

# Reparable Harm

Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of  
Educational Opportunity for California's  
Long Term English Learners



Laurie Olsen, Ph.D.



A CALIFORNIANS TOGETHER RESEARCH & POLICY PUBLICATION

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Baldwin Park Unified School District	Modesto City Schools
El Monte City Schools	Pasadena Unified School District
El Monte Union High School District	San Francisco Unified School District
Escondido Union High School District	Ventura Unified School District
Glendale Unified School District	Whittier Union High School District

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## Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's Long Term English Learners

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# Preface

**T**he pursuit and promise of educational opportunity has historically been central in the path towards inclusion and a better life by groups in the United States who are struggling against forces of poverty, racism, and prejudice. Now, protected by civil rights law, that promise is actually a pact. Schools have a legal responsibility to provide equal educational access and opportunity to all students, including language minority children who are not yet proficient in English.

English Learners face a double challenge of learning a new language while mastering all the same academic content as their English fluent peers. The courts have recognized that during the period when students are still learning English (especially if all their academic instruction is in English), they may incur academic deficits. They have made clear, however, that school districts are required to remedy those deficits so that they do not pose "...a lingering educational impediment." English Learners cannot, in the words of the court, "be permitted to incur **irreparable academic deficits**" during the time in which they are mastering English. While there is no timeline specified by law, school districts are obligated to address those deficits "as soon as possible," and to ensure that their schooling does not become a "**permanent deadend.**"<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, this is an era in which much is known about how to open access and teach English Learners in ways that make good on the promise of a quality education for all. Fortunately, this is an era of intense scrutiny and accountability to close the achievement gap. Unfortunately, the significant investment that has been made in school improvement initiatives to address these gaps in California has not shown the hoped for results in English Learner achievement. Misguided and ill-informed, too many California initiatives do not correspond with the research on the needs of English Learners, gambling instead on one-size-fits-all generic reforms. And so, another generation of English Learners has been left behind.

This report is presented as a wake-up call to California educators and policymakers to acknowledge the large number of English Learner students amassing in California secondary schools who, despite many years in our schools and despite being close to the age in which they should be able to graduate, are still not English proficient and have indeed incurred major academic deficits. This report is a call to once and for all put our efforts into creating schools that include and serve all children — to recognize, respond, and to repair the harm that has been exacerbated by lapses in state, district, and school policies and practices. It is repairable harm, it is preventable harm, and it is wholly in our power to change.



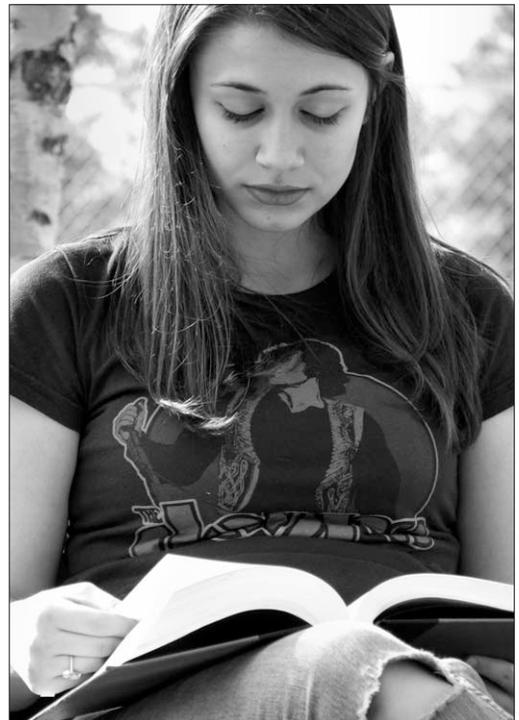
# Executive Summary

**R***eparable Harm* is a wake-up call to California educators and policymakers to recognize the large number of English Learner students amassing in California secondary schools who, despite many years in our schools and despite being close to the age at which they should be able to graduate, are still not English proficient and have incurred major academic deficits — the “Long Term English Learners.” This publication presents new survey data collected from 40 school districts throughout all regions of California in 2009–2010. It includes information on 175,734 secondary school students, almost one-third of all secondary school English Learners in the state. It is further informed by existing research literature and inquiries conducted in California secondary schools. Together, these sources provide an emerging and startling picture of students left behind, parents uninformed, educators unaware, and districts largely stumped about what to do.

## Major Findings

- **The majority (59%) of secondary school English Learners are “Long Term English Learners”** (in United States schools for more than six years without reaching sufficient English proficiency to be reclassified). In one out of three districts, more than 75% of their English Learners are long term.

- **California school districts do not have a shared definition of “Long Term English Learners.”** Most districts lack any definition or means of identifying or monitoring the progress and achievement of this population. Only one in four districts has a formal definition or designation for identifying, counting, serving, or monitoring services for these students — and their definitions vary in the number of years considered “normative” for how soon English Learners should have reached proficiency (range from five to ten years).



- **English Learners become “Long Term” English Learners in the course of their schooling experience.** Several factors seem to contribute to becoming a Long Term English Learner: receiving no language development program at all; being given elementary school curricula and materials that weren’t designed to meet English Learner needs; enrollment in weak language development program models and poorly implemented English Learner programs; histories of inconsistent programs; provision of narrowed curricula and only partial access to the full curriculum; social segregation and linguistic isolation; and cycles of transnational moves.

- **By the time Long Term English Learners arrive in secondary schools, there is a set of characteristics that describe their overall profile.** These students struggle academically. They have distinct language issues, including: high functioning social language, very weak academic language, and significant deficits in reading and writing skills. The majority of Long Term English Learners are “stuck” at Intermediate levels of English proficiency or below, although others reach higher levels of English proficiency without attaining the academic language to be reclassified. Long Term English Learners have significant gaps in academic background knowledge. In addition, many have developed habits of non-engagement, learned passivity, and invisibility in school. The majority of Long Term English Learners wants to go to college, and are unaware that their academic skills, record, and courses are not preparing them to reach that goal. Neither students, their parents nor their community realizes that they are in academic jeopardy.

- **Few districts have designated programs or formal approaches designed for Long Term English Learners.** Instead, the *typical “program”* and placements for Long Term English Learners in secondary schools appear to be similar to what they received in elementary school. It consists of: inappropriate placement in mainstream (no program); being placed and kept in classes with newcomer English Learners, being taught by largely unprepared teachers; overassigned and inadequately served in intervention and support classes; being precluded from participation in electives; and with limited access to the full curriculum.

## Promising Approaches

*Reparable Harm* offers a set of basic principles for more effectively meeting the needs of English Learners that can be applied across contexts, understanding that the actual program that can be mounted in any one school or district will differ depending on the numbers of students, dispersal across district sites, and capacity.

The report presents a *comprehensive secondary school program* for Long Term English Learners based upon these principles. The recommended program includes: a specialized English Language Development course designed for Long Term English Learners; clustered placement in heterogeneous and rigorous grade-level content classes (including honors, A–G) mixed with English proficient students and taught with differentiated SDAIE strategies; explicit language and literacy development across the curriculum; native speakers classes (in an articulated sequence through Advanced Placement levels); a master schedule designed for flexibility and movement as students progress; systems for monitoring progress and triggering support; and a school-wide focus on study skills, among other components.

What goes on inside those classrooms is equally crucial. Placing students with language needs and academic gaps into rigorous courses with high-level content depends upon instruction that is designed and adapted to their needs. The report describes the *instructional characteristics* of a strong secondary school Long Term English Learner program. Teachers need to know their students and engage in careful analysis of the language demands of the content they are teaching, as well as possess skills in implementing appropriate instructional strategies.

It is the *role of the district* to ensure high quality implementation of research-based programs for English Learners through: clearly defined pathways and clear descriptions of program models in English Learner Master Plans; providing professional development (including coaching and collaborative time) for teachers and administrators in understanding the needs of English Learners and strategies to meet those needs; communication and clarity of expectations about what quality instruction looks like; curriculum materials that facilitate differentiation for varying levels of needs; published expectations of growth and achievement for English Learners by length of time in program and by proficiency levels; systems of observation and mechanisms for monitoring student progress; emphasis on articulation between levels; systems for holding site administrators accountable for high quality programs for English Learners; and increasing access to preschool programs designed for English Learners.

## **Systems issues and policy recommendations**

Beyond the overall challenges facing the public school system, *Reparable Harm* identifies significant challenges facing districts in seeking to address the specific needs of Long Term English Learners. These barriers include: inadequate data and student information systems; shortage of teachers prepared with the knowledge and skills to effectively teach Long Term English Learners; lack of appropriate curriculum and materials targeted for this population; contradictory mandates and counsel; general misunderstandings and lack of knowledge of the research about effective practices for Long Term English Learners; inadequate assessments and systems to know how English Learners are doing or to identify English Learners who are not adequately progressing; widespread lack of understanding related to English Language Development and misunderstandings about what constitutes “English proficiency.” These are all, fundamentally, policy issues. They are also *leadership* issues.

Civil rights legislation and court action have been necessary in past decades because schools, on their own volition, were not adequately including or addressing the needs of English Learners. The No Child Left Behind Act has now created new pressure on schools to serve this population. Yet still, throughout the state too many schools and districts make English Learners a low priority. It has taken state law, compliance monitoring, and protected categorical funding to build and maintain some measure of response to English Learners in the schools. State policies that protect resources and require schools to serve English Learners must be preserved. And, *leadership* needs to step forward to clearly, squarely, fully make English Learners a focus of school improvement efforts in this state.

This report drew upon multiple types of sources to piece together the first-ever picture of what is occurring with Long Term English Learners in California. The data and

research that are available do not yet add up to the solid foundation that is needed to inform a definitive response to this urgent challenge, but action cannot wait. *Reparable Harm* offers seven recommendations to move California towards the remedying and preventing harm that has been done to Long Term English Learners.

- Calling for a standard state definition of Long Term English Learners, and data collection mechanisms to support monitoring, early identification, planning, and response.
- Ensuring the availability of appropriate and effective English Language Development materials and academic content materials to promote access to the core content.
- Developing consistent state messages and counsel (across accountability, corrective action, and compliance functions) based upon English Learner research, setting benchmark expectations for student progress, speaking to the differentiated needs of Long Term English Learners, and more accurately reflecting research.
- Build the capacity and skills of teachers and administrators in California so they are more prepared and skilled to work with English Learners and Long Term English Learners.
- Ensure that English Learners have access to the full curriculum.
- Provide parents with the information needed to monitor the impact of the schools' services and programs on their students, to know whether their children are progressing normatively, and to play an active role in helping shape their child's education and future.
- Invest in research and innovation to further the knowledge base about what works to prevent the development of Long Term English Learners and to address their needs in secondary schools.

# Introduction

**R***eparable Harm* was written to inform, motivate, and support state and district policymakers in addressing the alarming and urgent situation of a large group of students failed by our schools. It is based upon new survey data collected from 40 school districts throughout all regions in California, is informed by existing research literature, and draws upon inquiries conducted by leadership teams in high schools and districts throughout the state over the past four years.<sup>2</sup> Together, these sources provide an emerging and startling picture of students left behind, parents uninformed, educators unaware, and districts largely stumped about what to do.

The publication includes a brief background on the emergence of Long Term English Learners, including data on the extent and magnitude of Long Term English Learners in California schools. It describes the unique needs of Long Term English Learners, how they are currently being served in California schools, and outlines promising practices piloted in some districts in the state. An analysis of the challenges facing districts in implementing effective programs provides a backdrop for a set of state policy recommendations.



## Background

Three decades ago, seeking to end a long history of exclusion in education for language and cultural minority groups in the United States, civil rights legislation and court rulings established that schools throughout the nation have an obligation to address the language barrier that prevents English Learners from equal access to educational opportunity.

The landmark Supreme Court ruling (*Lau v. Nichols*) based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Law, declared: “...there is no equality of treatment merely by providing

students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum... for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.....”<sup>3</sup> Thus was created a “class” of students labeled at the time, “Limited English Proficient.” Schools throughout the nation began to create programs based on linguistic theory about second language development. These programs focused on moving students along the continuum from non-English speaking to limited English to English proficiency.

Since that time, a large body of research and field knowledge has developed about effective instructional strategies, program models, and approaches to meeting the needs of this increasingly large population. And yet, throughout the nation, English Learners continue to disproportionately end up in the lowest quartiles of achievement. The federal No Child Left Behind Act designates English Learners as a “significant subgroup,” shining a light on the persistent underachievement of English Learners, and adding urgency and pressure upon school districts to provide the instruction, curricula and supports needed to make real the promise of educational access and opportunity.



To a large degree, educational policy, program development, curriculum resources, and professional development have sought to address this issue by focusing on English Learners in the elementary school grades. In fact, more than one in three English Learners in California are in secondary school grades.<sup>4</sup> This group

represents 18% of the total secondary school enrollment. The assumption had been that by the time English Learners get to secondary school, they would already have developed the skills to participate on an equal footing with English proficient students — and that English Learners who are enrolled in middle and high school are more newly arrived immigrants. Yet, the vast majority of English Learners currently in middle schools and high schools have been enrolled in United States schools since kindergarten — and most were born in the United States. This group is struggling academically, failing to progress in English proficiency, and facing disproportionately high dropout rates.

In framing the legal responsibility of districts to provide language access and protect the rights of English Learners to access to equal educational opportunity, the *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court decision wrote:

*“Any system employed to deal with the special language skills needs of national origin minority group children must be designated to meet such language skills needs as soon as possible and must not operate as an educational dead-end or permanent track.”*

The existence of Long Term English Learners is evidence that for many students, the school experience that should have propelled them towards English proficiency and academic success has indeed been an educational dead-end.

California is not alone in facing the challenge of how to serve Long Term English Learners. A 2009 report by the Colorado Department of Education examined English Learner data by number of years in United States schools and sought to determine correlations to other factors. They concluded that there is “*no clear, easy reason revealed by data why students are remaining in the LEP category for 10+ years.*”<sup>5</sup> Similarly, a recent national study of English Learner programs and systems in five school districts conducted by the Council of Great City Schools to analyze lessons learned about English Learner programs concluded: “*While districts were unanimous in voicing their concern for such students (Long Term English Learners), finding effective interventions to move these long term students along the proficiency continuum remains a challenge.*”<sup>6</sup>

Even after language minority communities won the civil rights victory of protection for their rights to equal educational access, it was commonplace for there to be English Learners in public schools who were not well-served, who sat in classes precluded from participation because there were no supports to teach them English and help them access the curriculum. In 1999, a demonstration project in high school immigrant education in two California districts identified five “*typologies*” of secondary school “*Limited English Proficient*”<sup>7</sup> students with specific and differing needs: well-educated newcomers, underschooled newcomers, normatively developing English Learners, struggling Fluent English Proficient students, and “*Long Term Limited English Proficient*” students. In this first published definition, Long Term English Learners were defined as: “*English Learners who have been in United States schools 7+ years, are orally fluent in English but reading and writing below grade level, and have low literacy in the home language, if any.*”<sup>8</sup>

We know, then, that the phenomenon of “*Long Term English Learners*” is not new. But what is striking, is that these students have remained unnoticed and unaddressed in a time of intense scrutiny about English Learner achievement and major initiatives that purportedly were designed to meet their needs. In the past decade, California has set in motion major reforms intended to address the underachievement of students and close the achievement gap. It was assumed that these reform initiatives would meet the needs of English Learners along with other students. They were a misguided generic response applied to “*all children*” that failed to target the specific



needs of English Learners. The results for English Learners were disappointing. The achievement gap between English Learners and proficient English speakers actually widened in the past decade.<sup>9</sup>

Increasingly, educators in secondary schools seeking to understand this widening gap have noticed that there are English Learners in their classes who, despite having initially entered United States schools in the primary grades, are now stalled in their progress towards English and struggling academically. Not yet recognized in policy or formal literature of the field, various labels are applied: “ESL Lifers,” “The 1.5 generation,” “Forever LEP,” and “The 6 Plusers.”

And yet California, the state with the largest number of English Learners in the nation, is silent in policy on the existence of these students, has no plan for addressing the needs of this group of Long Term English Learners,<sup>10</sup> and has no approach for adjusting the conditions that have resulted in so many students spending so many years in our schools without being adequately served.

# Long Term English Learners in California: A Large and Statewide Issue

In 2008, the coalition Californians Together identified Long Term English Learners as a major priority for policy work in the state. Recognizing the lack of data on the extent or magnitude of the Long Term English Learner phenomenon in the state, Californians Together conducted a statewide survey of districts between October 2009 and February 2010 using student data from the 2008–2009 school year. In the spring of 2010, Californians Together invited nine school districts to participate in a “Long Term English Learner Forum.” Leadership teams from these districts undertook inquiries into their Long Term English Learner population as part of their participation, adding a deeper look at the systemic issues that contribute to the creation of Long Term English Learners and at the barriers that stand in the way of serving their needs well.

The Californians Together survey was completed by district staff in 40 school districts in California, reporting data on 175,734 English Learners in grades 6–12. This represents almost one-third (31%) of the state’s secondary school English Learners.

The districts represent all regions of the state.<sup>11</sup> The districts also represent a variety of contexts. Most of the districts are urban (18), nine serve suburban communities, and 13 serve rural areas. They range in size from very small student enrollments to very large. The smallest has a student population of just 1,300 students. Thirteen districts enroll fewer than 15,000 students, nineteen range in enrollment from 16,000 to 50,000, seven are over 50,000, and one has well over

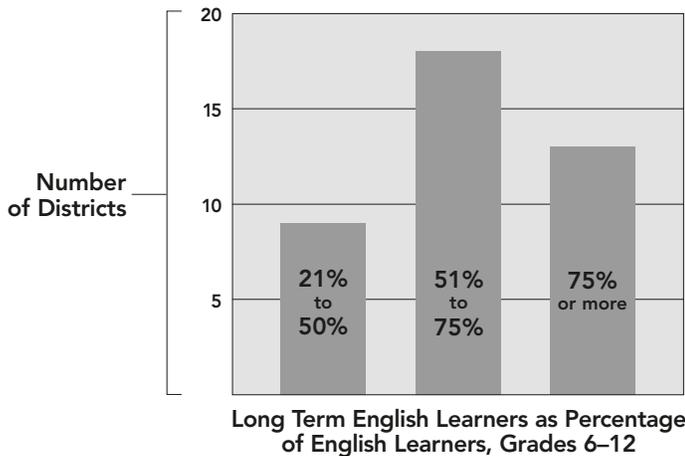


650,000 students. Some enroll only a small concentration of English Learners (fewer than one in ten students), while over half of the students in other districts are English Learners. Most are K-12 school districts, although four are union high school districts, and one is a K-8 district.

**The Majority of California Secondary School English Learners are Long Term English Learners (in United States schools for more than six years)**

Districts were asked to report the number of English Learners in grades 6–12 who have been enrolled in United States schools for more than six years without yet meeting the criteria for reclassification.<sup>12</sup> Across all districts, 59% of the total secondary school English Learner population fit that definition of “Long Term English Learners.” The percentages vary across districts, however. Long Term English Learners comprise just 21% of one districts secondary school English Learner enrollment, for example. But in two-thirds of the districts, more than half of the secondary school English Learners are Long Term English Learners. In 13 of the 40 districts, more than three out of four secondary school English Learners are Long Term English Learners.<sup>13</sup>

**Number of Districts by Percentage of Long Term English Learners**

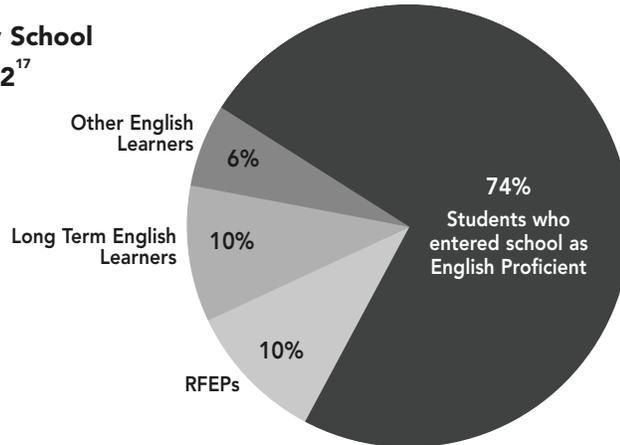


Little national data is available on Long Term English Learners, so it is difficult to ascertain whether patterns in California are unique or similar to the experiences in other states. Varying sources, using somewhat different definitions, provide some comparative context. A 2005 report from The Urban Institute estimates that nation-wide 56% of English Learners at secondary level were born in the United States.<sup>14</sup> A 2001 report from the Dallas public schools reports that 70% of their secondary school English Learners were born in the United States, and notes that the “overall academic performance of Long Term English Learners does not continue to improve. They reach a ceiling in their levels of academic English attainment over time.” Research from New York City reports one out of three English

Learners in grades 6–12 is a Long Term English Learner.<sup>15</sup> And a 2009 analysis from the Colorado Department of Education cites 23.6% of English Learners have been in their schools for 6+ years. However, because definitions differ across all of these reports, these can only give a general ballpark picture for comparison.

This does not tell the whole story. There are many students in California secondary schools who were once English Learners and were able to develop the English proficiency needed to be reclassified as “Redesignated Fluent English Proficient.” There is no consistent state source on the current numbers of students who are Redesignated Fluent English Proficient, but an estimate based on California Standards Test results disaggregated by language proficiency indicate that 10% of students in grades 6–11 are reclassified. It appears that half of the students who were English Learners together in elementary grades are reclassified by secondary school, and half continued as Long Term English Learners.<sup>16</sup>

### California’s Secondary School Students, Grades 6–12<sup>17</sup>



### California school districts do not have a shared definition of “Long Term English Learners.” Most districts lack any definition or means of identifying or monitoring the progress and achievement of this population.

Long Term English Learners tend to go unnoticed in secondary schools, subsumed instead within a general English Learner count, but sitting for the most part in mainstream classes. Despite the large number of Long Term English Learners, only one in three districts has a formal definition or designation for identifying, counting, serving or monitoring services for these students. Among the nine districts that reported having developed a formal definition for Long Term English Learners, the key component of their definition is a designated length of time (number of years) in United States schools that is thought to be on the edge or beyond what should normatively be expected for reaching English proficiency and satisfying reclassification criteria, The number of years used varies from 5+ years, 6+ years, 7+ years, and 10+ years. Those districts selecting 5+ years base it on the Annual Measurable Achievement Objective (AMAO 1) expectation in California that students should

progress one proficiency level per year on the state assessment of English Language Development (CELDT) — normatively taking five years to reach English proficiency. Those selecting seven years or longer refer to linguistic research that it normatively takes up to seven years to reach proficiency in a second language.

By itself, the number of years it takes an English Learners to become English proficient and satisfy reclassification requirements is not sufficient to define Long Term English Learners. Academic struggles and lack of progress (“being stuck”) towards English proficiency are also key to the definition.

There are, however, English Learners who are in the 6+ category for whom this is not true. They fit the “length of time” criteria for taking “too many years” to reach English proficiency, but are in fact still progressing steadily and are doing okay academically. These may be students who are just taking longer to become proficient, but are making progress and will get there. Or they may be students who got tired of taking the CELDT, don’t recognize the implications of their CELDT scores, and therefore no longer take it seriously — thus scoring at low levels of English proficiency despite having sufficient proficiency to do well academically in English-taught curriculum.

The Californians Together survey asked districts to calculate the number of English Learners who have been in United States schools 6+ years and have received at least two Ds or Fs in core academic subjects in the past year, as well as to calculate standardized test scores on the California Standards Test (CST) of English Language Arts by number of years an English Learner has been enrolled in United States schools. Most districts were unable to calculate this figure, but among the 13 which were able to produce data, the addition of the academic failure criteria reduced the count only somewhat. When inadequate progress towards English proficiency and academic success is included in the definition along with a designated number of years in United States schools, the number and percentage of Long Term English Learners drops from 59% of secondary school English Learners to 54%. It is most useful, therefore, to think of a continuum from those Long Term English Learners who are failing and whose proficiency is actually falling to those who are stagnating at a level of English proficiency managing to get by in school with very low grades, to those who are slowly progressing and doing okay in school.

Four districts in California have adopted a formal definition of Long Term English Learners that combine the length of time criteria with indications of inadequate progress in English language development. One, for example, cites two or more years remaining at the same CELDT level as evidence of inadequate progress. Another district combines number of years as an English Learner with failing grades in academic courses. The combination of academic struggles, failure to progress in English development, and the number of years enrolled in United States schools identifies the group of students this report focuses upon.

# How Do English Learners Become “Long Term” English Learners?

Students do not enter kindergarten as *Long Term* English Learners. As five-year-olds, they come to school ready to learn, eager. Their young brains are curious about their world, wired for language development and concept development. They do not start out knowing there could be years ahead of struggling to master content they would be expected but not helped to learn. They do not sit in kindergarten expecting year after year of academic difficulty and falling further and further behind, or knowing that they could down-the-line be excluded from electives and a full curriculum while their days are filled with remedial and intervention classes.

The parents of English Learners do not walk their children to school on the first day of kindergarten thinking that they are placing their children into programs that could lead to academic failure and inadequate English. Teachers do not get up in the morning and set out to intentionally weaken a child’s home language, teach lessons that children will not be able to understand, and to ignore a child’s language needs.

And yet, all of this happens for our Long Term English Learners along the way as they move through our schooling system. By definition, English Learners enter school lacking the English skills and proficiency needed to access fully the core



curriculum. They have to learn English and at the same time master core content being taught in the language they do not understand. The programs, support, curriculum and instruction they receive can either move them along the continuum towards English proficiency and provide access to core content while they are learning English, or it can relegate them to struggling without support to understand what is being taught in a language they have not mastered, and contribute towards the erosion and loss of their home language. The strength of the language development approach and the consistency and coherence of the program a student receives across grade levels greatly impacts students' long-term academic outcomes. The large number of Long Term English Learners in secondary schools is testimony to the fact that something has gone wrong along the way. District inquiries and research on the educational background of Long Term English Learners reveal several factors that seem to contribute to becoming Long Term English Learners.

### **Received no language development program at all**

In California, studies of cumulative file records of 48 Long Term English Learners indicated that three out of four had spent at least two years in “no services” or in mainstream placements, and that 12% of Long Term English Learners may have spent their entire schooling in mainstream classes with no services. This is what is popularly termed “sink or swim” — in other words, no language development program at all. Research on the backgrounds of Long Term English Learners in New York City found that half of the sample of students had experienced a complete gap in English Learner services at some point in their schooling, and were placed in mainstream classes for one to three years with no English Learner support.<sup>18</sup>

It is difficult to determine what students actually receive in English Learner services in California because the categories used to label services have changed in the past decade, and because what gets reported may or may not reflect what actually happens in the classrooms. However, by combining “like categories,” a picture emerges of English Learner services and programs in the years the current Long Term English Learners were in elementary school.<sup>19</sup> Trends in placement into California's “instructional settings” and “English Learner services” ten years ago and five years ago show that very few students (and a declining number) received primary language instruction, more than a third (and increasing numbers) received no services or were placed in mainstream settings, one out of five just received English Language Development (ELD) with no support for access to content, and the others received English-only instruction.

<b>California English Learner Services and Instructional Settings: 2000–2009</b>			
	<b>2000–01</b>	<b>2004–05</b>	<b>2008–09</b>
No Services	5%	2%	1%
Mainstream	34%	41%	?
Primary Language Instruction	11%	7%	5%
Alternative Course of Study	12%	8%	?
ELD Alone	11%	11%	10%
ELD plus SDAIE Instruction	48%	47%	49%
Structured English Immersion Setting	35%	50%	55%

Research on the effectiveness of various English Learner settings and programs shows that placement of English Learners into “mainstream” classes without English Learner support produces (over time) the worst outcomes. Students who have been in these settings in elementary school are the lowest achievers in comparison to students in any specially designed English Learner program. By middle school and high school, English Learners who have been in any form of specialized instruction are more likely to score at grade level and less likely to drop out of high school than those who were in mainstream settings.<sup>20</sup>

Formal program designation is not always a clear indication of what students receive. In some districts and in some classrooms, implementation of the model actually reflects the model “on paper.” But in many, evidently, it does not. One of the components of effective English Learner education that is most strongly supported by research on English learners is that dedicated instruction in English Language Development (ELD) makes a big difference.<sup>21</sup> District and school site inquiries have found that very little ELD actually goes on in many classrooms across *all* program models. The California Department of Education’s compliance reviews have demonstrated that lack of ELD is one of the top items of non-compliance.<sup>22</sup> Teachers are confused about whether “just good teaching” strategies for all students provides English Learners access to the curriculum, and confused as well in thinking that English Language Arts curriculum and any teaching they are doing in English is really the same as ELD. To a large degree, it appears that Long Term English Learners did not receive ELD. They were taught, instead, the mainstream, regular core curriculum with no accommodations or strategies to promote access.

Because so few students now receive primary language instruction, the overall picture is little or weak English language development, and for most students, no primary language development.

## **Provided elementary school curriculum and materials that were not designed to meet English Learner needs**

This has been an era of “one size fits all” curriculum, and where curriculum has become synonymous with materials and purchased programs. In the name of “equity” and “high standards,” appropriate curriculum has been interpreted as the same for all. Speaking to this paradigm decades earlier, the Justices in *Lau v. Nichols* had written: “...merely by providing the same textbooks, teachers, and instruction, a student who does not speak English is foreclosed from a meaningful education.” Yet, in 2002, the State Board of Education voted to adopt English Language Arts textbook programs that were written for “universal access” within the overall presentation and instruction of the material. For schools that were showing persistent underachievement (many of them primarily for their English Learner population), corrective action called for a requirement that these texts be used with fidelity. Supplemental materials were provided to help with English Learner access. Professional development was tied to the implementation of the materials.

A study of the adopted reading series concluded that “*the materials offered little specific English Learner assistance to students or teachers, and what was offered was contrary to best practice.*”<sup>23</sup> It went on to conclude that “the supplemental strategy mandated by the Board was practically unworkable.”<sup>23</sup> This has been affirmed in reports from teachers, administrators, and coaches who describe the difficulty of trying to follow the pacing guidelines (normed for native English speakers) faithfully and still find ways to address the particular needs of English Learners.

## **Enrolled in weak language development program models**

There are four basic models of English Learner programs for elementary schools (all include dedicated English Language Development instruction): Structured English Immersion, Early-exit Bilingual Programs, Late-exit (or Maintenance) Bilingual/Biliteracy Programs, and Two Way (or Dual Language) Programs. Mainstream placement is not a model at all for English Learners, though in reality, many English Learners are placed there. The models differ in the language(s) used for instruction, goals, student grouping, and outcomes. While there has been much controversy in the past about which of these is “better” and about the role that primary language instruction plays in producing positive English Learner outcomes, in the past five years an important new generation of research has clarified differences in outcomes. Long term outcomes looking at both the strength of English literacy and at academic success has affirmed that the simultaneous development of both English and the home language facilitates higher outcomes in English literacy, and also provides more access and fewer gaps in academic content. Teaching students to read in their home language promotes higher levels of reading in English.<sup>24</sup> The simultaneous development of home language AND English promote literacy overall as skills transfer across the two languages.

Thus, in studies of well-implemented program models, the English Language Development (ELD) pullout model or ELD as the *only* component of the school day designed to address English Learner needs has been found to produce weak outcomes over time, and does not sufficiently address a major goal of schooling which is access to and mastery of academic subjects. While English Learners in these settings may appear to be progressing adequately in English in the primary grades, as they continue on to upper elementary grades and secondary schools where language demands increase significantly, they fall further and further behind. The degree to which the home language is developed is correlated with positive outcomes in English literacy, so those models that continue development of the home language as well as English produce the most positive outcomes. There is evidence from studies of students' cumulative files and personal histories that Long Term English Learners were not in programs that developed their home language. They appear to have been either in no program at all or in the weaker program models. This is what researchers Menken and Kleyn labeled as "consistent subtractive schooling."<sup>25</sup>

However, in reality, there is widespread poor implementation *across* models. In practice, ELD in many classrooms and across program models has tended to be weak. The development of home language literacy and language has often been weak as well. The result has been that many English Learners do not develop strength in either language.

### **History of inconsistent programs**

Aside from the issue of which program model an English Learner has received, the inconsistency of programs over time appears to be a major contributing factor to the creation of Long Term English Learners. Typically, Long Term English Learners have received inconsistent language development in their years of schooling in the United States. This inconsistency results in limited opportunities for academic language development in both their home language and English — and the accumulation of academic deficits over time. To some degree, this inconsistency is due to mobility and transiency as children move from one school to another across districts, or one school to another within a district where there is no consistent or aligned language policy or programs. In many cases, the inconsistency occurs as students move through the grades even within a school and experience yearly changes in the kind of English Learner program and instruction provided. The past decade has seen a steady abandonment of bilingual programs or watering down of programs under the pressures of English-only testing and misinformed guidance from school improvement coaches who do not know the strong research on the role of home language as a foundation for academic success and English literacy. Some of the shifts have been due to these intentional changes. Few administrators have had training or guidance in understanding what constitutes a strong English Learner program or the critical components of any particular model that impacts its success.

At times, however, inconsistency is a result of differing individual decisions and perspectives from one classroom teacher to another, and from grade level to grade level regarding how the needs of English Learners should be addressed within a school. A long-term substitute teacher placed in a bilingual classroom may not believe in the program, and emphasize English — while the preceding teacher may have emphasized home language and done little ELD.

Inconsistencies result from multiple factors: lack of clear district language policy and guidelines defining what should be occurring, administrators who lack understanding about what should be in place, inadequate professional development for teachers, the lack of state-adopted ELD materials so that what gets used in one classroom may or may not bear resemblance to what gets used in another. However it happens, the lack of consistent language development in English and in their home language that occurs in the lives of Long Term English Learners leaves significant gaps — linguistic and academic — and contributes to the belief that “*I am not as capable as my peers.*” This bounce from one program to another is referred to by some, aptly, as the ping pong effect. The patterns of alternating placement in an English Learner program one year and mainstream another have also been called “revolving door policies.”<sup>26</sup>

The research on language and academic progress makes clear that consistency in program *matters* across the grades, as does strong, faithful implementation of research-based models. The coherence of program over time and articulation is another major factor in producing high achievement. Yet Long Term English Learners apparently enjoy very little of this.

### **A narrowed curriculum — and partial access to the curriculum**

While acquiring English, English Learners have only as much access to the curriculum as the teacher finds ways to make it comprehensible. By definition, an English Learner does not have sufficient mastery of English to understand and participate fully in an English-taught curriculum. This means that during the years they are learning English, much of the science, social studies, and language arts that is being taught is learned only partially.

There have long been discrepancies in access and exposure to an enriched curriculum between schools in lower socio-economic communities and those in wealthier communities, between high-minority enrollment schools and schools with fewer minority groups. The well-documented differences in the presence of school libraries, science labs, technology, experienced teachers, and adequate facilities have been a persistent feature of the landscape of unequal education in our nation and state. Aside from the very crucial issues of equity in this unequal distribution, the development of academic language for English Learners is impeded when language development is taught in the absence of a full and enriched curriculum. Language development occurs not only through an explicit Language Arts

curriculum but through the use of language as a vehicle for learning academic content and learning about the world. Social studies and science are particularly rich content areas for the development of language.

In the past decade, several forces have contributed to a narrowed curriculum. For people who have not read the research on how second language development takes place, it seems like common sense that if students are not doing well in English, you should increase the time spent in teaching them English. In fact, more time does not translate to better outcomes.<sup>27</sup> But the result of those beliefs has been to crowd out other areas of the curriculum to make time for more and more instruction in language arts. Furthermore, in efforts to focus underperforming schools on the essential tasks of teaching English reading and math, a series of misguided state policies and practices have emerged that have also unintentionally resulted in a narrowing of curriculum for students attending underperforming schools. These are policies of increasing mandated minutes and hours to be spent in Language Arts and Math — crowding out time for other subjects. This is heavily impacting English Learners.

A statewide survey in 2009 found that among schools for whom the low achievement of the English Learner subgroup resulted in the school being placed into Program Improvement or High Priority School Grant status, almost two-thirds (65%) reported that corrective actions required them to expand the hours of the day spent on English Language Arts and Math resulting in reduced access to science and social studies. In 17% of the schools, students no longer receive science and social studies at all. In 28% of the schools, English Learners do not get art or music at all, and almost half of the schools had reduced art and music as part of their corrective action.<sup>28</sup>

### **Socially segregated, linguistically isolated**

In California many English Learners (especially Spanish-speaking English Learners) go to school in linguistically isolated communities. And within those schools, they tend to be clustered primarily with other English Learners. This results in few opportunities to interact with/engage with native English speakers, to hear and learn English from other English Learners. Linguistic research on second language development cites interaction with native English speakers as a key component in motivation, in providing the necessary opportunities to actually use the language in authentic situations, and providing good English models. Where English Learners are socially segregated or linguistically isolated, they learn English with and from other English Learners — and depend upon the teacher to be the sole English model.

### **Transnational Moves — Transnational Schooling**

Most Long Term English Learners were born in the United States and have been in United States schools from the start, but they have not necessarily lived in

the United States continuously. The New York City study found that many Long Term English Learners have a history of transnational schooling — spending some time in schools in one country, and some time in the United States, with movement back and forth over the course of their education. Each move results in gaps in knowledge due to non-alignment of the curricula across national school systems. And, more significantly, because students are seldom in bilingual programs in either country, every move from the United States to another nation results in cessation of English language development. Every move back to the United States results in cessation of the home language development. The Menken and Kleyn study of Long Term English Learners in New York City found that these international moves tend to occur repeatedly, creating “*a cycle of adjustment and readjustment*” as well as new decisions each time about placement and program. They also found that the schooling outside the United States tended to be for short durations, and did not result in literacy development in their home language. However, district inquiries in California that reviewed cumulative record files did not find the same extent of this transnational schooling that was found in New York. This is an issue requiring further research.

# Characteristics of Long Term English Learners

**B**y the time Long Term English Learners arrive in secondary schools, there is a set of characteristics that describe their overall profile. Their academic and linguistic issues are complex and include the following:

## **Long Term English Learners struggle academically**

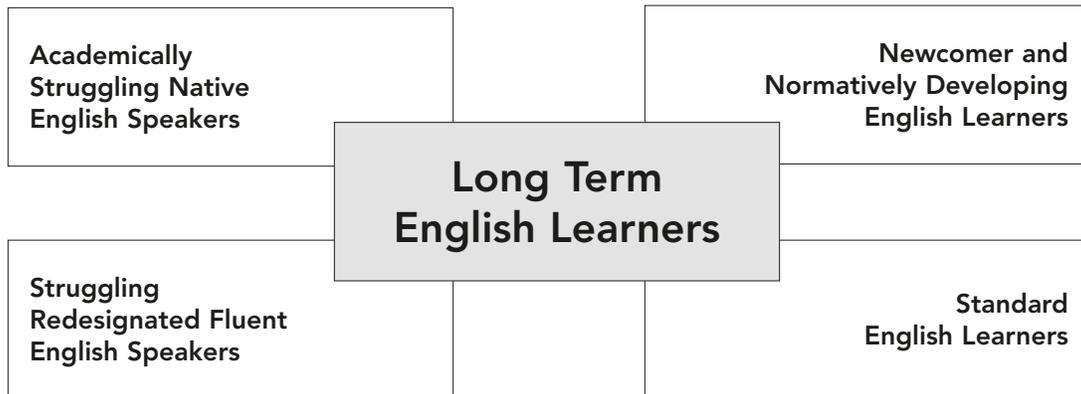
A definitional characteristic of Long Term English Learners is that they are not doing well academically. They are not progressing in English language development as would normatively be expected, and they struggle with the academic work expected of them. Typically, grades plummet, and the general profile of a Long Term English Learner is a student with a grade point average of less than 2.0. Test scores tend to show that achievement in math and English language arts is two to three years below grade level. The gaps are apparent by fourth grade in math as well as English language arts. By eighth grade, students who are still classified as English Learners demonstrate some of the lowest performance of any student group. English proficient students meet grade level expectations at more than five times the rate of English Learners. By eleventh grade, 74% of English Learners are at the Below and Far Below Basic levels in algebra 1, and 78% in language Arts.



## **Long Term English Learners have distinct language issues**

Long Term English Learners share some characteristics with other groups of students, but occupy a unique space with regard to language issues. (See Figure on next page.) While their California English Language Development Test (CELDT)

**Long Term English Learners share characteristics with other groups — but also have a unique set of needs**



profile may look similar to other English Learners, they have spent most or all of their lives in the United States and do not share the newcomer’s unfamiliarity with the culture or lack of exposure to English. Long Term English Learners struggle academically at several years below grade level. Thus, their California Standards Test (CST) scores might look similar to struggling adolescent native speakers, and they also struggle with academic language and comprehending academic texts. Yet they are still English Learners — with gaps in the basic foundation of the English language. They share much in common with other Standard English Learner groups — the mix of English vocabulary superimposed on the structure of their heritage language and the use of a dialect of English that differs from academic English. Yet they are still acquiring basic English syntax, grammar, structures, and vocabulary that native English speakers have by virtue of growing up in homes where English was the spoken language. Generally, the linguistic characteristics of Long Term English Learners include:

***Long Term English Learners are able to be high functioning in social situations in both their home language and in English***

In the research literature, Long Term English Learners are often described as orally bilingual.<sup>29,30</sup> Most of them function relatively well in everyday social interactions in both their home language and in English. But the vocabulary they draw upon in both social and academic contexts tends to be at once general and imprecise.

Because they have lived most or all of their lives in the United States, they usually have been exposed to English and been in schools in which English is the primary language of instruction. Thus, they have had the opportunities to develop everyday English. The English to which they are exposed, however, is generally not through native speakers of the language. Nonetheless they sound in many ways like their adolescent native English-speaking peers. They continue to use their home

language within the home (and sometimes community) context. As a result, they are able to be high functioning in social interactions in both English and their home language. Despite coming from homes in which a language other than English is spoken, however, many English Learners by the time they get to secondary schools use their home language only in limited ways. Many are in the process of losing their home language,<sup>31</sup> and prefer using English.<sup>32</sup> The language Long Term English Learners tend to use and the vocabulary they draw upon is an “imprecise”<sup>33</sup> social language. They exhibit fossilized features of language based upon the home language system superimposed with English vocabulary, and frequently code-switch. This is commonly referred to with terms such as “Spanglish” or “Chinglish,” and while it is expressive and functional in many social situations, it is not a strong foundation for the language demands of academic work in Standard English.

### ***Weak academic language, and gaps in reading/writing skills***

Long Term English Learners have weak academic language and significant gaps in reading and writing. For each Long Term English Learner, however, the gaps vary depending how long they remained in a specific language-learning setting, the number of changes and inconsistencies in their education, and the timing at which these changes occurred related to their linguistic development. Generally, however, Long Term English Learners lack rich oral language and literacy skills in scholastic English needed to participate and succeed in academic work. They exhibit little to no literacy skills in either language and often only a skeleton academic vocabulary in their home language. In order to engage with the academic demands of secondary school curriculum, they must learn more complex syntax, richer oral language, and the specialized vocabulary needed to understand academic text and participate in classroom discussions. When Long Term English Learners are asked about their academic experiences in school, they often talk about struggles with reading textbooks, making sense of specialized words, and handling long written passages. Teachers looking closely at the work of this group of students often notice significant deficits in writing. Writing is generally weak, approached by Long Term English Learners as written down oral language and suffering from both lack of understanding of academic genres and still weak proficiency in basic English syntax, grammar and vocabulary.<sup>34</sup>

### ***The majority of Long Term English Learners are “stuck” at Intermediate levels of English proficiency or below: others reach higher levels of English proficiency but do not attain adequate enough academic language to be reclassified***

There are two linguistic profiles of Long Term English Learners in terms of where their development plateaus. The majority appear to get “stuck” and to remain at an Intermediate level of English proficiency (Level III on the CELDT) or below. Some of these students actually lose ground as the standards of English proficiency required to score as proficient and the language required for grade-level

academic work increases through the grades. There is a smaller, but still significant number, of Long Term English Learners who attain “CELDT proficiency”<sup>35</sup> but who after several years at that level still cannot meet the California Standards Test criteria or grades criteria for reclassification as English Proficient. This is because “CELDT proficiency” is actually a low measure of English proficiency, far lower than the English proficiency required to score at Basic or above on the California Standards Test in English Language Arts.

A 2005 analysis of California English Learners’ tenth grade scores found that 60% scored Proficient on the statewide assessment of English language development (CELDT) while only 3% scored proficient on the more rigorous scale of the California Standards Test in English Language Arts.<sup>36</sup>

**Many Long Term English Learners have developed habits of non-engagement, learned passivity and invisibility in school, and have not developed the behaviors associated with academic success.**

Long Term English Learners are not a group that draws notice or causes problems. In fact, some teachers remark that these students are better behaved than their English proficient and native speakers students. Teachers’ comments in focus groups included statements such as: *“They are well-behaved, but they don’t do the work.”* *“They come in with their hoods over their head and put their head down on the desk — not causing trouble, trying to not call attention to themselves.”* *“They try to stay under the radar.”* *“They never talk, they don’t do their work.”* *“I have trouble getting them to be active in class.”* This is learned behavior. It is not surprising that students without command of the language of the classroom would be reluctant to participate. And, over years, non-participation becomes a habit.

However, Long Term English Learners don’t see their own behavior in quite the same way. They say they are being courteous, respectful students. Primarily, they see themselves as “well-behaved” in school. To the surprise of administrators, counselors and teachers who conducted interviews and focus groups with Long Term English Learners, many said that they enjoy school, don’t find the work hard, and *feel* they are being successful students. A closer look indicates that they do not understand the behaviors associated with academic success and engagement. Long Term English Learners have (due to their gaps in English, and the pedagogy of teachers who do not know how to engage English Learners or hold low expectations for their engagement) been passed from grade to grade assuming that their behavior and performance is what is expected. They have not been explicitly taught nor expected to behave academically engaged. One school district surveyed two groups of students across three high schools: Reclassified FEP students in Advanced Placement classes, and Long Term English Learners in Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) class for English Learners.

The groups were similar in the desire to go to college and in their *perceptions* that they were doing well in school and taking the right courses to lead towards college. Both groups equally attended classes and brought needed materials to class. Their behaviors differed, however, in interesting ways. The biggest differences were in the amount of reading done outside of classes, their comfort in approaching academic texts, the habits of writing down what their homework assignments were, the depth of understanding about assignments and expectations, habits of seeking help, and recognition that they were supposed to participate in class discussions.

**The majority of Long Term English Learners want to go to college, and are unaware that their academic skills, academic record and the courses they are taking are not preparing them to reach that goal. Neither students, their parents nor their community knows that they are in academic jeopardy**

One of the successes in this era of school improvement has been creating an overall climate that carries the message about the importance of going to college. Consistently, research and district inquiries find that almost all Long Term English Learner students say they want to go to college. They think they are doing fine. Their parents assume that if their children are being promoted from one grade to the next, they must have mastered the skills of that grade.<sup>37</sup> The students do not recognize that their academic record and the courses they are taking (and not taking) in high school have greatly limited their chances of graduating prepared to go to college. They do not realize that the “Early Advanced” label (Level IV CELDT) accorded to their English skills on the CELDT is actually a very low rating that still considers them an English Learner without the English skills needed for full academic participation. Their talk about planning to go to college does not match the reality of low scores, low grade point averages, and a critical gap in amassing credits needed to graduate. Many Long Term English Learners do not know they are English Learners, particularly those who have been placed into mainstream settings for years and are socially comfortable in English. They are surprised when a counselor or teacher tells them they are an English Learner. This happens often when a student transitions from elementary to middle school or from middle school to high school where there is no articulation of programs. Suddenly, the student is placed into classes for English Learners. “*Why do I have to take the CELDT again?*” “*Why do I have to be in ELD classes?*” It is rare for the student or their parents to be provided information about moving along the trajectory towards English proficiency, what constitutes English proficiency for academic purposes, the implications of the CELDT test for the classes they are given, and the relationship of all of this to graduation and college preparation.

## **Long Term English Learners have significant gaps in academic background knowledge**

Long Term English Learners struggle with both a linguistic challenge and academic challenge. The two are closely related. The impact of weak English language skills and not having received targeted language development is limited attainment of all subject matter. A student needs literacy skills in order to access the academic content being taught. Simply, if students don't know the language used for instruction, they miss some or all of the academic content that is taught in a language they don't comprehend. Because they perform below grade level in reading and writing and lack academic vocabulary, they struggle in all content areas that require literacy. And they have missed chunks of curriculum and background information that were taught in the periods of their schooling where they may have been in and out of programs, with inconsistent support or no support. Over the course of their years in school, Long Term English Learners have amassed gaps in language development that has impacted their access to and achievement in academic content areas. As a result of their insufficient academic language there are gaps in academic knowledge. The specific academic gaps that Long Term English Learners have depend in large part on the degree of support they received in any particular school year for accessing curriculum in a language they hadn't yet mastered.

## **Some Long Term English Learners have become discouraged learners, tuned out, ready to drop out of high school**

For many years, Long Term English Learners are able to “hang in” with school, despite academic struggles and falling further behind. Most are amazingly resilient and optimistic, believing they are on the path to graduation, college, and the future they want. (See section above.) Over time, however, some Long Term English Learners have become convinced they simply can't do it, and are wearied of not understanding and doing poorly. Interviews with students indicate that this begins around fifth grade. By high school, this group has disengaged. By this point in their schooling, they have internalized a sense of failure, and no longer see themselves as belonging in school. They may come to school; they may not. Many drop out.

# How are They Currently Served in Secondary Schools?

Only four districts responding to the Californians Together survey have designated programs or formal approaches designed for Long Term English Learners. Instead, the typical “program” and placements for Long Term English Learners in California appear to be similar to what they received in elementary school. It consists of the following:

## **Inappropriate placement in mainstream — no program**

In California, according to surveys of districts, the most common “program” for Long Term English Learners in secondary schools is placement into “mainstream” classes designed for and mixed with English proficient students. Teachers often do not know they have English Learners in their classes. There is nothing about these classes (instruction, pacing, curriculum, grouping) that addresses the language development or access needs of Long Term English Learners.<sup>38</sup> The fact that teachers of these classes have a Crosscultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD) credential obscures the fact that the instruction, support, curriculum, and materials are not designed to address the specific language gaps, language development issues, and needs of Long Term English Learners. An inquiry in one district, looking at the range of English proficiency levels in mainstream classes found, that many classrooms have students ranging from non-English proficient (no English) to honors level students with high



academic and native levels of English and all levels in between. Differentiated instruction is difficult and made more so when the range in skills is so broad. In these classes, even though a teacher may not be formally aware that some students are English Learners, teachers tend to teach towards the “middle.”<sup>39</sup>

### **Placed and kept in classes with newcomer English Learners**

Most secondary school English Learner programs are designed with newcomers in mind. The English Language Development (ELD) classes are designed as a three- or four-year sequence, and students are placed in them by English proficiency level as determined by their scores on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). English Learner “Specially Designed Academic Content in English” (SDAIE) content classes are the placement for English Learners until they get through an Intermediate level of proficiency. For Long Term English Learners, who seem to plateau at an Intermediate level of proficiency, districts and schools with this approach to placement keep Long Term English Learners in these separate English Learner settings indefinitely. For example, if a Long Term English Learner remains at a CELDT Level III (Intermediate) for three or more years, they remain in the ELD III class. Because they remain in these classes for years, this becomes in many ways an “ESL ghetto.”<sup>40</sup> Research from New York City indicates that this is the pattern for most Long Term English Learners, though it appears to be less prevalent in California. Eight of the 40 districts that responded to the Californians Together survey indicated that this is the approach in their schools. Long Term English Learners, based on their CELDT level, are put in the same classes with other English Learners.

### **Unprepared teachers**

Whether Long Term English Learners are placed in mainstream classes or in designated English Learner SDAIE content classes, they often are taught by teachers without the preparation, support, or strategies to address their needs. Secondary school teachers are generally not prepared to teach reading and writing skills. They do not have training in language development. Their focus has been on the academic content to be taught in the class. They are challenged by how to teach grade-level, advanced secondary school academic content to students without the English foundation or literacy skills, needed to access that content. Few teachers feel they have the tools, skills or preparation to meet the needs of their English Learner students — and, few have received professional development to do so.<sup>41</sup> This is made even more problematic because these classes are disproportionately assigned to the least prepared teachers in the school. In too many settings, as teachers become more veteran, they earn the rights to “move up” to the honors classes.<sup>42</sup>

In California, there have been ongoing efforts for years to strengthen the preparation of teachers to be better able to meet the needs of the diverse students

and communities served by the schools. The California CLAD Credential sought to infuse understandings of the role of language and culture in education into teacher preparation. Now, having a CLAD credential is treated as synonymous in schools and accountability for having the skills to teach English Learners. Yet the preparation teachers actually have as a result of attaining a CLAD credential is far from what is actually needed.

### **Overassigned and inadequately served in Intervention and Reading Support classes**

Long Term English Learners run the gamut from those several years below grade level with exceptionally weak language skills for academic purposes in both their home language and in English to those who are getting by adequately but still with persistent errors in language and weak vocabulary. In California, based on test scores in Reading/Language Arts on the California Standards Test (CST), a student who is several years below grade level (testing Far Below Basic — Tier 3) often is assigned to Intensive Intervention classes. The classes include both English Learners and native English speakers. For English Learners, this takes the place of English Language Development (ELD). The 2008 state adoption of intervention materials required Tier 3 to include an ELD component as one part of the materials, so Long Term English Learners placed in this setting are receiving some degree of language development. The focus is, however, primarily on reading, not sufficiently incorporating the rich, targeted oral language development needed by Long Term English Learners.

Those Long Term English Learners who score Below Basic or Basic (called Tier 2), are placed into Strategic Intervention classes, mixed with native English speakers. Again, this takes the place of an ELD class. The Strategic Intervention does not have an ELD component, and actually has no specific curriculum. Double-blocked with the “regular” English Language Arts class and core curriculum, the second period is most typically used for review or more time on the same material as was covered in the first period. There may be or may not be a writing component.

Some schools apparently put students scoring at Below Basic and Basic into reading support classes. The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth released a comprehensive review of research, gleaning findings across 3,000 reports and publications. They found that instructional strategies effective with native English speakers do not have as positive a learning impact on language minority students, and that “*instruction in the key components of reading is necessary but not sufficient for teaching language minority students to read and write proficiently in English.*”<sup>43</sup> Thus, the programs and approaches used in literacy intervention programs designed for native English speakers may help English Learners to some degree, but the gap will grow — and the specific needs of Long Term English Learners will not be adequately addressed.

In describing the program and instructional elements that address the needs of English Learners, the National Literacy Panel specifically speaks to the need for oral language development recognizing that *language* development is not the same as *literacy* (decoding, fluency, etc.) development. “*It is not enough to teach reading skills alone to language minority students; extensive oral English language development must be incorporated into successful literacy instruction.*”

Teachers of these intervention and support classes are seldom provided a prescription, program, curriculum, or assessments for how to unpack and address the language development needs of their Long Term English Learners. The materials are reported to be light on the kind of writing skills and oral practice Long Term English Learners need and do not address the oral language and vocabulary required to successfully engage in academic work. As a result, *language* development (e.g., grammar, structure, syntax, practice) seldom occurs in these classes. Intervention classes are not an English Language Development (ELD) program, and do not adequately or directly address the needs of Long Term English Learners who need courses that address their *language development* needs as English Learners. One member of a district leadership team conducting part of an inquiry on Long Term English Learners called this pervasive problem, “*intervention fatigue.*”

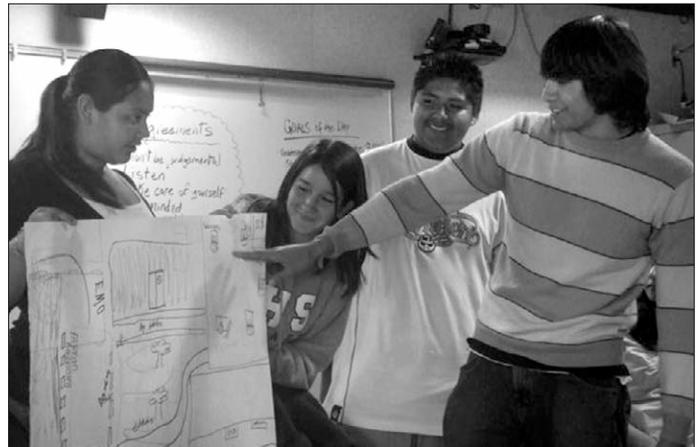
### **No electives, and limited access to the full curriculum**

A Long Term English Learner’s schedule tends to be filled with English/English Language Development (ELD), intervention and support classes, and math. The ELD classes in many districts do not receive university approved A-G credit, so Long Term English Learners who remain in ELD because their CELDT scores don’t progress beyond Intermediate levels cannot earn the English credits for college preparation. The number of intervention and support classes in English and math crowd out access to electives and in some schools science and social studies.

# What Works? What Should Long Term English Learners Be Getting in School?

While the research literature that is available does not yet add up to the solid foundation that ideally would inform responses to this critical challenge, it does suggest appropriate approaches for meeting the needs of Long Term English Learners — and is supported significantly by the work of districts in California that have been piloting those approaches.

Increasingly educators are becoming aware that the existing programs and approaches are not working for Long Term English Learners. Concerned about not meeting Annual Yearly Progress goals set by the state because the English Learner subgroup is lagging in achievement, some districts have begun to dig deeper into what is occurring. They are discovering the extent of the Long Term English Learner population. In response, a variety of strategies are being tried, and in those districts, new ground is being broken in crafting the mix of courses, supports, instruction, and curriculum that works better for Long Term English Learners.



State and school districts have a *legal* responsibility to ensure equal educational access through programs that speak to the needs of *all* English Learners by developing their proficiency to the level required for participation in an English-taught curriculum and providing access to the core curriculum. In taking responsibility for providing this access for Long Term English Learners, there are several design principles that should guide what is done.

## Basic principles

***Urgency, acceleration and focus!*** They no longer have the luxury of years remaining in school to close academic gaps and develop language proficiency and literacy. By high school, they have only a few short years left in the schooling system to overcome deficits accumulated since kindergarten. This means that whatever courses and instruction they receive needs to be particularly targeted to most efficiently, most directly, and most powerfully address their needs.

***Long Term English Learners have distinct needs that have to be addressed.*** The basic understanding underlying a strong Long Term English Learner program is that solutions must be designed *for* them, and the recognition that their needs are distinct and different from newcomer and normatively developing English Learners, and are also unique and different from those of struggling native English speakers. Additionally, there is diversity of need within the Long Term English Learner population which requires assessments to accurately diagnose.

***Language development is more than literacy development; Long Term English Learners need both.*** Courses, strategies, and instruction focused on literacy skills are important but not sufficient. Long Term English Learners need development in all four domains of language (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and for multiple functions and contexts!

***Long Term English Learners have both language development and academic gaps that must be addressed across the curriculum.*** English Language Development (ELD) alone is not enough. Building the skills and addressing gaps of Long Term English Learners has to become the responsibility of the entire school (administrators, counselors, support services, and mainstream content teachers). They need to focus on the task of accelerating and supporting Long Term English Learners' progress. All teachers have to and can teach language development related to their subjects. Similarly, ELD classes have to be a space and place in a school day where students can receive the language development that they need for academic success in their other classes. The two tasks are entwined.

***Remember the crucial role of primary language development.*** An English Learner's home language plays an important role in their overall language and literacy development. The degree to which it is developed impacts mastery of English literacy as well. Schools have to implement mechanisms to support home language as well as English and to teach students issues of contrastive analysis and transfer across the two languages. Students cannot be expected to develop high levels of literacy for academic work in English if they are being hobbled by not engaging their home language.

***Long Term English Learners need rigor.*** The curriculum provided to Long Term English Learners cannot be dumbed down, watered down, or simplified. They

need challenging, rigorous, relevant curricula along with the instructional strategies and targeted support based on individualized assessment that will enable them to succeed in a rigorous class.

***Long Term English Learners need invitation, support and insistence that they become active participants in their own education.*** In the classroom, teachers need continuous strategies to engage students and to promote student responsibility. Students need information about their own progress and how it relates to their life goals — and help to develop the organization and study skills that are needed for them to pursue those goals. They need to know that the CELDT is important and will be used to make key decisions about their course assignments. They need to know what specific courses constitute a pathway to college. Student choice and opportunities for student leadership must be part of the Long Term English Learner school experience.

***Relationships matter.*** As a group of students who have been largely overlooked throughout their schooling, it makes a difference when adults reach out, listen, and mentor them. As one Long Term English Learner put it, *“I need to know someone cares — not just about my homework being turned in, not just about my scores, but about ME and my education.”*

***Maximum integration with other students without sacrificing access.*** It is essential that Long Term English Learners break out of the “ESL ghetto” and be fully integrated into the life of the school. This cannot be done, however, at the expense of their meaningful access to an education. Their integration comes with an assurance that their teachers, counselors, and other adults are prepared to support them for success in those integrated settings.

## **A recommended secondary school program for Long Term English Learners:**

While the above principles can be applied across contexts, the actual program that can be mounted in any one school or district will differ depending on the numbers of students, dispersal across district sites, and capacity. The following program is provided as an example of a comprehensive program for Long Term English Learners. Every one of these components has been piloted and is now being employed in some California districts and schools in the state with very promising results. Some of these are referenced within the sections below.

### ***I. Specialized English Language Development course(s)***

A course designed specifically for Long Term English Learners, sometimes called “Academic Language Development” (ALD), focuses on powerful oral language development, explicit literacy development, instruction in the academic uses of English, high quality writing, extensive reading of relevant texts, and an emphasis on academic language and complex vocabulary. Long Term English

Learners should be concurrently enrolled in a grade-level English class mixed heterogeneously with strong native English speakers and taught by the same teacher. This class should be double-blocked with the ALD/ELD class so it can focus more specifically on the language demands and language development needed for success in the grade-level English class.<sup>44</sup> *Districts have approached the structure of this class in somewhat different ways. In Escondido Union High School District, it is a double-block ELD III Intensive (approved for U.C. A-G credit). In Ventura Unified School District, a double-period block combines the regular grade-level English classes with a specially designed ELD IV period, taught by the same teacher who can focus in the second period on the language demands and language development needed for success in the first period English Language Arts class. Modesto City Schools rotates one semester with a double block of Academic Language Development (for Long Term English Learners) and the next semester with a double block of Read 180.*

## ***II. Clustered placement in heterogeneous and rigorous grade-level content classes (including honors, A-G) mixed with English proficient students and taught with differentiated instructional strategies.***

In order to maximize integration with English proficient students, increase interaction with strong English models, and ensure curricular rigor, Long Term English Learners should be placed into grade-level content classes in intentional clusters of “like Long Term English Learners” among English proficient students. Long Term English Learners should not comprise more than one-third of the class. The teachers of these classes should have a CLAD credential and be provided with information about the specific language gaps and needs of the cluster enrolled in their class. Professional development should be provided to teachers in differentiation and in appropriate Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies to scaffold access to the content. The success of Long Term English Learners in these classes should be carefully monitored and trigger academic support as needed (e.g., Saturday School, tutors, homework support, online tutorial support, etc.). *This cluster approach is currently being used in Ventura Unified School District and in Modesto City Schools. The rigorous placement, monitoring and Saturday school approach is in place at Orange Glen High School in Escondido Union High School District.*

## ***III. Explicit language and literacy development across the curriculum***

Teaching subject matter to English Learners requires direct, explicit instruction on strategies needed to build vocabulary and comprehend grade-level texts and participate in discussion about the content. All classes should be designed for explicit language development and focus on academic language as needed for studying the specific academic content of the class. Long Term English Learners need explicit instruction in academic uses of English, with a focus on comprehension,

vocabulary development, and advanced grammatical structures needed to comprehend and produce academic language. They also need, however, explicit instruction in the language of the content used in the discipline being studied. Lessons should be designed around carefully structured language objectives for integrating subject matter content, vocabulary development, and content-related reading and writing skills. Teachers should be trained in doing text-centric analysis of the language demands needed in order to do academic tasks. Language objectives should target the language forms needed for the academic work. The classes should be interactive, with structured and carefully planned activities that have students actively using language and engaging with the academic content. Teachers must understand the importance of getting students **talking** about academic content to support the learning and processing of content, and work collaboratively to plan around common language functions and concepts. *Anaheim Union High School District uses a coaching model to develop these consistent approaches across the curriculum, as does Torch Middle School in Bassett Unified School District.*

#### ***IV. Native speakers classes (articulated sequence through Advanced Placement levels)***

Wherever possible, Long Term English Learners should be enrolled in an articulated, high quality program of primary language development. These courses should be designed for native speakers, and include explicit literacy instruction aligned to the literacy standards in English and designed for skill transfer across languages. Such a series of courses provides solid preparation and a pathway into Advanced Placement Language and Literature, and can include cultural focus and empowering pedagogy. Long Term English Learners of less-common languages for whom an articulated series of native language development classes is not feasible, can be placed into a language-based elective (e.g., drama, journalism) or computer lab with software that focuses on native language development. If that is not possible, home language literacy and development should continue through community/school partnership programs afterschool. *Escondido Union High School District has won a Golden Apple Award for their Spanish for Native Speakers series which has increased their Latino college-going rate (through success in getting students into and through Advanced Placement classes). Their model includes tools for assessment and placement, and articulation with feeder middle school districts. Across their Spanish for Native Speakers and their English courses in the school, similar curricular and instructional approaches are used — focused primarily around the Write Institute units in English and the Write Institute “Aspire” units in Spanish. Whittier Union High School District has partnerships with community heritage language schools, enabling students from less common language groups to be able to develop literacy in their home language and earn high school A-G credits for their studies there.*

**V. Placement for accelerated progress and maximum rigor paired with formal systems for monitoring success**

Long Term English Learners should be placed into rigorous, college preparation courses (see II above) and specialized English language development courses (see I above). The master schedule is arranged to facilitate accelerated movement needed to overcome gaps and earn credits, as well as to allow for adjusting a student's placements to provide increased supports. For example, all ninth grade English and English Language Development (ELD) classes can be scheduled at the same time. A formal monitoring system can review mid-semester assessments and grades for each Long Term English Learner in order to determine whether placement needs to be adjusted and what kind of supports might be needed to improve student success. *Escondido Union High School District has developed a district-wide approach, training counselors from each site to monitor English Learner placement at 12 week intervals and adjust placements as needed.*

**VI. Schoolwide focus on study skills, metacognition, and learning strategies**

To address the need for Long Term English Learners to develop study skills and learning strategies, a schoolwide emphasis on these skills, and the inclusion of AVID-like and College Board techniques into classes in which Long Term English Learners are enrolled should be implemented. In addition, supports (e.g., after-school or Saturday sessions, tutoring, etc.) for students to help them understand homework assignments and complete them must be available. *Holland Middle School in Baldwin Park is the site for schoolwide AVID for English Learners. This approach developed in part from their focus on Long Term English Learners.*

**VII. Data Chats, CELDT preparation and support, and testing accommodations**

To increase awareness of the seriousness and implications of the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), and to build student responsibility for their education, schools should provide students and their parents with information and counseling about their test data (CELDT overall and subscores, California Standards Test scores, grades, credits) along with discussions about the implications of this data. Students need to know what they must do to meet the criteria for reclassification. CELDT testing should be handled with the same seriousness as other testing. It should be administered by classroom teachers, calendared on the schedule, and located in quiet rooms. Allowable testing accommodations on standards tests, such as translated glossaries, flexible settings, and hearing directions in the home language should be used for Long Term English Learners as for other English Learners. *Ventura Unified School District, Torch Middle School in Bassett Unified School District, and Holland Middle School in Baldwin Park each implement approaches to engaging students and parents directly in understanding and gaining support related to testing and assessments.*

### ***VIII. Inclusive, affirming school climate and relevant texts***

Issues of full participation and engagement in school, healthy identity development, and positive intergroup relationships should be addressed through strategies to build an inclusive and affirming school climate. These include, for example, literature and curricular material that speak to the histories and cultures of the students, intentional outreach for extracurricular and club activities that seek to diversify participation, provision of awards or multilingual designations on the diplomas of students for attainment of biliteracy and mastery of two or more languages, and elective courses that focus on the histories and contributions of the diverse cultures represented among the student body. The school should be involved in intentional efforts to end the social isolation and structured isolation of English Learners through activities that build relationships across groups. Empowering pedagogy in a school incorporates explicit leadership development components that help young people develop as responsible members, cultural brokers, and bridges of their communities. *Examples of this are the Bridging Multiple Worlds student leadership program and sociology courses in Escondido Union High School District and the Capturing Kids Hearts program in Whittier Union High School District.*

### **Responsive and targeted instruction for Long Term English Learners**

Creating the right combination of course offerings and carefully placing and monitoring student success in those courses is a necessary and major component of providing the education Long Term English Learners need. Structures, program design, and placement create more optimal opportunities for student needs to be addressed and targeted learning to occur. However, what goes on inside those classrooms is equally crucial. Structural reform alone is not enough. Instruction must be addressed.

Placing students with language needs and academic gaps into rigorous courses with high-level content depends upon instruction that is designed and adapted to their needs. This means that districts must pay attention to clarity of expectations about what quality instruction looks like, professional development in how to implement that vision of instruction, attention to the depth and demands of the tasks students are assigned in those classes, and curriculum materials that facilitate differentiation for varying levels of needs.

Good instruction for Long Term English Learners begins with teachers having information. First, teachers need to know they have Long Term English Learners enrolled in their class and have access to assessments that pinpoint the specific gaps in language development and academic skills students need to fill. Teachers need to understand the language demands of the content they are teaching. This includes careful analysis of the language-related demands of the texts and thoughtful reflection on the discipline-specific discourse patterns and vocabulary that students need for the tasks assigned in the class.

Teachers also need to know their students — who they are, how they experience school, and what matters to them. Much of the research literature related to language minority youth cites the importance of “culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy” and “empowering pedagogy.” These call upon teachers to draw upon students’ life experiences and wisdom, to focus upon helping students develop their own “voice,” to provide opportunities for students to make choices, to emphasize critical and deep thinking and reflection, and to find and include relevant texts that matter to students and captivate their attention. All students learn by making connections between what they already know and the new experiences, perspectives, and information they encounter. Pedagogy that encourages and supports students to bring their experiences, their culture, their heritage, and language into the classroom maximizes learning by allowing students to build upon the full foundation of their prior knowledge.<sup>45</sup>

Empowering pedagogy builds upon teachers’ genuine interest in and caring about students. It requires high expectations and the ability to communicate those expectations and the belief that students can do rigorous academic work. It is participatory by design. It brings into the classroom the topics that matter to students, and uses strategies that engage students in critical thinking, asking questions and making meaningful choices.

Teachers need skills for how to build upon the familiar, scaffold the unfamiliar through explicit activities, and elicit and respond to what students have to say. All of this requires that teachers adapt, shape, select from, and add to the curriculum and materials they are given. Pacing guides designed for native English speakers push teachers to keep going even if students aren’t comprehending the lessons, and tempt teachers to pass over the interactive activities so needed by Long Term English Learners. This needs to be confronted and changed. High quality instruction for Long Term English Learners recognizes that existing materials and programs are not sufficient for pinpointing the specific gaps and needs of this population. This means that schools need to invest in teachers’ knowledge and skills and create the collaborative mechanisms for teachers to work together in the endeavor of designing instruction for Long Term English Learners.

### **A strong elementary school program**

The trajectory to becoming a Long Term English Learner begins in elementary school. The secondary school programmatic recommendations listed above are designed to support students once they become Long Term English Learners, but comprehensive solutions require addressing the conditions that contributed towards the creation of Long Term status in the first place. Elementary school programs designed to prevent the development of stalled progress and academic failure include the following components:

- Dedicated, daily standards-based English Language Development (ELD) addressing specific needs of students at each fluency level supported with quality materials and focusing on all four domains of language — with a major emphasis on building a strong oral language foundation;
- Programs that develop the home language (oral and literacy) to threshold levels that serve as a foundation for strong development of English literacy and academic success (at least through third grade, more powerfully through fifth grade, and optimally ongoing throughout a student’s education). Teaching students to read in their first language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in English and provides students the benefits of bilingualism;
- Curriculum, instruction and strategies that promote transfer between English and the home language;
- Emphasis throughout the curriculum on enriched oral language development;
- Access to academic content is facilitated with modified instructional strategies and supplemental materials; and,
- Coherence and consistency of program across grades.

### **The District role**

It is the role of the district to ensure high quality implementation of research-based programs for English Learners through:

- Clearly defined pathways and descriptions of program models in English Learner Master Plans;
- Professional development (including coaching and collaborative time for Professional Learning Communities) for teachers and administrators in understanding the needs of English Learners and implementing research-based program models and strategies for implementation;
- Published expectations of growth and achievement for English Learners by length of time in program and by proficiency levels;
- Systems of observation and monitoring student progress;
- Clear language policy across the system;
- Emphasis on articulation between levels; and,
- Increased access to preschool programs designed for English Learners and to high quality early foundations for dual language development and school success.



# Systems Issues and Policy Recommendations

This is a very difficult time in public education in California. Severe budget shortages challenge even the most committed and visionary leaders trying to close persistent achievement gaps and create schools that provide quality education to all children. Beyond those overall challenges, though, are significant systems challenges facing districts in seeking to build programs and supports to meet the needs of Long Term English Learners and to provide the kind of leadership and clarity that is needed to end the creation of Long Term English Learners. These barriers include:



- **Data systems** that cannot track students longitudinally or produce analyses of progress by length of time in the United States and language proficiency levels resulting in lack of information and awareness about Long Term English Learners.

- **Shortage of teachers** who are prepared with the knowledge and skills needed to provide targeted, rigorous, and supportive instruction that is needed by Long Term English Learners. This is exacerbated because of insufficient resources to cover costs of developing and delivering teacher professional development and collaboration time — and insufficient state and district professional development that speaks to the specific needs of Long Term English Learners.

- **Lack of appropriate curriculum and materials** targeted for this population overall. The State Board of Education elected not to adopt explicit English Language Development materials in 2002, and opposed/voted down the criteria for the 2008 adoption of Language Arts programs that would have resulted in materials written specifically for English Learners.

- **Confusion** about what is heard by the field as contradictory mandates and counsel between English Learner related compliance, accountability related sanctions, and research on effective practices for English Learners. The framework for corrective action is neither informed by nor aligned with the research on effective approaches for English Learners. Compliance tools do not adequately differentiate between the needs of Long Term English Learners and other English Learners.

- **General misunderstanding and lack of knowledge of the research** about effective practices for Long Term English Learners, including lack of understanding about the important role of primary language development, misconceptions that learning English can occur in a short time, and prevalent beliefs that universal one-size-fits-all approaches and curriculum are appropriate and sufficient for English Learners.

- **Inadequate assessments and systems** to know how English Learners are doing or to identify English Learners who are not adequately progressing. High stakes assessments and state tests administered only in English and written for native English speakers which do not adequately inform about what English Learners know and can do result in labeling and imposing unfair sanctions on schools, and inappropriately informing student placement. To create a somewhat more valid assessment system, the state has adopted testing accommodations for English Learners for the California Standards Test and the high school graduation examination, but districts are often not aware that these accommodations exist and can be used and are not provided the materials and resources (e.g., translation glossaries, translated scripts for directions) which would facilitate the use of the accommodations. As a result only a small percentage of English Learners are provided the accommodations. No assessments in languages other than English are included in the calculation of the Annual Yearly Progress and the Achievement Performance Index for state accountability, resulting in devaluing and disregarding student progress measured in other languages and undermining primary language instruction. If these scores were to be used, more students would demonstrate proficiency and fewer schools would be placed in Program Improvement status and under sanctions. For example, in a third grade comparison of English Learners' scores on the Spanish Test of Standards (STS) for Math and the California Standards Test for Math, 33% more students demonstrated proficiency. The lack of inclusion of the STS for accountability purposes is one of the pressures contributing to the erosion and even disappearance of native language instruction.

- **Lack of direction and inadequate** materials related to English Language Development. The English Language Development (ELD) standards aren't recognized as a framework and guide for curriculum and instruction for English Learners. Since the State Board of Education's refusal to adopt the ELD standards as content standards, there has been a ripple effect on inadequate

attention to ELD. The argument that English Learners should be held to the same standards as everyone else has resulted in curriculum development, materials adoption, and professional development that does not directly address the needs of English Learners. It has left the work of adapting English Language Arts curriculum and instruction to the needs of English Learners and of developing ELD approaches/programs up to the discretion of individual districts and teachers. This has contributed towards inconsistent, weak, and often no ELD occurring.

- ***Inadequate infrastructure*** and district systems for monitoring and providing support to school sites in meeting the needs of English Learners.

- ***Lack of clarity about the meaning of “English proficiency,”*** lack of stated normative expectations for progress of English Learners towards English proficiency, and the kind of direct instruction and support needed to move English Learners along the continuum towards the English proficiency needed for academic success. The CELDT is not aligned to the California Standards Test (CST) in English Language Arts. The “Advanced” level on the CELDT is well below “Proficiency” on the CST. This is further complicated by the definition of a new category, “CELDT Proficient” created by the State Board of Education which can be earned by English Learners even before they reach the “Advanced” level on CELDT and which is understood by the field to release them from expectations that targeted instruction and support are needed for English Learners. Finally, the state target for AMAO 1 is very low, expecting just over half of the English Learners in the state to have to progress one level on the CELDT in a year.

These challenges are all matters for policy and state leadership. The reason civil rights legislation and court action was necessary in past decades is that schools on their own were not adequately including or addressing the needs of English Learners. The No Child Left Behind Act has created a new form of pressure on schools. Yet still throughout the state too many schools and districts make English Learners a low priority. It has taken state law, compliance monitoring, and protected categorical funding to build and maintain *some* measure of response to English Learners in the schools. That has been crucial. It must be maintained. But even that has not been sufficient.

State policies that protect resources and require schools to serve English Learners must be preserved. And *leadership* needs to step forward to clearly, squarely, fully make English Learners a focus of school improvement efforts in this state. Until that happens, Long Term English Learners will continue to be created and continue to struggle in the schools across our state.

The following state level recommendations are designed to move California towards making good on the promise of equal access to education and towards remedying the harm being done as English Learners become protracted and then Long Term English Learners.

***Recommendation 1: Create a standard state definition of Long Term English Learners and institute data collection mechanisms to support monitoring, early identification, planning, and response.***

We recommend that the state adopt a definition for Long Term English Learners and that the state require districts to collect and report data on the number of Long Term English Learners by grade level, their progress, and achievement. Students should be “flagged” starting at fourth grade when not performing at English Learner specific benchmark expectations for two years in a row. The R-30 Language Census and California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CalPADs) should require that this information be collected and reported by districts to the state.

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***Proposed Definition:*** *An English Learner who has continuously been in United States schools for 6+ years, has not met reclassification criteria, and shows evidence of inadequate progress towards meeting that criteria (e.g., stagnation or loss of proficiency on CELDT, missed benchmarks two years in a row, grade point average of 2.0 or lower, receiving two or more Ds or Fs in core academic courses, or lack of progress on the California Standards Test of Language Arts or Math).*

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Achievement data and dropout rates should be disaggregated to monitor Long Term English Learners as a distinct subgroup.

Schools should be required to monitor the progress of this cohort through the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) along with their plan to address the needs of Long Term English Learners.

AMAOs should be reported by cohorts: English Learners in the United States three years or less; English Learners in United States 4–6 years, and English Learners who have been in the United States 6+ years.

***Recommendation 2: Ensure availability of appropriate, intensive, and effective English Language Development materials and academic content materials to promote access to the core content.***

Invest in the development and adoption of English Language Development (ELD) materials aligned to the ELD standards and designed to address the full continuum of development to English proficiency, including the academic language needs of Long Term English Learners.

Establish criteria for new materials and adopt grade level academic content texts that have language objectives by English proficiency level tied to the linguistic demands of the texts and that support differentiated instruction for English Learners at various proficiency levels.

***Recommendation 3: Revise state compliance tools, corrective action frameworks, and other mechanisms that inform the field about expected practices with regards to English Learners so that these frameworks and tools set a clear and appropriate set of benchmark expectations for student progress, provide a consistent set of guidelines about good practices, speak to the differentiated needs of Long Term English Learners, and more accurately reflect research.***

We recommend that the California Department of Education review and revise (as needed) compliance and advisory materials and mechanisms to reflect the distinct needs of Long Term English Learners as differentiated from newcomer and “normatively developing” English Learners. This should include: specialized English Language development, Long Term English Learners specific interventions, and distinct program pathways, and support for differentiated approaches to class placement and grouping as based on assessed need and profile.

In situations where District/School Assistance and Intervention Team (DAIT/SAIT) providers are working with district or school sites to improve English learner achievement, we recommend a focus on the needs of Long Term English Learners including, but not limited to: use of intervention classes and materials that are designed for protracted English Learners (as distinct from struggling native-English speakers), specialized English Language Development focusing on academic language development and writing skills, placement in heterogeneous and rigorous classes with targeted support, and development of literacy in the primary language.

Rewrite the Nine Essential Components that constitute the framework for Corrective Action for schools in Program Improvement status, so they target the student subgroups that did not meet state and federal targets, and provide specific guidance built on the research for those subgroups. Guidelines for materials, language arts and math curriculum, and professional development must support the specific language and academic diagnosed needs of Long Term English Learners

Where districts have failed to meet Annual Yearly Progress targets for their English Learner subgroup, the data should be disaggregated by length of time in United States schools and English Learner proficiency level in order to guide the most appropriate action.

***Recommendation 4: Institute mechanisms to build capacity and skills among the teaching and administrator force in California so they are more prepared and skilled to work with English Learners and Long Term English Learners.***

Unlike other states, California does not have a designated credential for teachers of English to speakers of other languages. Secondary school teachers are credentialed for single subjects. We recommend the development of an English Language Development secondary credential.

Title III technical assistance from the California Department of Education should include a professional development component for teachers and administrators of schools in Years 2, 3, or 4 Corrective Action that are impacted with Long Term English Learners. The California Department of Education should convene a Task Force of district, county, and English Learner specialists to develop the content and delivery of this new professional development effort.

Use targeted categorical funding for English Learners (Economic Impact Aid, English Language Acquisition Program, and Title III) for high quality professional development targeted for teaching to the needs of Long Term English Learners.

***Recommendation 5: Ensure that English Learners have access to the full curriculum.***

Collect information and conduct an assessment of the extent of English Learner access to the full curriculum in California schools.

Revise the Essential Program Components' requirement of instructional minutes for basic core ELA and Math programs to support access to a *full* curriculum content. There needs to be differentiated options that enable a more efficient use of time for English Learner students facing the double challenge of mastering a new language and all other academic content.

***Recommendation 6: Ensure that parents are provided information to monitor the impacts on their children of the schools' services and programs, to know whether their children are progressing normatively in order to play an active role in helping shape their children's education and future.***

Currently districts have reporting requirements to parents including initial and annual CELDT scores, program placement and services, notification of placement options, and the right to request services. In addition, Title III requires parent notification of graduation rates for the district. We recommend expanding reporting to English Learner parents to include:

- Number of years that research indicates English Learners need to achieve English proficiency (5–7).
- Longitudinal test data for their child including the CELDT initial score and date, plus all subsequent CELDT proficiency levels, as well as CST English Language Arts and Math scores at least for the most recent three years.
- Yearly benchmark growth targets for English Learners based on the California Standards Tests and CELDT by years of United States schooling.
- Students' status with regard to yearly benchmarks (“meeting,” “not meeting,” “exceeding”).

Require that districts provide annual reports to their District English Language Advisory Committee and site committees reporting on patterns in the district and at individual sites within the districts related to progress of English Learners by length of time in United States schools and proficiency levels compared to benchmark expectations.

***Recommendation 7: Invest in research and innovation to further the knowledge base about what works to prevent the development of Long Term English Learners and to address Long Term English Learner needs in secondary schools.***

Create a state Clearinghouse of Best Practices for Long Term English Learners where districts can learn about the successes and lessons learned from other districts, where new research can be posted, and resources listed.

Create a competitive pilot demonstration effort (through partnership with a philanthropic foundation) that supports a select group of districts to develop comprehensive models for meeting the needs of Long Term English Learners.

Work with the federal government and with private foundations to focus research funding on better understanding the needs of Long Term English Learners and identifying the most powerful and effective responses.



# Conclusion

This report drew upon multiple types of sources to piece together the first-ever picture of what is occurring in California in the creation and response to Long Term English Learners. The data and research that are available do not yet add up to the solid foundation that is needed to define the most powerful responses to this urgent challenge, but we cannot wait to take action. It is time to wake up to the reality that large numbers of English Learners are mis-served by our schools. It is time to recognize that weak programs and approaches are foreclosing life options for many students who struggle along, year to year, falling further and further behind. And it is time to create the policies and practices and mobilize at the state and district levels to provide direction and support for schools to address the needs of Long Term English Learners in secondary schools and turn around the conditions in elementary grades that are resulting in the creation of long-term failure. It is time for leadership to stand together with English Learner communities and say, “Yes, our schools are for you, too.”





# Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Castañeda v. Pickard*, United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit. June 23, 1981. Pg. 26.

<sup>2</sup> In California between 2006 and 2010, 32 secondary school leadership teams taking part in the Secondary School Leadership Series for English Learner Success and 13 districts participating in the Creating Coherence for English Learner Success Institutes undertook inquiries into their Long Term English Learner population. In addition, nine school districts took part in the Californians Together “Long Term English Learner Forums,” contributing their inquiries. Their work — digging deeper into their data, interviewing and surveying students, holding focus groups with teachers, and analyzing student histories — has contributed significantly to understanding the experiences of this group of students and the challenges districts face in responding.

<sup>3</sup> *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U. S. 563, vs Supreme Court, January, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> California Department of Education, Data Quest “Statewide English Learners by Grade Enrollment Data.” In 2008–2009, 62% of English Learners were in grades K–5; 38% in grades 6–12.

<sup>5</sup> Colorado Department of Education (2009).

<sup>6</sup> The Council of the Great City Schools (2009).

<sup>7</sup> “Limited English Proficient” was the formal term used in federal and state guidelines. Because the term connoted overtones of a deficiency view of these students, many educators began using the term “English Learners.” The “LEP” designation in the California Tomorrow study was drawn from the official data systems in place at the time. The term was changed to “Long Term English Learners” in subsequent materials.

<sup>8</sup> Olsen, L. and Jaramillo, A. (1999) *Turning the Tides of Exclusion: A Guide for Educators and Advocates for Immigrant Students*. Oakland, CA: California Tomorrow.

<sup>9</sup> For seven years (2002–2009), the achievement gap between English Learners and English proficient students has widened in California, from 33.4% gap to 37.9%, according to California Department of Education reports of results on the California Standards Test of English Language Arts.

<sup>10</sup> The term “Long Term English Learners” is used because it identifies the key issue of how long English Learners have remained in United States schools without having attained English proficiency. It is always worrisome to create labels for groups of students that may result in tracking and blaming. The responsibility, having created the label, is to ensure that action is taken to address and remedy the conditions resulting in students moving through the schooling system for years without attaining the proficiency in English required for equal educational access and participation.

<sup>11</sup> Three districts in San Diego county, two districts in the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino counties), four districts in Orange County, five districts in the Central Valley, ten districts in Los Angeles County, four districts in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, eleven districts along the Central Coast, and one district in the Northern region of the state.

<sup>12</sup> “Reclassification” is the formal designation that an English Learner receives when they have achieved sufficient English proficiency for participation in an academic program taught in English. The “language barrier” has been overcome. The actual requirements for reclassification differ, however, from district to district.

<sup>13</sup> A Tomas Rivera Policy Institute report on English Learners in Los Angeles Unified School District concluded that 94% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Learners were either native United States-born or had been in United States schools 8+ years (October 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Capps, R., Fix, M. et.al. (2005) “The New Demography of America’s Schools: Immigrants and the No Child Left Behind Act.” Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute.

<sup>15</sup> Menken, K., Kley, T. & Chae, N. (2010).

<sup>16</sup> School districts collect information on numbers of students who are reclassified. Using the numbers from districts in the Californians Together survey sample that provided these counts, it appears that more than 10% of California’s secondary school students are possibly reclassified students. The Long Term English Learners were the peers of these Redesignated Fluent English Proficient students in elementary school but were left behind, while others progressed to reclassification.

<sup>17</sup> California Department of Education, DataQuest 2008–2009 count of English Learners and of total student enrollment grades 6–12. The percent of English Learners who are estimated to be Long Term English Learners and the percent who are Reclassified as “RFEP” are based on the Californians Together survey of 40 school districts.

<sup>18</sup> Menken, K. & Kleyn, T. (2010).

<sup>19</sup> The California Department of Education collects data on instructional settings and services for English Learners each year on the “Language Census.” The category “Mainstream” first appeared in 2000–2001 and then does not appear on the most current Dataquest reports. “Similarly, alternative course of study” (primary language, bilingual program) also appeared in 2000–2001 and is not on the most current reports.

<sup>20</sup> Lindholm-Leary, K. & Genesee, F. (2010); Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (2002).

<sup>21</sup> Saunders, W. & Goldenberg, C. (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Ganahl, J. “2006–2007 Frequent Non-compliant English Learner Items,” Slide 5, PowerPoint presentation, Bilingual Coordinators Network, November 30, 2007, California Department of Education (Sacramento, CA).

<sup>23</sup> Calfee, R. (2006).

<sup>24</sup> Goldenberg, C., (2008); August, D. & Shanahan, T. (2006).

<sup>25</sup> Menken, K. & Kleyn, T. (2010).

<sup>26</sup> Valdés, G. (2001).

<sup>27</sup> Lindholm-Leary, K. (2006, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Californians Together (2008) “English Learner State and Federal Accountability Systems Survey Results,” Long Beach, CA: Californians Together.

<sup>29</sup> Freeman, Y., Freeman, D. & Mercuri, S. (2002); Kinsella, K., (2005); Menken, K., Kleyn, T., & Chae, N. (2007); Olsen, L., & Jaramillo, A. (1999).

<sup>30</sup> This observation about social fluency is based on research that has been done primarily with Spanish-speaking populations. While it is generally thought to apply to other groups, an inquiry at a San Francisco high school with Cantonese Long Term English Learners discovered a very different pattern. Due in part to social isolation and linguistic separation at school and a large Cantonese speaking community surrounding the school, these Cantonese Long Term English Learners had developed very low oral fluency in English. Their reading and writing skills were higher.

<sup>31</sup> Wong-Fillmore, L. (1999).

<sup>32</sup> Menken, K., & Kleyn, T. (2010).

<sup>33</sup> Kinsella, K. & Dutro, S. Presentation, California Department of Education Accountability Institute, Burlingame, CA: December 2009. I am also indebted to Dr. Kate Kinsella for conversations clarifying these linguistic issues and how she works with teachers to help them understand these linguistic features among Long Term English Learner students.

- <sup>34</sup> Harklau, L. (2002; 2003).
- <sup>35</sup> “CELDT Proficiency” is an overall score of Early Advanced (IV) or Advanced (V) proficiency on the CELDT test, with all subscores (reading, writing, listening, speaking) at least at an Intermediate level (III).
- <sup>36</sup> Gold, N. & Maxwell-Jolly, J. (2006)
- <sup>37</sup> Schooling systems in many sending nations promote students to the next grade based upon mastery of grade-level content and skills. If they have not mastered the material, they are not promoted.
- <sup>38</sup> Callahan, R. (2006) researched impacts of a secondary reading program on English Learners and concluded that it is not designed to exit students at the secondary school reading levels with the literacy skills needed to navigate high school curriculum, nor did it align with ELD standards. The narrow focus on reading rather than the comprehensive language development that involves the language domains needed by English Learners (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) contributed to the lack of impact and inappropriate match for English Learners.
- <sup>39</sup> Maxwell-Jolly, J., P. J., Gándara, P. & Mendes-Benavidez, L., (2007).
- <sup>40</sup> G. Valdes (2001).
- <sup>41</sup> Maxwell-Jolly, J., P. J., Gándara, P. & Mendes-Benavidez, L. (2007).
- <sup>42</sup> Dabach, D.B. (2009); Olsen, L. (1997).
- <sup>43</sup> August, D. & Shanahan, T. (2006).
- <sup>44</sup> If and when Long Term English Learners are placed into support or intervention classes, explicit English Language Development must be incorporated. The structure described above of pairing an intervention class with the English language arts class in a double block with the same teacher should be used. Assessments of each student are needed to focus on the type of intervention necessary — decoding, contrastive linguistics, fluency in speaking, writing mechanics, composition, vocabulary development, grammar, etc. Begin interventions as soon as possible and end the intervention when it is no longer needed!
- <sup>45</sup> The PROMISE Initiative (2010); Meltzer, J. & Hamann, E. (2005); Olsen, L. & Romero, A. (2006); Cummins, J. (2000).

## A DISTRICT CHECKLIST:

# Steps for Addressing the Needs of Long Term English Learners

District and school leadership should be knowledgeable about the diversity of the English Learner enrollment (typologies) and understand the implications of that diversity for program design, program implementation and instructional practices. District systems should be created to prevent the development of Long Term English Learners and serving those Long Term English Learners who are enrolled in secondary schools across the district.

**A district addressing the needs of Long Term English Learners should have the following in place:**

- We have a formal definition for Long Term English Learners.
- We have designated annual benchmark expectations for English Learners by number of years in United States schools and by progress towards English proficiency.
- We have conducted our own inquiry (including analysis of data, student interviews, and focus groups, review of cumulative file histories, and classroom observations) to develop a deeper understanding of our own Long Term English Learner population.
- We have an English Learner Master Plan that includes descriptions of research-based program models for different typologies of English Learners, including a designated program and pathway for Long Term English Learners.
- Site and district leadership are knowledgeable about the diversity of the English Learner enrollment in our district, including the different needs of newcomer students, normatively progressing English Learners, and Long Term English Learners.
- Our data system enables us to analyze English Learner achievement data by length of time in United States schools and by English proficiency levels.
- We can analyze data longitudinally to assess issues of program consistency and long-term program impact for our English Learners.
- We regularly disaggregate English Learner data by length of time in the United States and English proficiency level and review that data to inform and trigger district planning.
- We identify “Long Term English Learner candidates” in fourth grade and develop a catch up and program consistency plan for those students.
- At the secondary school level, we have specially designed English Language Development (ELD) to focus on the unique needs of Long Term English Learners, including academic language and writing.
- At the secondary school level, Long Term English Learners are in classes with high quality SDAIE instruction in clusters within rigorous classes along with English fluent students.

- Our programs at the elementary, middle and high schools support the development of students' native language to threshold levels of rich oral language and literacy — and students have the opportunity to develop their native language through Advanced Placement levels.
- Our elementary school programs are research-based and we use the most powerful models of English Learner language development. The district monitors and ensures these are well-implemented with consistency.
- We hold meetings, publish materials, and fully expect that all administrators, teachers, English Learner students, and their parents know about and understand the reclassification criteria.
- We report annually to English Learner parents on: their child's status compared to the number of years that research indicates English Learners need to achieve English proficiency and compared to district expectations. These reports include longitudinal test data for their child including the CELDT initial score and date, plus all subsequent CELDT proficiency levels, as well as scores on the California Standards Test in English Language Arts and Math for the three most recent years, and yearly benchmark growth targets for English Learners based on the California Standards Test and CELDT by years of United States schooling.
- The district has adopted and purchased English Language Development materials and our teachers have received professional development in their use.
- Our Long Term English Learners are knowledgeable about the purposes of the CELDT and implications of their CELDT scores. They know what they need to do in order to reach reclassification criteria.
- We calendar the CELDT with sufficient advance notice so sites can protect the testing window and ensure supportive conditions for testing. Students are tested by their English teachers and the district provides subs and release time to enable teachers to do the testing.
- Professional development and collaborative planning time for teachers of classes with Long Term English Learners is a high priority for the use of professional development funds.
- We assign the most experienced and most prepared teachers to the classrooms and sites with the highest need.
- We monitor student schedules and class schedules to ensure that English Learners have access to the full curriculum.
- We provide supplementary materials and relevant literature for academic classes with Long Term English Learners in order to enhance access, engagement, and academic success.
- Our secondary school counselors have received professional development in appropriate placements and monitoring for Long Term English Learners, and work together with district/site English Learner Coordinators in developing each individual English Learner's schedule and in planning the school master schedule to facilitate flexible and accelerated progress.

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**Californians Together** is a statewide coalition of 22 parent, professional and civil rights organizations that mobilize communities to protect and promote the rights of 1.6 million English Learners, 25% of Californian's students. Californians Together has served for 11 years as a statewide voice on behalf of language minority students in California public schools. The coalition is committed to securing equal access to quality education for all children.

This report and updates on Californians Together's work to create the policies and practices for accelerating the language and academic needs of Long Term English Learners are posted on the organization's website.

**[www.californianstogether.org](http://www.californianstogether.org)**



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