



# Alabama Framework for English Learner Success

Alabama State Department of Education





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# The Framework at a Glance

# I. Introduction to the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success



At the Alabama State Department of Education, Every Child. Every Chance. Every Day. is not only the motto, it is our guiding philosophy. We know many children need extra help and tailored instruction. Some of the children most in need of our support are our English learners (ELs). Even though these children represent only 4% of the student population, they represent a growing, vibrant demographic. Experience has shown that through high expectations and targeted quality instruction, these students will excel.

The Legislature, Governor, and State Board of Education have provided supports for these students through unprecedented investments in education. This funding helps expand current programs and increases personalized learning for these students.

We appreciate our partnership with the Region 7 Comprehensive Center (R7CC) and the many supports they provide. The Alabama Framework for English Learner (EL) Success, outlined in this publication, provides the vision, principles, and theory of action as a means of developing and implementing a systemic approach to evidence-based, high-quality instruction for ELs.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric G. Mackey".

Eric G. Mackey,  
State Superintendent

# Introduction

The number of English learners (ELs) in Alabama has increased significantly in recent years. English learners include U.S.-born children whose first language is not English, newcomers to the U.S., and other students developing English proficiency. These children are in Alabama schools, acquiring academic English instruction that promotes mastery of the content standards.



**For ELs to thrive,** Alabama believes it must adopt coherent, powerful models for change so that ELs have access to high-quality instruction based on research and data-informed policies, services, and practices. Alabama must shift from using traditional practices to systemic practices that hold all educators responsible for ELs and all other students. These practices must be driven by a process that first builds individual internal accountability, then collective internal accountability, and finally, a move toward external accountability.

**Alabama  
must focus  
on quality  
and  
excellence.**



The state must shift from beliefs that ELs have deficits and require simplified education to those that assert that all ELs have strong assets and can and must learn at grade level and beyond.



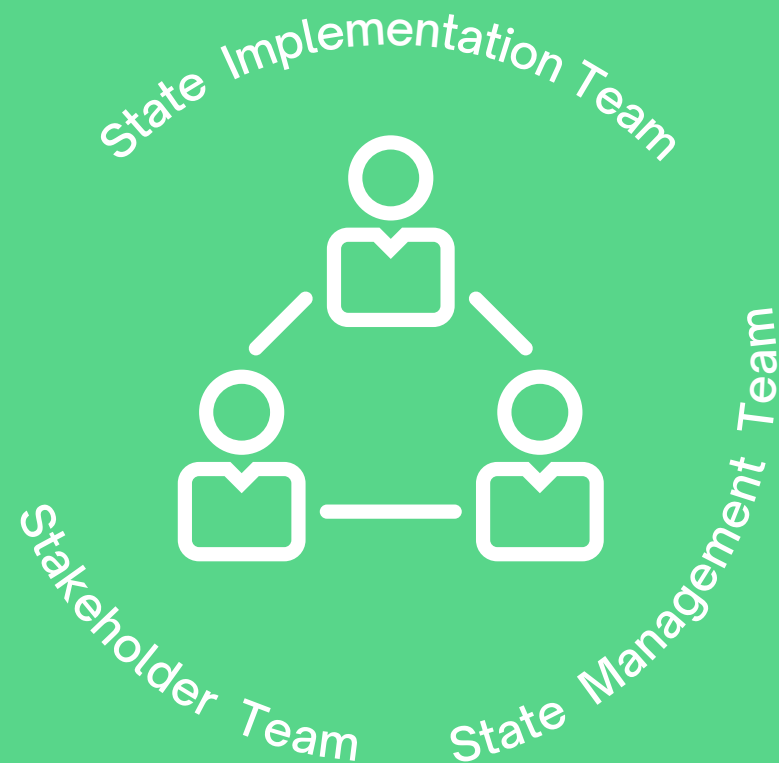
The state must prepare ELs for college and careers and ensure that there are structures and processes in place to encourage and allow for content, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and bilingual teachers to work together to plan and deliver high-quality instruction to build readiness.



The state must shift to view professional learning as a mutually beneficial community composed of content, ESOL, and bilingual teachers and principals.

## To facilitate the shift from traditional to systemic practices,

the development of a framework for the success of ELs was undertaken by a configuration of state teams, including a state management team, a state implementation team, and a stakeholder team. During the framework development, members of these teams engaged in discussion on salient research, state demographic data, and district survey data. They discussed implications and important refinements of current practices informed by the research and data review and reflected on Alabama's understanding of and capacity to engage ELs in high-quality instruction and provide them with research- and data-informed policies, services, and practices.



## II. English Learners in Alabama



Alabama has had tremendous growth in its EL population in schools over the last several years, adding nearly 10,000 ELs since 2015. Currently, ELs comprise 3.954% (33,237 students) of the state's population in schools, an increase of 2.64% from 2015.

Alabama's ELs are a diverse group of students with over 150 different languages spoken across the state. The **top five languages** spoken by Alabama ELs are depicted here.

Description	Percent
Spanish; Castillian	78.09
Central American Indian Languages	2.11
Arabic	1.98
Korean	1.72
Mayan Languages	1.66

# English Learner Subgroups

To better understand the needs of ELs, Alabama is committed to collecting and analyzing data from all EL subgroups. Below we have defined the EL student groups in Alabama for the year 2021.

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Student Subgroup	Subgroup Definition	Student Population (2021)	
		Number	Percent
Ever ELs	Has ever been identified for EL services; includes Current and Former ELs. (EL-1, EL-2, FEL, FEL-1-4, & EL Waived Services)	63,454	8.6
Current ELs	Currently identified as an English learner (EL-1 & EL-2, EL Waived Services)	33,652	4.5
EL Waived Services	Students who are ELs, yet parents have refused supplemental Title III services.	415	.056
Newcomers	First Year EL	4,753	.64
Developing ELs	ACCESS Levels 1, 2, 3	TBD	TBD
Long-Term ELs*	Receiving EL services for 7 or more years	TBD	TBD
Dually Identified ELs	Identified for both EL and Special Education services	9,502	1.3
Former ELs	Previously identified as EL, both monitored and no longer monitored (FEL, FEL-1, FEL-2, FEL-3, & FEL-4)	13,156	1.8
Monitored ELs	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their first-fourth year of systematic monitoring. (FEL-1-4)	5,683	.77
No Longer Monitored ELs	Former EL students who have successfully completed four years of monitoring and are no longer ELs. (FEL)	7,473	1.0
National Origin Minority Whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English (NOMPHLOTE)	Have never been identified for EL services (Non-ELs, NOMPHLOTE)	12,616	1.7

English Learners in Alabama

\*State definition of Long-Term ELs differs from federal reporting requirements for ELs who have not yet attained English language proficiency within five years.

### III. The Need for the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success



**Closing the achievement gap.** English learners in Alabama underperformed their peers in both reading and math on the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), with the widest gap in Grade 4 literacy.

#### 2019 NAEP Achievement Gap

Student Group	Grade 4 Reading	Grade 4 Math	Grade 8 Reading	Grade 8 Math
ELs at or above proficient	5%	11%	*	11%
All students at or above proficient	28%	28%	N/A	21%
<b>Achievement Gap</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>10%</b>

\*Not enough students were represented on the Grade 8 reading test to meet reporting standards.

# The Need for the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success



Similar trends in the achievement gap between ELs and all students are evident in the 2019 State Achievement Test in reading and math. While there are gaps in each grade level and content area, **the widest gaps are in literacy and at the secondary levels for both math and reading.**

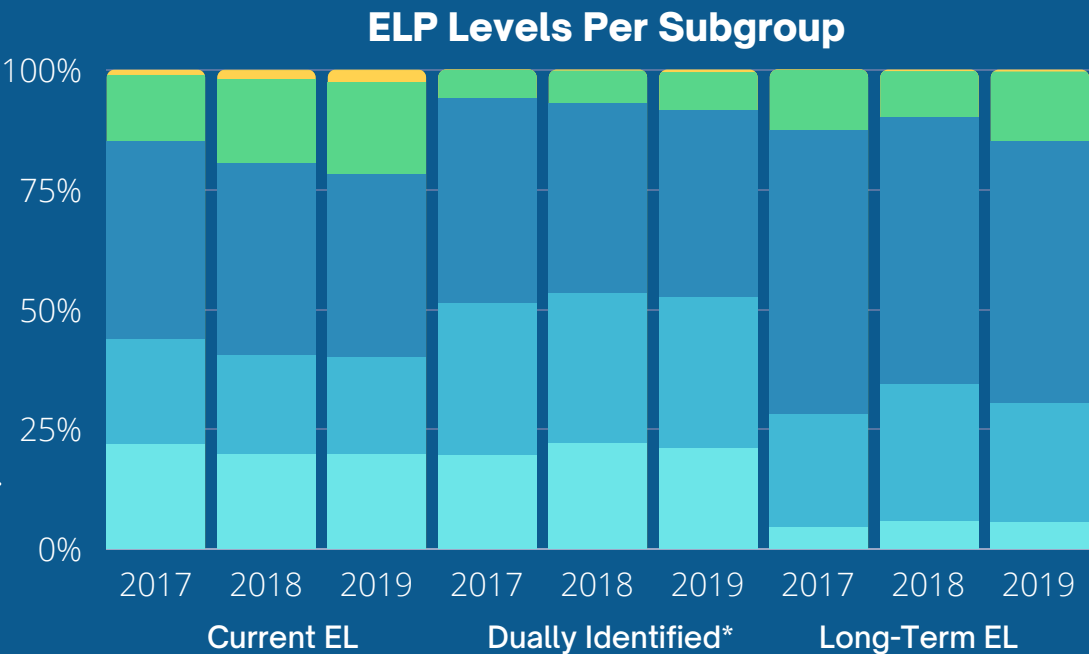
**2019 Alabama State Achievement Test Achievement (Scantron) Gap:  
Percent of Students Proficient in Reading and Math**

Student Group	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 8 Reading	High School Reading	Grade 3 Math	Grade 8 Math	High Schol Math
ELs at proficient	17%	4%	4%	39%	12%	12%
All students at proficient	48%	43%	43%	58%	45%	43%
Achievement Gap	31%	39%	39%	19%	33%	31%

# Increasing English Language Proficiency (ELP) Among ELs

In Alabama, ELs must score a 4.8 composite on the ACCESS for ELLs English Language Proficiency test to be reclassified as fluent in English.

State trends for the 2017 through 2019 school years for Current ELs and subgroups of Dually Identified ELs show approximately 80% of Current ELs fall between English proficiency levels 1-3, whereas approximately 93% of Dually Identified ELs fall between these first three levels.

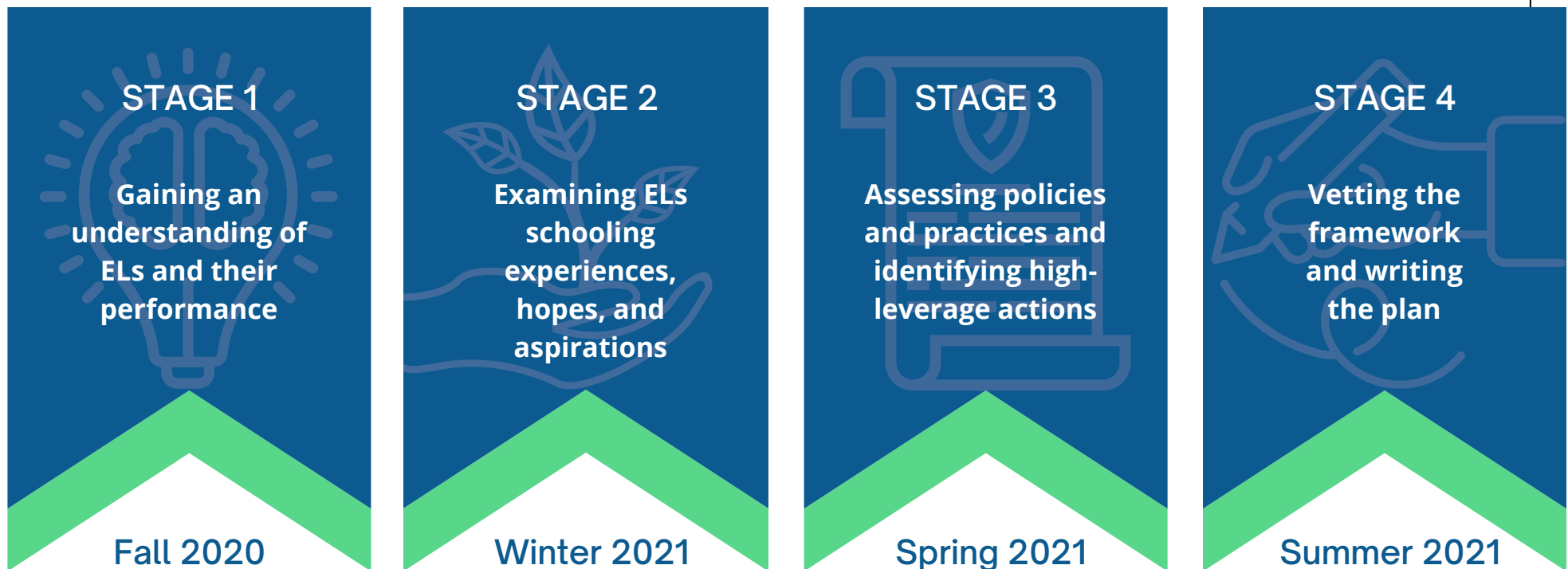


\*ELs who are also identified needing special education services (e.g., gifted and talented, Students with Disabilities)

## IV. Stages of the Development of the Framework

The state and stakeholder teams engaged in a four-stage iterative process to develop the framework. The process involved building a knowledge base, developing a vision for ELs, engaging in self-reflection, vetting the framework, and developing a framework implementation plan. A summary of the stages of development is illustrated below.

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## V. Introduction to the Framework Components

Alabama developed the Framework for English Learner Success in response to current research and state data focused on ELs and to make needed shifts from traditional to systemic instructional practices that lead to EL success. The framework is composed of the state's vision and principles which are grounded in high-quality, evidence-based instruction, foundational for improving the state's educational priorities, supports, programs, and practices for ELs. The vision and principles are the basis for the theory of action. The theory of action highlights long-term student outcomes, goals, and high-leverage strategies.

## VI. Vision Statement

Alabama ELs will have equitable access to high-quality, rigorous instruction designed within a systematic framework built on values and respect for students' cultures and languages and a socially and emotionally supportive learning environment, empowering ELs to excel socially, academically, and linguistically and lead productive lives.



## VII. Principles

Principles are the foundation, informing every decision being made. They describe the fundamental tenets that will be pervasively followed through the execution of the vision.

1

### **Asset Oriented System**

All educators and staff foster an inclusive mindset that values and affirms the cultures and languages of students and families, empowers students, and maximizes resources within the school and community to support the success of ELs.

2

### **High-Quality Instructional System**

All educators and staff provide ELs with equitable access to all programs, including gifted, extra-curricular, career and technical education, and advanced placement; a clearly defined, evidence-based, rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum and instruction; high-quality teachers and leaders; culturally and linguistically valid and reliable assessments; and a multi-tiered system of supports.

3

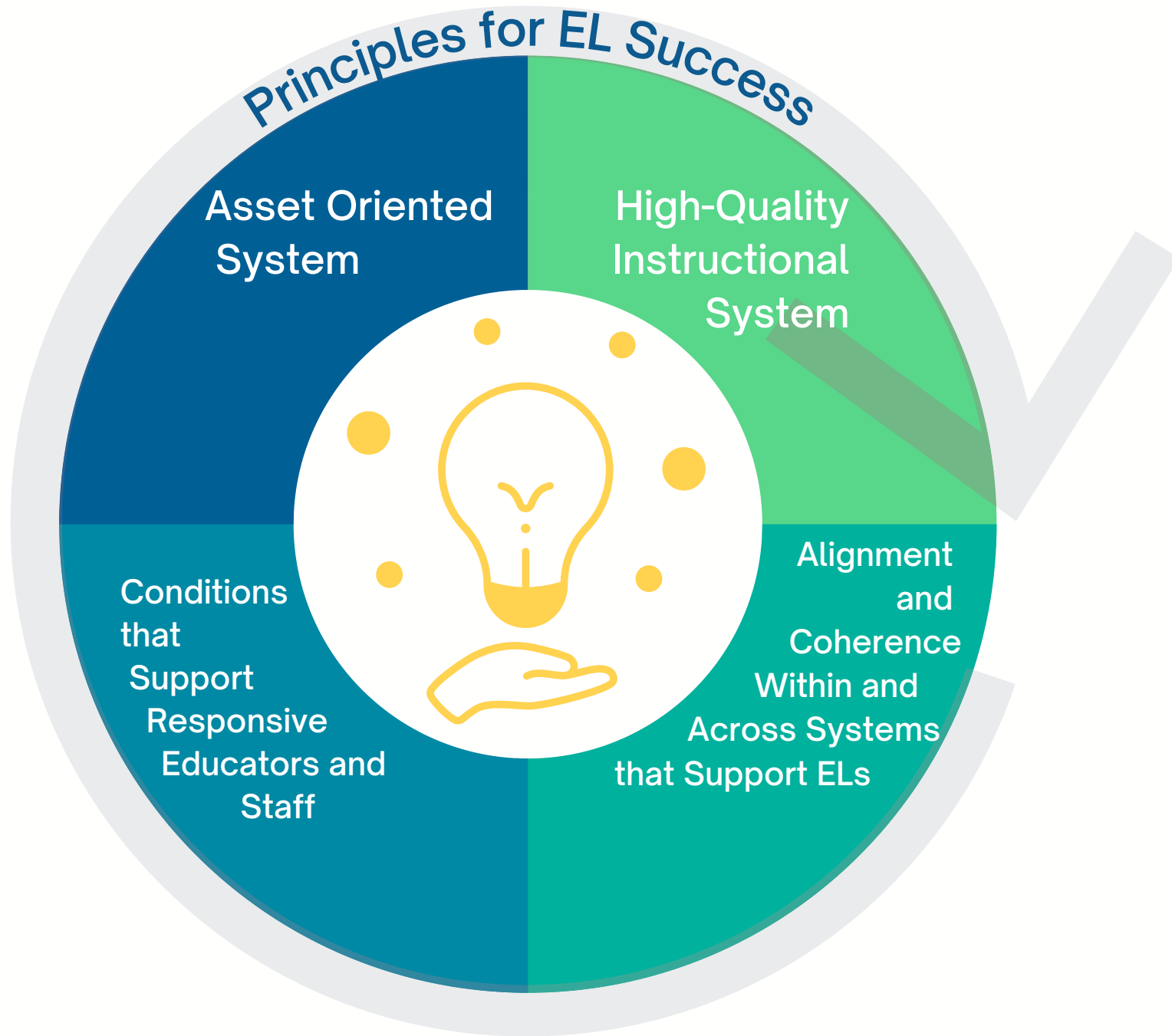
### **Conditions that Support Responsive Educators and Staff**

All educators and staff are knowledgeable and responsive to EL student needs, know how to use data systems in conjunction with tiered supports for continuous improvement, have access to high-quality training and resources needed to provide high-quality instruction, and have a shared responsibility to leverage strengths and meet the needs of ELs.

4

### **Alignment and Coherence Within and Across Systems that Support ELs**

All educators and staff provide ELs with learning experiences using consistent, clearly defined practices and pathways across all educational levels (early childhood through postsecondary) to meet the diverse needs essential to prepare graduating learners for higher education and/or careers.





## VIII. Theory of Action

The ALSDE State Implementation Team (SIT) worked together to analyze current state practices and determine areas of strength and growth to strategically increase academic outcomes for ELs. The plan for change is clear, coherent, and can dramatically change how students and communities experience systems within ALSDE. **The Theory of Action identifies five Strategic Goals with High-Leverage Strategies** that provide specific steps to focus district efforts to achieve lasting improvements efficiently and effectively.

# Theory of Action

## Strategic Goal 1

Increase the use of high-quality instruction and assessments in every classroom every day to engage ELs.

## Strategic Goal 2

Foster and build the capacity of all school and district staff to serve ELs.

## Strategic Goal 3

Establish, communicate, and implement coherent and equitable systems.

## Strategic Goal 4

Utilize data and research to refine EL education in order to provide individualized and systematic supports.

## Strategic Goal 5

Mobilize and actively engage families, caregivers, community members, and the public to support ELs.

*Then we will ensure equitable access for ELs  
and transform outcomes for all students.*

# Strategic Goal 1

## If we...

Increase the use of high-quality instruction and assessments in every classroom every day to engage ELs by...

- Developing criteria and guidance for districts and classrooms for what high-quality EL content and language instruction looks like.
- Developing classroom observation protocols to support the implementation of high-quality instruction for ELs in every classroom.
- Defining and developing guidance for high-quality EL language assistance programs (including biliteracy/bicultural and dual language programs).
- Defining and developing criteria and guidance for what the use and implementation of high-quality assessments for ELs (at multiple levels) looks like at state, district, school, and classroom levels, including bilingual formative assessments.

## Strategic Goal 2

If we...

Foster and build the capacity of all school and district staff to serve ELs

by...

- Identifying and designing core principles of high-quality professional learning that incorporate the criteria for high-quality instruction and assessment for ELs.
- Developing a professional learning plan that incorporates the core principles and essential components of comprehensive, evidence-based practices of high-quality instruction and assessment for ELs.
- Developing and providing guidance to local education agencies on how to use and implement the core principles of high-quality professional learning for ELs and essential components of the high-quality instructional and assessment framework for ELs needed for all teachers to serve ELs.

## Strategic Goal 3

### If we...

Establish, communicate, and implement coherent and equitable systems  
by...

- Collaborating and strategizing on the communication and dissemination of the Alabama Framework for EL Success across all ALSDE offices, other state agencies, and districts to ensure coherence.
- Aligning EL guidance and other state and district policies to the Alabama Framework for EL Success.
- Reviewing in-state educator preparation and certification requirements and pathways (issuance and renewal) to ensure they incorporate high-quality instruction and assessments.
- Building leadership capacity (at state, regional, and district levels) to understand, guide, and monitor high-quality instruction for ELs by providing professional learning on the Alabama Framework for EL Success and developing guidance to support the implementation of high-quality instruction for ELs.
- Ensuring educational equity in the allocation of ALSDE's resources, including funding, instruction, and opportunities according to need, requiring that equitable practices and beliefs be identified and prioritized.

## Strategic Goal 4

### If we...

Utilize data and research to refine EL education to provide individualized and systematic supports by...

- Making EL data accessible across the state to districts and schools.
- Strengthening educators' capacity to use quantitative data (state assessment, screeners, classroom assessments, demographic data) to make decisions in programming and instruction.
- Building the capacity to secure, interpret, and use qualitative EL data drawn from surveys, interviews, and focus groups to make decisions about instruction and programming.
- Deepening educators' capacity to understand and use evidence-based research in the instruction of ELs.

## Strategic Goal 5

### If we...

Mobilize and actively engage families, caregivers, community members, and the public to support ELs by...

- Improving engagement and communication with families of ELs.
- Increasing community advocacy for families and caregivers to influence public policy and inform resource investment.
- Supporting LEAs with the implementation of community and family engagement strategies through the development of tools and EL state and regional co-facilitation of events hosted by the LEA or school.
- Increasing community awareness of the value-added benefits of multilingualism that ELs bring to Alabama.

Then we will see...



an increase in...

- The % of ELs earning Career and Technical Education (CTE) credentials.
- The % of ELs identified for Gifted and Talented and participation in advanced coursework (i.e., AP courses/dual enrollment/IB/Honors).
- The % of ELs making progress or exceeding in academic growth as measured by the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP).
- The % of ELs who achieve English proficiency annually as measured by ACCESS for ELLs.
- EL attendance rates.
- The % of ELs that earn the Seal of Biliteracy annually.
- The annual EL graduation rate.



and a decrease in....

- The annual % of long-term ELs.
- The annual drop-out rate among ELs.
- The achievement gap between ELs and all students.





Alabama State Department of Education

# Acknowledgments

The publication of the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success represents Alabama's commitment to increase literacy throughout the state. The Alabama State Department of Education is dedicated to ensuring that each student receives the same high-quality educational opportunities.

The Alabama Framework for English Learner Success is the collective insight of various stakeholders engaged in the creation of this document. We would like to thank this team of extraordinarily talented and committed individuals who have invested their time to ensure all children learn English and thrive in their studies of all subjects.

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