? Can materials that supplement the core curriculum contribute to improved EL student outcomes, as compared to relying upon the core curriculum alone? If so, which types of supplemental materials are most effective? To date, state policymakers have had to make decisions about instructional materials without the benefit of this information.

***State Should Identify How Successful Districts Use Instructional Materials for EL Students.*** For practical purposes, the recent debate over

the RLA materials is over—SBE has made its decision and publishers already are at work designing new materials for the 2008 RLA adoption cycle. However, decisions over how the state’s core instructional materials can best meet the needs of EL students will return with the next textbook adoption cycle in 2014. To ensure the state obtains adequate information regarding the effectiveness of instructional materials programs available for EL students, we recommend the instructional materials component of the best practice evaluation be reasonably comprehensive and rigorous. To this end, the Legislature may want to grant certain districts waivers from the requirement they rely on the core RLA curriculum to educate their EL students. This would help ensure different types of instructional materials could be assessed and compared. Not only would findings from such a study help inform the next statewide RLA adoption, the state also could collect information on how additional materials can best be used to supplement the core curriculum for EL students. These data would help inform future budget decisions regarding instructional materials.

## **Teacher Quality**

*We recommend the state fund a separate evaluation to identify effective approaches to preparing new teachers to work with English learner (EL) students. In addition, we recommend the EL best practices evaluation include an in-depth assessment of the effectiveness of commonly used approaches to professional development for teachers of EL students.*

Research cites teacher quality as among the most important school-level factors contributing to EL student success. While the prevalence of properly credentialed teachers and state support for professional development both have increased in recent years, it is still unclear how effective these efforts have been at preparing teachers to work with EL students.

## **Teacher Preparation**

Because such a high proportion of the state’s students are ELs, teacher preparation programs have increasingly emphasized techniques for teaching this population. Despite this effort, research suggests many teachers still do not feel sufficiently prepared for the challenges of meeting EL students’ needs.

*Teachers Must Hold Special Credential to Teach EL Students.* The state requires that teachers with one or more EL students in their classrooms attain special authorization and training. Beginning in 2002, training on how to work with EL students has been embedded in all teacher preparation programs, and new teachers acquire EL certification as part

of their regular credential. Veteran teachers must attain a special certificate—the Cross-cultural, Language and Academic Development (CLAD) credential—to be considered qualified to work with ELs. Requirements for CLAD certification may be satisfied by coursework or through examination. (The Bilingual CLAD certificate, also meets state requirements for teaching EL students and may be attained by passing an examination.)

***Many Teachers Still Lack Proper Certifications to Teach EL Students.*** Despite state requirements, a 2005 study by The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (CFTL) reported that only 48 percent of fully credentialed teachers with more than five years of teaching experience hold proper EL authorization. (The researchers note this is an improvement over 1999-00, when only 29 percent were qualified.) Likewise, in a 2003 CFTL survey, 87 percent of California teachers reported having EL students in their classrooms, but only 47 percent reported holding the proper certifications.

***Teachers Do Not Feel Sufficiently Prepared to Work With EL Students.*** The 2005 CFTL report also shows that only about 40 percent of teachers working with EL students—including those who had met state certification requirements—report having adequate training related to second language acquisition. Moreover, the report found that many new teachers who received EL training as part of their credentialing program were unaware or unaffected by this training. Specifically, two-thirds of new teachers surveyed did not even *know* they were properly certified. These findings suggest that even teachers who have met the state's requirements for teaching EL students may not feel properly prepared.

***Additional Data Needed to Evaluate Whether Teacher Preparation Programs Need Improvement.*** Despite the state's additional certification requirements, little research has been done on what makes teacher preparation programs effective in preparing teachers of EL students. Does attaining CLAD certification make a teacher more effective? Do certain types of preparation programs better prepare teachers to meet EL student needs? Requiring teachers of EL students to hold a special authorization might be beneficial, but without additional data and analysis, the state cannot ascertain which teacher preparation requirements actually benefit EL students.

***Evaluating Teacher Preparation Programs Will Help Identify What Works.*** We recommend the Legislature provide between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in one-time monies for CDE—in consultation with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing—to contract for an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in improving EL student achievement. Federal Title II or Title III carryover funds likely would be available to cover this cost. Using data from the statewide teacher and

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student information systems (both currently under development), the evaluation should link preparation programs with student outcome data, including achievement gains and FEP redesignation rates. The evaluator should use statistical methods to control for the effects of student factors, such as primary language and socioeconomic status, as well as school factors, such as the concentration of EL students. The study also should include surveys and focus groups with teachers to identify what about their preparation programs they thought worked or needed improvement. The information from such a study could be used to identify and replicate effective practices at particular teacher preparation programs as well as to inform future state-level decisions regarding teacher credentialing requirements.

## Professional Development

Preparation programs are only the beginning of a teacher's training. Through various incentive programs the state promotes ongoing professional development. In 2006-07, the Legislature augmented the Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program by \$25 million to provide training specifically for teachers of EL students. In addition, the Governor's 2007-08 budget includes \$670 million for various other professional development programs. In most cases, districts can opt to use these funds to offer training activities related to EL student instruction. Despite these investments, however, the state knows little about which professional development approaches foster the greatest EL achievement gains.

*Many EL Teachers Do Not Feel They Get Sufficient Training.* A 2005 survey asked 5,300 EL teachers in the state about their professional development activities over the previous five years. Survey results show many teachers had little or no professional development designed to help them teach EL students. Specifically, over the five-year period, 43 percent of teachers with 50 percent or more EL students in their classrooms reported they had received no more than one in-service training focused on the instruction of ELs. Teachers with fewer than 50 percent EL students were even less likely to have received specialized in-service training. Furthermore, the survey found the quality of the training was uneven and often disconnected from teachers' needs. Roughly one-third of teachers reported that training sessions were poorly planned, provided by presenters who had limited knowledge and experience with EL students, and did not contain adequate or appropriate information to help them improve EL instruction.

*Best Practices Project Can Help Identify Effective Approaches to Teacher Training.* While decisions about how to structure professional sessions are largely left up to districts, the state can play a role in helping

to identify and disseminate training approaches that have been found to work well. Although professional development is already specified as one component of the best practices pilot program, we recommend the evaluation emphasize a rigorous assessment of professional development approaches and their effect on EL student achievement. Such an assessment should examine which types of delivery models are most effective. It also should examine how the duration and content of training affect teacher and student outcomes.

## **Assessment and Accountability**

*We recommend the Legislature require state assessments to be vertically scaled so that English learner (EL) student progress can be measured. We believe this change is vital to strengthening district accountability for serving EL students.*

The state's main assessment system does not allow for measuring student progress from one year to the next. This is because "basic" or "proficient" levels on the STAR assessment do not necessarily describe the same level of mastery in each grade. An improvement in students' scores could mean one of two things—either they have made significant learning gains and are achieving closer to the state's standards, or the test was slightly easier in the second year. As a result, comparing results across years does not allow one to determine whether a student's achievement actually is improving, getting worse, or staying the same. While this weakens the accountability system for all students, it makes accountability for serving EL students especially tenuous. That is, policymakers cannot hold schools accountable for improving student outcomes.

*Measuring Individual Level Progress Is Especially Important for EL Students Because Group Is Always Changing.* While being able to measure gains and losses is important for all students, it is essential for EL students. Aggregate comparisons of how EL students perform as a group from one year to the next are not particularly meaningful because the students classified as EL change every year due to immigration and redesignation.

By definition, the students who get redesignated are those who have developed greater competence in English and therefore are likely to be higher performers on the STAR exams. Because the highest performing EL students tend to "fall out" of the EL group each year, aggregate EL student STAR scores remain low, and the gains of the most successful students are not reflected. Moreover, the new immigrants who "join" the EL group each year typically have low proficiency in English. Because of these dynamics, comparing aggregate EL student test scores across years can be mislead-

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ing. Measuring individual student progress is the only way to accurately assess whether EL student achievement is improving.

*Vertically Scaled STAR Test Would Allow State to Track EL Student Progress and Better Highlight Problem Areas.* We think it is critical that the state's assessment and accountability system be able to measure annual student-level gains in achievement, especially for EL students. Therefore, we recommend revising the STAR assessment system so that the tests are "vertically scaled"—that is, so that performance levels mean the same thing in each grade. This would allow the state to measure student gains and losses across years. As a first step in this process, we recommend requiring CDE to contract out for a report on the feasibility and costs of vertically scaling the STAR tests and to report findings to the Legislature by April 1, 2008.

## CONCLUSION

With such a large and diverse population of students, closing the achievement gap between ELs and their English-speaking peers presents a significant challenge for the state. Despite the obstacles, some schools and districts are achieving positive outcomes with their ELs. Both state and local entities would benefit from learning from these success stories. The Legislature could develop policies and funding mechanisms that support these approaches, and local educators could begin to replicate the effective practices in their own classrooms. While there are no obvious answers to this issue, more information on what *is* working for educators of EL students would help policymakers at both the state and local levels make better-informed decisions.

Any discussion of best practices is predicated on the assumption that educators can tell what approaches are effective because they yield the desired results. Thus, the ability to measure outcomes is essential to refining and improving EL student services. In order to ensure it is meeting the needs of its EL—and all—students, the state must develop the capacity to measure student progress across years.

