

THE STATE OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

IN CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A CALIFORNIANS TOGETHER REPORT

By Manuel Buenrostro



**CALIFORNIANS
TOGETHER**

CHAMPIONING THE SUCCESS
OF ENGLISH LEARNERS



About the Author

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Message from the Executive Director

California has made considerable progress over the past decade in improving our public education system and recognizing the incredible gifts that our students bring to school. As an organization focused on English learner (EL) achievement, Californians Together recognizes the considerable progress in supporting students' home languages and expanding multilingualism. From the the adoption of the State Seal of Biliteracy in 2012 and English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework in 2014, which recognized the integration of English language development within standards alignment, to the passage of the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative in 2016 and the adoption of the English Learner Roadmap policy in 2017, the policy landscape has dramatically changed. We no longer need to convince education leaders that supporting students' home languages and assets are central to their educational attainment. There is now common agreement based on the evidence and research.

Over the next decade, our challenge lies in ensuring that we build on California's strong policies and guidance that reflect the research on effective practices for ELs. The goal is to implement these policies in classrooms across the state. This is more urgent than ever as we consider the impacts of the pandemic, which disproportionately affected our ELs.

This report is our initial attempt at summarizing key demographic and outcome data for ELs. It offers a sober reality of the work ahead to ensure that our education system provides access for all current and former ELs and sets a vision for the outcomes that our system should produce by 2030. Sections include goals for the state and districts to consider and reflect on to build the collective capacity necessary to ensure EL success. These goals build on those set for the state in other important publications, including the bold vision established in [Global California 2030](#).

This report also offers some, but not all, of the information needed to understand how ELs are doing in our education system. While the report summarizes information for which there is publicly available data, it is important to emphasize that our students are not a number or an assessment score. We hope that school, district, and county leaders continue to consider the importance of other information for gaining a holistic understanding of the needs of ELs. However, the data and goals presented here will offer a starting point for much needed conversation by California's education leaders and practitioners.

There is much work to be done, and together, we will continue to make a difference for ELs and all multi-lingual students. Let's build a stronger multilingual California!



Martha Hernandez, Executive Director
Californians Together

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Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of data focused on better understanding how English learners (ELs) are doing in California’s education system. Credit should be given to the progress the state has made over the past fifteen years to establish research-based policies and guidance. This progress includes the State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB) in 2012, the ELA/ELD Framework in 2014, the CA Education for a Global Economy Initiative in 2016, and the English Learner Roadmap (EL Roadmap) policy in 2017. It also includes efforts by state leaders to affirm and expand multilingual education, including the 2018 release of [Global California 2030](#) and 2021 launch of the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards.

What is clear is that the time is now to fully implement and build on the foundation that the state has set. This report offers reflection questions for education leaders to consider and goals to meet by 2030 (see Appendix: Summary of 2030 Goals).

Understanding Our Students. This section summarizes key demographic data for California ELs, including their identification across the grade levels, languages spoken at home, and impacts of socio-economic and disability status. It also offers an overview of the various EL profiles, including Long-Term ELs (LTELs), newcomer students, and Dual Language Learners (DLLs) in early childhood education. With one in four students entering elementary school as an EL and representing a rich array of languages spoken at home, ensuring that education leaders understand the strengths and needs of these students is critical.

Academic Achievement. This section summarizes achievement data, including progress towards English language proficiency, reclassification, prevention of LTELs, academic achievement (in ELA, math, and science), and high school graduation. It also offers statewide goals and a vision for the outcomes that our system should produce by 2030. Although California might have been making slight progress in EL achievement during the years before the pandemic, outcomes on many indicators have fallen to the lowest levels over the past decade. These data confirm what we already knew about the pandemic disproportionately impacting our highest need students, including our ELs.

Expanding Multilingualism. This section summarizes data focused on attainment of the State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB) and dual language immersion programs. It also offers statewide goals for what progress towards multilingualism can look like by 2030. While not all data is available to fully assess progress, it is clear that California has made significant progress towards multilingualism over the past decade. Since 2012, California has led the country in the SSB. It is also clear that there is much work to be done if we are to achieve the goals outlined in [Global California 2030](#) and ensure all students have the opportunity to develop proficiency in English and their home language.

Access to Rigorous Coursework. This section examines access to rigorous coursework and a well-rounded education for EL and Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students in California. Data analysis revealed persistent disparities in

access between ELs and their English-only counterparts. These disparities were evident in A-G course completion rates, and college-level coursework participation (dual enrollment and AP). The section also sets goals to be met by 2030 focused on increased participation in rigorous coursework and access to courses that encompass a well-rounded education such as the arts and ethnic studies. There is a need for more data, specifically for RFEPs, to better understand their access to rigorous coursework.

Supporting the Whole Child. This section focuses on the idea that, to succeed in school, multilingual learners need to have their basic needs met. While not exhaustive, this section focuses on three key areas that can support the whole child: keeping students engaged and motivated, making sure they are healthy and well, and giving them learning opportunities outside of school hours. Clear from the data is that far too many students, including ELs, face chronic sadness and do not have access to a caring adult in school. Moreover, the proportion of ELs facing chronic absenteeism has more than doubled since the pandemic. The section further sets goals for 2030 focused on increasing connections between students and school, and meeting their basic needs.

Access to Well-Prepared Educators. This section highlights the critical role well-prepared educators, particularly bilingual educators, play in ensuring equitable access to a quality education for ELs. A key finding is the significant shortage of bilingual teachers, especially in relation to the growing demand for multilingual programs and expansion of preschool and transitional kindergarten. While California is

making progress in issuing bilingual authorizations, there is a need to increase the number of bilingual teacher preparation programs and ensure they have sufficient resources. The section includes goals focused on increasing the number of bilingual authorizations, expanding access to the bilingual authorization within teacher preparation programs, and ensuring that all educators are supported at delivering designated and integrated English language development (ELD) within instruction.

Accountability. This section emphasizes the improvements that still need to be made in California’s accountability system to ensure that it is transparent, sets high expectations, and ensures that districts set goals focused on closing gaps for ELs. The system lacks transparency due to the way it combines EL and RFEP students in the EL academic indicator, and sets low expectations for EL progress, specifically in the cut scores for the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI). This combination obscures the true performance of ELs and allows districts with struggling EL populations to avoid being flagged for needing additional support. The section also summarizes the number of school districts identified for Differentiated Assistance based on their outcomes for ELs. However, there are positive developments to celebrate, including the inclusion of LTELs as a separate student group in the accountability system.

State and Local Recommendations.

This section provides key state and local recommendations for education leaders at all levels to consider and reflect upon.

STATE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Set Clear Statewide Goals for EL Outcomes and Track Progress. Use Appendix: Summary of 2030 Goals as a starting point.

2. Improve Publicly Reported Data. Including in high school graduation and outcomes for RFEPs, equitable access to rigorous coursework, access to bilingual programs, and teacher supply and attrition.

3. Invest in the Expansion of Bilingual Pathways and Programs. Support expansion of the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards and biliteracy programs and establish state award of “multilingual excellence” for districts and schools.

4. Continue Investments in Community Schools and Initiatives Supporting the Whole Child. Ensure investments center the needs of ELs, support bilingualism and multilingualism, and are aligned to the English Learner Roadmap policy.

5. Address the Bilingual Teacher Shortage. Invest in proven programs, such as Bilingual Teacher Residencies and the Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program (BTPDP) and remove barriers to a bilingual authorization.

6. Improve the Accountability System. Increase transparency by separating ELs and RFEPs from the EL academic indicators and in any proposed growth model and set high expectations for EL outcomes in the ELPI and other indicators.

LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Set Goals for EL Outcomes, Track Progress, and Invest Adequate Resources. Use Appendix: Summary of 2030 Goals as a starting point to develop local goals focused on key areas of the report.

2. Expand Bilingual Pathways Leading to the State Seal of Biliteracy. Participate in the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards and expand bilingual pathways and programs. All districts with high school students support all ELs and RFEPs to attain the SSB.

3. Increase Access to Rigorous Coursework. Invest in bilingual counselors to ensure ELs and RFEPs enroll in rigorous coursework, and ensure supports are in place, such as access to high quality instructional materials that center EL needs.

4. Center ELs in Community Schools. Center ELs, and in particular those who are newcomers and socioeconomically disadvantaged, in planning and implementation of Community Schools. Ensure alignment to the EL Roadmap.

5. Ensure Integrated ELD Professional Learning for All Educators. Prepare all educators to deliver integrated ELD within instruction. Promote collaboration between content area and EL departments in delivery of professional learning.

6. Build Partnerships to Address the Bilingual Teacher Pipeline. Create partnerships between county offices of education, districts, and colleges and universities to recruit bilingual staff and students into the teaching profession.

Conclusion.

State and local leaders should remember that while this report presents important information, it does not include all of the information about ELs. Local data are just as important. Education leaders must also remember two critical points:

- › Students are individuals with multiple identities, strengths, and challenges, not just a number or an assessment score; and
- › Challenges and gaps identified within this report are deficits in the system for state and local leaders to address, not deficits in our students.

There is much work ahead as we strive to meet the 2030 goals outlined in this report. Our students possess valuable strengths in their cultures and languages that must be celebrated and form the basis for improvements in our public education system. Moreover, these improvements will happen if education leaders continue to build on the legislative and policy achievements of the past 15 years. The state of ELs in California public schools is one of urgency, but also of promise as we seize upon the strengths of our students, schools, and communities.





1

SECTION ONE: UNDERSTANDING OUR STUDENTS

Alignment to the English Learner Roadmap policy. *This section is most closely aligned to Principle One: Assets-Oriented and Needs-Responsive Schools.*

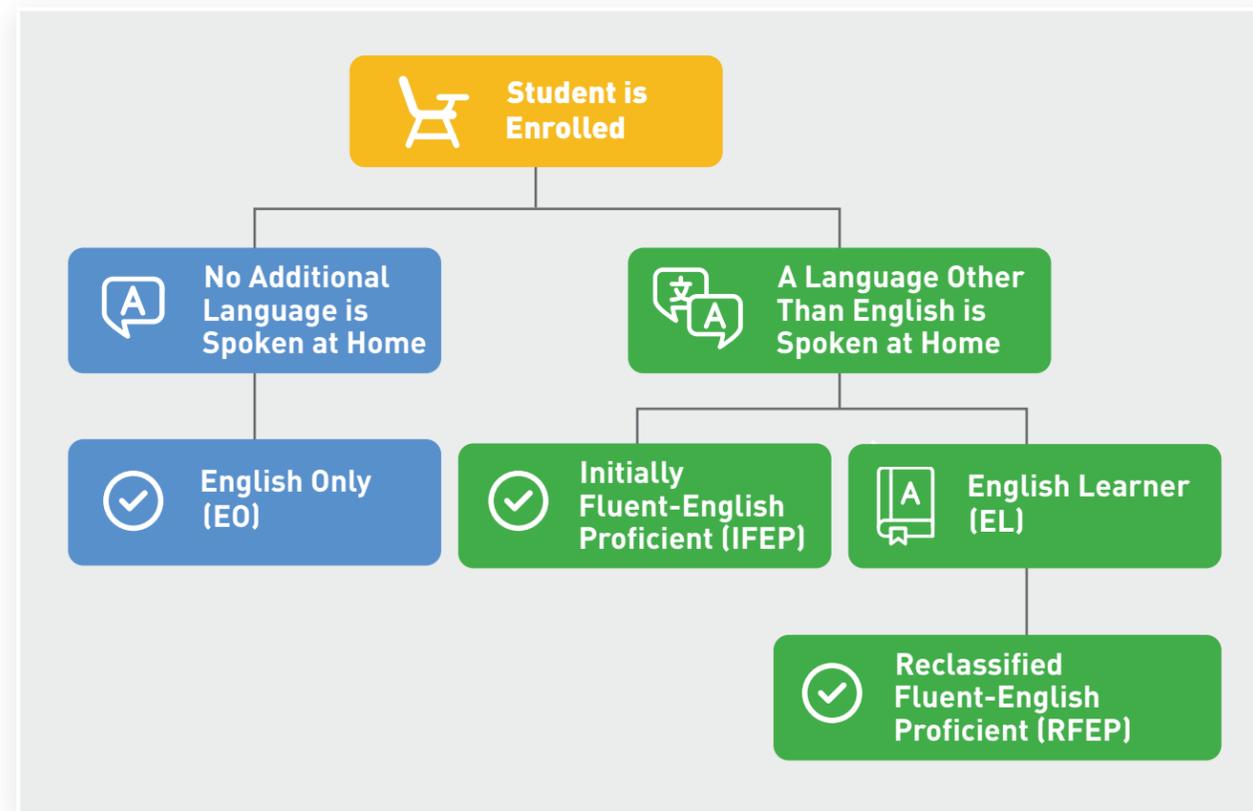
Understanding California's English learners (ELs), including their strengths, needs, and backgrounds is critical to shaping an education system that can best support their progress. In presenting statewide data, we encourage education leaders to think about the individual student experience. Data can be a powerful tool for analyzing overall trends and shaping conversations, but we must remember that every student is an individual with their own unique story.

English Learners in California Public Schools

During the 2022-23 school year, 1.1 million ELs were enrolled in California public schools, making up 19 percent of all public school students.

When enrolling students in a California TK-12 public school, parents or guardians complete a home language survey. This survey identifies students who speak only English at home as English only (EO). Those students identified as having a language other than English at home are assessed for their English language proficiency within the first 30 days of enrollment. Based on this assessment, students who are determined to have sufficient English language proficiency to access the curriculum without additional support are identified as Initially Fluent English Proficient (IFEP), while those who require additional English language development support are identified as English learners (EL). Additionally, as students move through the grades, ELs that achieve English language proficiency are identified as Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students.

Figure 1: Students by English Language Acquisition Status

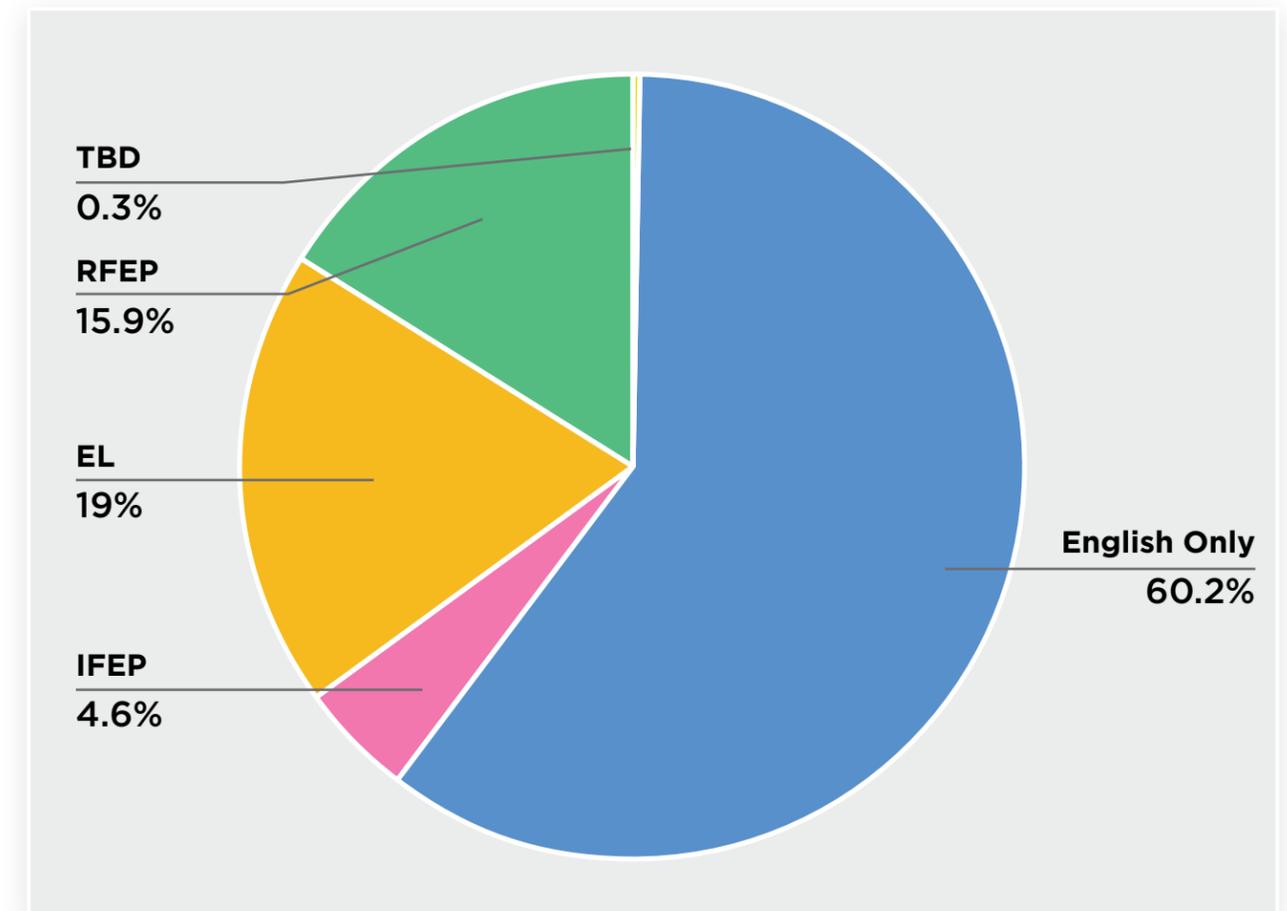


The California Department of Education (CDE) has a glossary of common EL terms, which can be found here: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/longtermel/Glossary.aspx>

Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status (ELAS)

In California public schools, 40 percent of students have a home language other than English at home, which includes IFEP, EL, and RFEP students (see Figure 2).¹

Figure 2: 2022-23 Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status

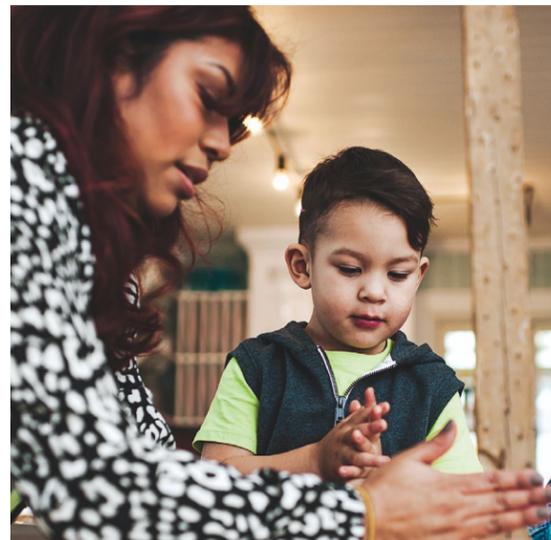


Since it takes time for ELs to gain English language proficiency and become reclassified, it is not surprising that the proportion will look different at each grade level. Therefore breaking down this information by grade is important for understanding the status of ELs in each county and district (see Table 1).²

Table 1: 2022-23 Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status, by Grade

Grade	English Only	IFEP	EL	RFEP	Language Other than English (IFEP, EL, & RFEP)
K-2nd Grade	67%	5%	26%	1%	32%
3-5th Grade	63%	5%	24%	8%	37%
6-8th Grade	58%	4%	17%	20%	41%
9-12th Grade	54%	4%	12%	28%	45%
All Grades	60%	5%	19%	16%	40%

REFLECTION: What does enrollment by English language acquisition status look like in your county or district? What does it look like by grade level? How might this information inform your programs and services?



Languages Spoken at Home

English learners come to school with rich linguistic and cultural assets. Bilingualism and cultural diversity are important assets that improve EL outcomes and also strengthen our public education system. Schools must leverage and acknowledge these assets in order to improve outcomes for all students, in particular those participating in programs leading to bilingualism and biliteracy.

Additionally, when discussing the language assets of students in California public schools, it is important to note that not all students who speak a language other than English at home are classified as ELs. As previously noted, students who speak a language other than English at home can be ELs, IFEPs, or RFEPs.

During the 2022-23 school year, there were over 100 unique languages spoken at home by English learners. Amongst these, Spanish is spoken at home for 82 percent of ELs and 76 percent of all students who come from a house where another language other than English is spoken. However, in many districts and schools, other languages may be more prominent amongst students and the community. For example, there are 21 languages spoken by at least 2,000 ELs (see Table 2 for the ten most prominent languages spoken by ELs).³

Table 2: Ten Most Prominent Languages Spoken by ELs

Language	ELs	Fluent English Proficient (RFEPs and IFEP)	Total	% of ELs
Spanish	911,119	840,738	1,751,857	81.9%
Vietnamese	21,344	42,506	63,850	1.9%
Mandarin (Putonghua)	20,393	50,033	70,426	1.8%
Arabic	15,878	16,456	32,334	1.4%
Cantonese	13,156	27,847	41,003	1.2%
Russian	10,787	12,719	23,506	1.0%
Farsi (Persian)	10,347	10,976	21,323	0.9%
Filipino (Pilipino or Tagalog)	9,964	24,789	34,753	0.9%
Punjabi	9,380	13,794	23,174	0.8%
Korean	7,454	21,870	29,324	0.7%

REFLECTION: What are the most prominent languages spoken at home in your county or school district?

Long-Term English Learners and At-Risk of Becoming LTEL

English learner students are not all the same. For this reason, additional terminology has been developed to identify different typologies of these students. This includes Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) and students at risk of becoming LTEL (AR-LTELs).

Long-term English learner: An EL in grades 6-12 who has attended U.S. schools for six or more years, has remained at the same level of English proficiency for two or more years as determined by the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) or has regressed to a lower level of English language proficiency, and for students in grades 6-9, scores below basic or far below basic on the English language arts achievement test.

EL at risk of becoming a long-term English learner: An English learner in grades 3-12 who has attended U.S. schools for four or five years, scores at the intermediate level or below on the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), and for students in grades 3-9, scores below basic or far below basic on the English language arts achievement test.

It is important to note that research shows that the vast majority of ELs can reach English proficiency in four to seven years with sufficient support. When this does not occur, it is not because the students are deficient, but because the system is failing to provide access to an education that leads to English proficiency in a timely manner.



During the 2022-23 school year, there were 226,535 LTEs and 144,190 AR-LTEs.

- › In grades 6-12, 49 percent of ELs were LTELs and 5 percent were AR-LTELs.
- › In grades 3-5, 40 percent of ELs were AR-LTELs.⁴

This is an issue for secondary schools to address in order to meet the needs of their LTELs and for elementary schools to prevent students from becoming LTELs.

REFLECTION: *What is the number of LTELs in my district and schools? What is the proportion of ELs who are LTELs in grades 6-12? What is the proportion of EL who are AR-LTELs in grades 3-5?*

English Learner by Socioeconomic and Disability Status

By understanding the characteristics of English learners, programs can be shaped to leverage their assets and address their needs.

A student is socioeconomically disadvantaged when they meet one of several criteria, including eligibility or participation in the Free or Reduced-Price Meal program or if neither of their parents received a high school diploma.⁵ Socioeconomic status often reflects availability of school and community resources that might impact access and outcomes. A significantly higher proportion of ELs are socioeconomically disadvantaged

(84 percent) when compared to English-only students (51 percent). Of note is that a smaller proportion of RFEPs (77 percent) are socioeconomically disadvantaged when compared to ELs. However, the proportion of RFEPs who are socioeconomically disadvantaged is still significantly larger than that of English-only students.

A similar trend can be found when analyzing disability status. ELs who also have a disability status are often referred to as “dually identified”. ELs are more likely to be identified for a disability (17 percent) when compared to English-only students (14 percent). Of note is that a significantly smaller proportion of RFEPs are identified for a disability (8 percent) when compared to both ELs and English-only students. These data are more striking for LTELs when considering that nearly one in three (32 percent) of LTELs are identified for a disability.⁶

It is important to acknowledge the impacts that these characteristics can have on ELs. Addressing any barriers to programs, services, and learning is critical for any county, district, or school to be successful. Addressing the needs associated with socioeconomic and disability status must be just as important a consideration as meeting language and other academic needs.

Table 3: Proportion of ELs, RFEPs, and All Students who Are Socioeconomically Disadvantaged or Students with Disabilities

	Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SED)	Students with Disabilities
ELs	84%	17%
-LTELs	87%	32%
RFEPs	77%	8%
English-only	51%	14%
All Students	61%	13%

REFLECTION: *What does socioeconomic status look like in your county or school district by EL, LTEL, and RFEP students? What strategies might your district employ to support ELs who are socioeconomically disadvantaged?*

What does disability status look like in your county or school district by EL, LTEL, and RFEP students? Are there patterns to the types of disabilities identified? What strategies might your district employ to address both the language and disability needs of these students and ensure proper identification?

Dual Language Learners

Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are young children, from birth to age 5, who are learning two or more languages simultaneously, or are learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language. In California, DLLs represent a significant and growing portion of young children, and they may require additional support to achieve success in early childhood education and beyond.

As the state invests in Universal PreK, it is critical to track information about DLLs across the multi-delivery system, especially in preschool and transitional kindergarten programs. Our early childhood education systems should ensure that DLLs receive educational opportunities to support the cultural and linguistic assets they bring. While we do not include DLL data in this report, future reports will track and monitor the progress of DLLs in preschool and transitional kindergarten programs to provide educators and policy-makers with a better understanding of their unique needs and to identify areas where additional support or resources may be necessary.

Newcomer Students

In 2023, AB 714 (McCarty) was signed into law, which created a definition of Newcomer students and requires schools, districts, and counties to report on their number of these students and by country of origin.⁷ Newcomer students in California are students between 3 and 21 years of age who were born in another country and have attended school in the U.S. for fewer than three years. According to the California Department of Education, Newcomer students “may include, but are not limited to, asylees, refugees, unaccompanied youth, undocumented youth, migratory students, and other immigrant children and youth identified by the local educational agencies (LEAs).” Many of these students are identified as ELs after enrolling in public schools and need additional support. These newcomer ELs might have different needs, especially if they are enrolling in later grades or have had limited or interrupted formal education.⁸

While statewide data on Newcomer students will not be available until the 2023-24 school year, according to a May 2023 brief by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), there were 151,996 Title III Immigrant students enrolled in California schools during the 2020-21 school year, of which 67 percent were socioeconomically disadvantaged. Only 10 percent of these students indicated English as their home language, with 44 percent indicating Spanish, and 46 percent indicating a language other than English or Spanish.⁹

REFLECTION: *How many Title III immigrant students are in your county or school district? How many are enrolled in secondary schools? What proportion of these students are socioeconomically disadvantaged? How is your county or school district supporting the unique needs of these students?*

Conclusion

California’s EL population is a vibrant tapestry, with over 100 unique languages spoken at home. This rich linguistic diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for educators. The data underscores the need for targeted support for different EL subgroups, including Long-Term English Learners, newcomer students, and those with disabilities. Additionally, a higher proportion of ELs come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, requiring a focus on removing barriers to success.

By leveraging the valuable information presented here, California can cultivate a robust and equitable education system that empowers all ELs to reach their full potential.





2

SECTION TWO: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Alignment to the English Learner Roadmap policy. *This section is most closely aligned to Principle Two: Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access.*

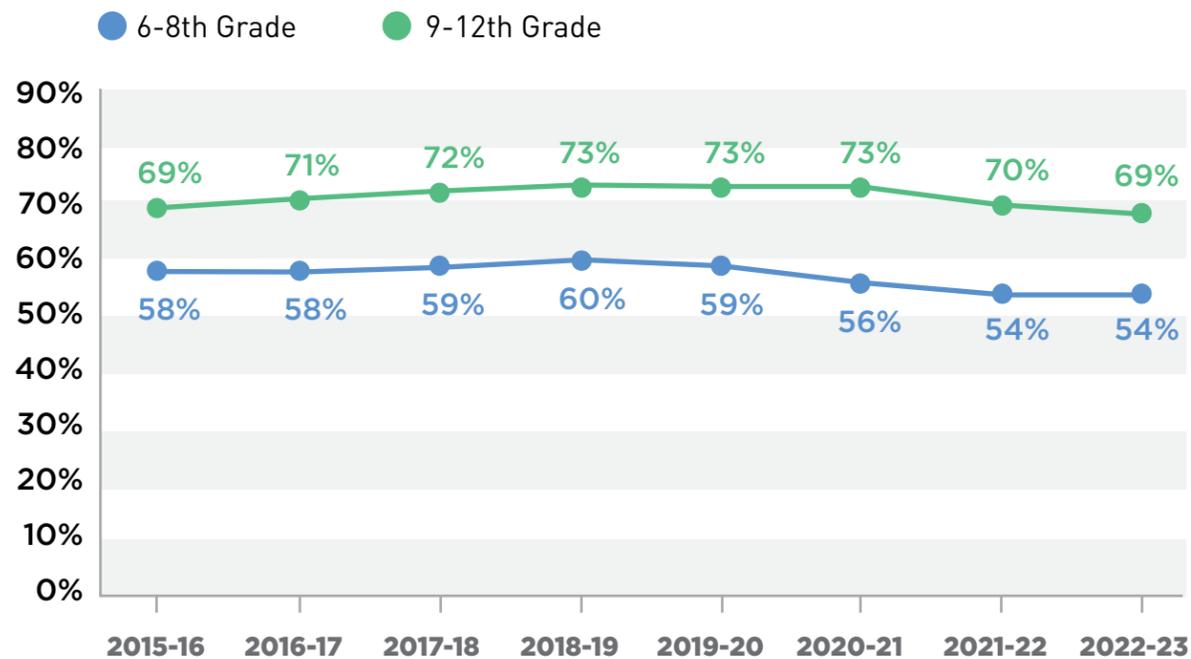
Ensuring that ELs attain English language proficiency, develop literacy in English and their home language, and achieve in all academic subjects is of utmost importance to an equity-focused education system. Moreover, ensuring that they graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and life success is also critical. This section focuses on the achievement of English learners towards English language proficiency, and in academic subjects (including English language arts, mathematics, and science). The subsequent section focuses on expanding multilingualism and the opportunity of students to maintain and develop their home language.

Reclassification

Once an EL demonstrates English language proficiency and meets the criteria to determine that they are linguistically proficient in English, comparable to peers in their grade level and age, a school district can reclassify them as a Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) student. This section focuses on the overall proportion of Ever-ELs who have been reclassified in grades 6-8th and in grades 9-12th.¹⁰ The term Ever-EL includes both ELs and RFEPs. In other words, it is inclusive of all students who are currently or have previously been an EL.

In the 2022-23 school year, 69 percent of 9-12th grade ever-ELs had been reclassified as RFEPs, a slight decrease from the 2021-22 school year. In grades 6-8, only 54 percent of ever-ELs had been reclassified in both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school year (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proportion of Ever-ELs in Grades 6-8th and 9-12th Who Are RFEPs, 2015-16 to 2022-23



This is a reversal from the slight progress that had been made over the past decade. However, it is important to note that the administration of the ELPAC assessment was paused in 2019-20 and not evenly distributed in 2020-21, which could have had an impact on those numbers.

► **Achievement Goal #1:**

Increase the proportion of Ever-ELs who are reclassified by ten percentage points

(for grades 6-8, from 54 percent in 2023, to 64 percent in 2030; and for grades 9-12, from 69 percent in 2023, to 79 percent in 2030)

If we are to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, then we need to ensure that our progress gets back to the pre-pandemic levels and has consistent growth in the subsequent years. An additional issue to keep in mind is that as we reclassify students, we must also ensure that these students maintain high levels of academic achievement. We explore this further in subsequent sections of this report when analyzing English language arts, math, and science achievement.

REFLECTION: *What is the proportion of Ever-ELs in my county, district, or school who are being reclassified in Grades 6-8th and 9-12th? What have been the changes in these proportions from 2015-16 to 2022-23?*

Preventing and Meeting the Needs of LTELs

Based on the latest data from the 2022-23 school year, 49 percent of ELs in grades 6-12 are LTELs and 40 percent of ELs in grades 3-5 are at risk of becoming LTELs. These 2022-23 numbers demonstrate a slight increase since the 2019-20 school year and a reversal of the progress that had been made over the previous decade.

Note that the significant increase in LTELs in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, is due to a drop in students taking the ELPAC due to the pandemic, leading to students not being able to demonstrate progress toward English language proficiency. The 2022-23 numbers are closer to historic levels as they are based on two full years of ELPAC administration (see Table 1).¹¹

Table 1: Proportion of ELs Who Are LTEL and AR-LTELs, 2019-20 to 2022-23

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Grades 6-12: Proportion of ELs Who are LTELs	46%	80%	81%	49%
Grades 3-5: Proportion of ELs Who are AR-LTELs	36%	59%	58%	40%

In the 2021 report, *Renewing Our Promise*, goals were set to significantly reduce the number of students who are LTELs and at-risk of becoming LTEL by the 2029-30 school year. Here we restate those goals based on the current status of California.

► **Achievement Goal #2:**

Reduce by half the percentage of ELs in grades 6-12 who are LTELs

(from 49 percent in 2023 to 25 percent in 2030)

► **Achievement Goal #3:**

Reduce by half the percentage of ELs in grades 3-5 who are AR-LTELs

(from 40 percent in 2023 to 20 percent in 2030)

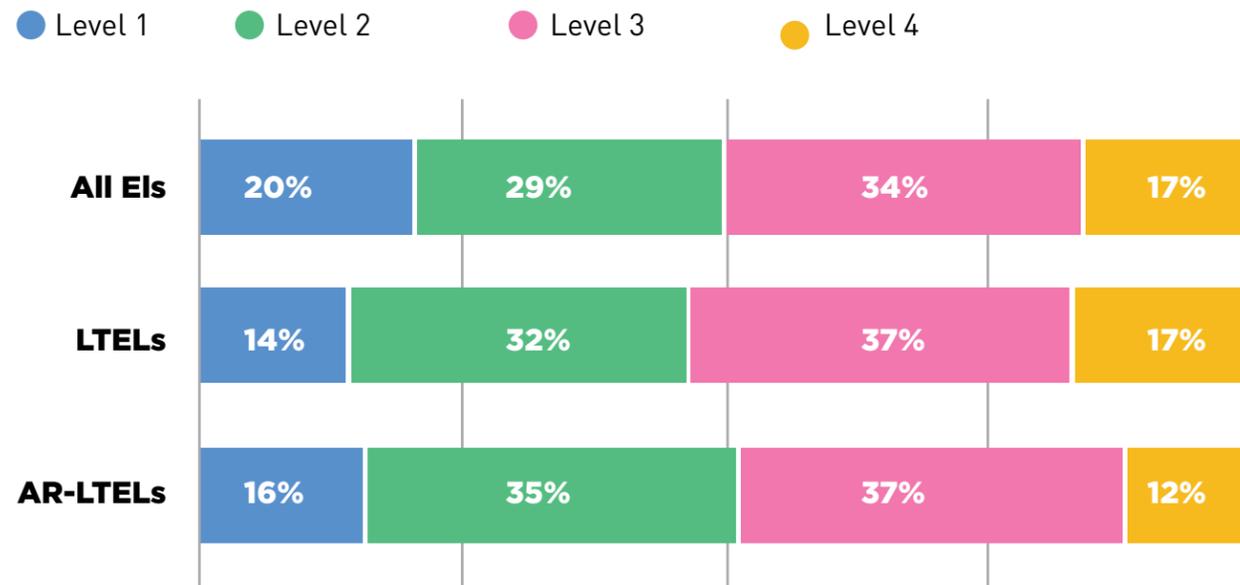
REFLECTION: *What is the status of my county or district related to accomplishing these goals? Can a goal be set for my county or district? What strategies might we be able to implement in order to bring us closer to these goals?*

Progress Toward English Language Proficiency

The English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) consists of two separate ELP assessments: one for the initial identification of students as ELs, and a second to measure a student's level of English language proficiency and their progress in learning English.

Based on the results of 2023 summative ELPAC, 17 percent of ELs had an English language proficiency level 4 (well developed), 34 percent level 3 (moderately developed), 29 percent level 2 (somewhat developed), and 20 percent level 1 (beginning to develop). Thanks to the passage of AB 1868 in 2022, ELPAC results are now available for LTELs and AR-LTELs.¹² This is important data that can support state and local efforts to differentiate instruction based on the specific needs of each student. The 2023 ELPAC results demonstrate that a higher proportion of LTELs and AR-LTELs are at moderately developed and somewhat developed level (see Figure 2).¹³

Figure 2: 2023 ELPAC Summative Assessment Results



Important insights arise when looking at data for each of the ELPAC domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (see Table 2).¹⁴

Table 2: 2023 ELPAC Level by Domain

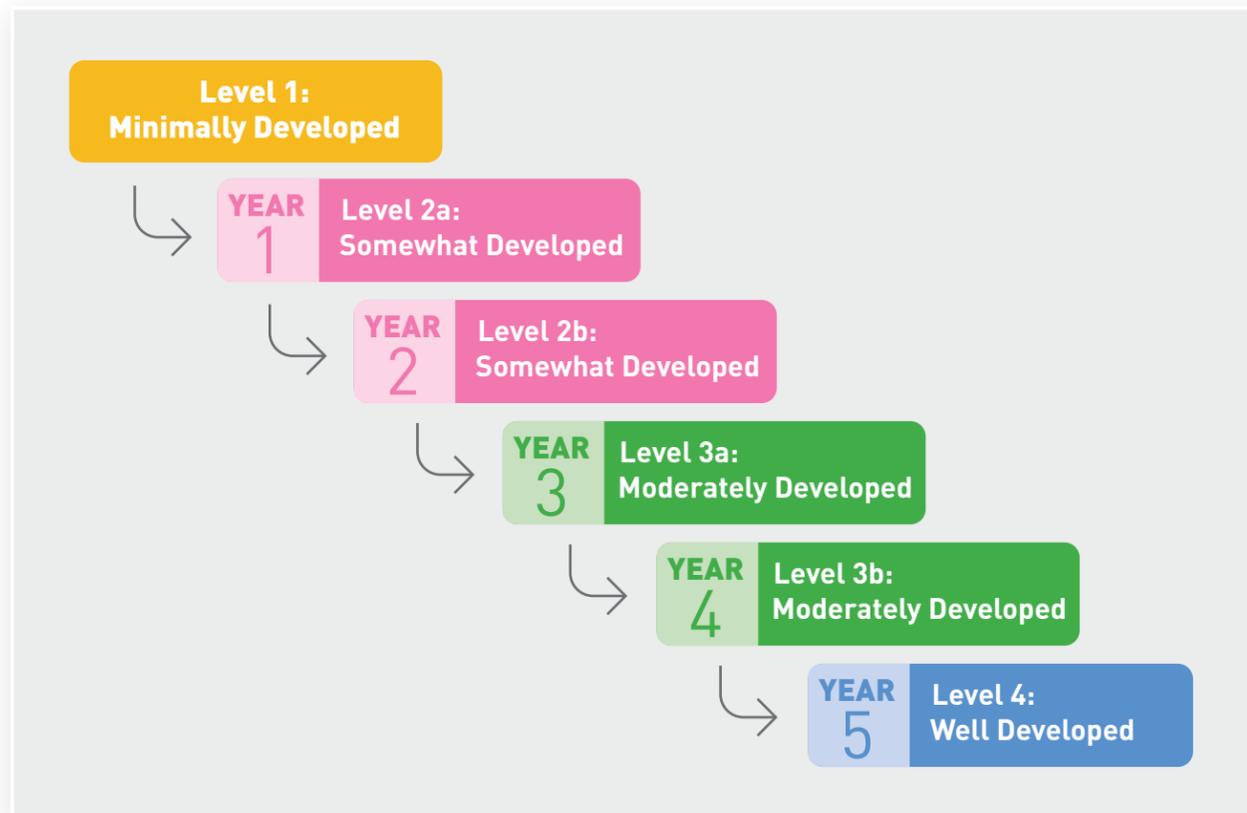
	Performance Level	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
All ELs	Well Developed	21%	47%	11%	16%
	Somewhat/Moderately	60%	36%	48%	61%
	Beginning to Develop	19%	17%	41%	23%
LTELs	Well Developed	11%	71%	10%	10%
	Somewhat/Moderately	70%	23%	42%	76%
	Beginning to Develop	18%	6%	48%	14%
AR-LTELs	Well Developed	22%	52%	5%	12%
	Somewhat/Moderately	64%	38%	49%	65%
	Beginning to Develop	14%	11%	46%	23%

Here we see the relative strength that LTELs have in speaking, which might lead educators to believe that they are fluent and might not need extra support. However, these data show that LTELs do need extra support, specifically in the areas of listening, reading, and writing when compared to all ELs. Of note is that nearly half of LTELs are “beginning to develop” in reading, despite the fact that they have been ELs for six or more years.

ENGLISH LEARNER PROGRESS INDICATOR

While it is understood that ELs, by definition, are not proficient in English language arts, our system should expect all to make yearly progress towards English language proficiency. The California Schools Dashboard (Dashboard), has a measure called the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI), which determines whether an EL with a prior and current year ELPAC score has made adequate progress toward English language proficiency. This is done by dividing the four ELPAC levels into six (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Expected ELPI Progress



The expectation that underscores the ELPI, is that a student who enters school at lowest ELPAC level (level 1) and who makes yearly progress will reach Level 4 within five years. A student with an ELPI score is considered to be making progress if they move up at least one level or maintain a Level 4 score. **Based on the ELPI scores released for the 2023 California Schools Dashboard, only 49 percent of ELs made expected progress toward English language proficiency.** This is significantly below what we would expect from an equity focused system.¹⁵

- ▶ **Achievement Goal #4:**
70 percent or more ELs will make progress toward English language proficiency (as determined by the ELPI)

REFLECTION: *What is the proportion of ELs in my county, district, or school making progress toward English language proficiency? What can be done to support ELs and increase the number that make yearly progress? What goals can be set for my county, district, or school?*

Achievement in ELA, Math, and Science

English learners deserve access to rigorous coursework in all subject areas that encompass a well-rounded education and for continued progress in their overall achievement over the next decade. Moreover, we should expect for RFEPs to perform at least on par with English-only (EO) students across all grades. Although there are unique language demands in the content areas of math, science, and history/social studies, ELs will achieve at high levels if provided with the right scaffolds and support. This support includes designated and integrated English language development (ELD).

For the purposes of this section, we will focus on ELA, math, and science achievement in 2022-23 and progress over the past decade. We also propose the following academic achievement goals for California public schools by 2029-30 (with 2021-22 data serving as the baseline):

- ▶ **Achievement Goal #5:**
Improve the proportion of ELs and RFEPs who meet or exceed standards in ELA, math, and science by ten percentage points, across each grade.
- ▶ **Achievement Goal #6:**
Ensure that RFEP achievement in ELA, math, and science is above or on par with that of EO students across each grade.

The second goal is a reaffirmation of a goal set in the 2021 report, [Renewing Our Promise](#). It is also critical, as our ultimate vision for ELs is not reclassification for its own sake, but reclassification that signals high levels of academic achievement.

While this section covers achievement in subject areas for which there is data available (ELA, math, and science) we strive for full access and achievement in all subject areas that encompass a well rounded education, including arts, music, history, and much more. It is our intention for future reports to include information on additional subject areas.

We also note that there is no 2019-20 achievement data due to the suspension of assessments that year, and 2020-21 data is not used in our analysis since testing was not evenly implemented.

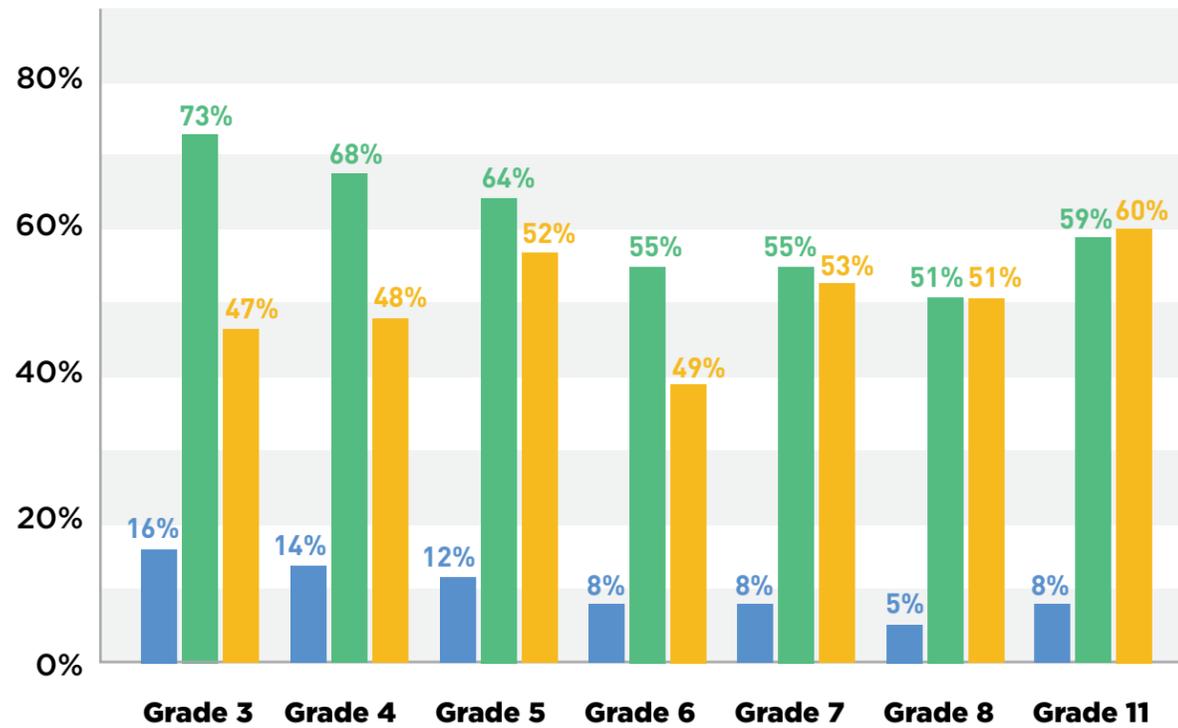
English Language Arts

Based on the 2023 ELA achievement data, there is a clear need to inject more urgency into the system that is still not preparing over two in five RFEPs and nearly nine in ten ELs to meet ELA standards (see Figure 4).¹⁶

Breaking the ELA achievement down by grade level reveals the following trends:

Figure 4: 2022-23 Percentage of EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded ELA Standards, by Grade

● Not English Proficient ● English Proficient ● English-Only



- > The proportion of ELs who meet or exceed ELA standards declines as we move up the grades, from 16 percent in Grade 3 to 8 percent in Grade 11.
- > The proportion of RFEPs who meet or exceed ELA standards also decreases as we move up the grades, from 73 percent in Grade 3 to 59 percent in Grade 11.

ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN ELA

There is a widening EL to EO achievement gap as we move up the grades and the emergence of an RFEP to EO gap by 11th grade (see table 3). The gap between EL and EO students increases from 31 percentage points in 3rd Grade to 53 percentage points in 11th Grade. Moreover, while RFEPs outperform EO students in Grades 3-7, this advantage narrows as we move up the grades, turning into a one percentage point gap by 11th grade (see Table 3).¹⁷

Table 3: 2022-23 ELA Achievement Gaps by Grade Level, EL-EO and RFEP-EO

Gap	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 11
EL-EO	-31%	-35%	-39%	-41%	-45%	-45%	-53%
RFEP-EO	+25%	+20%	+12%	+6%	+2%	0%	-1%

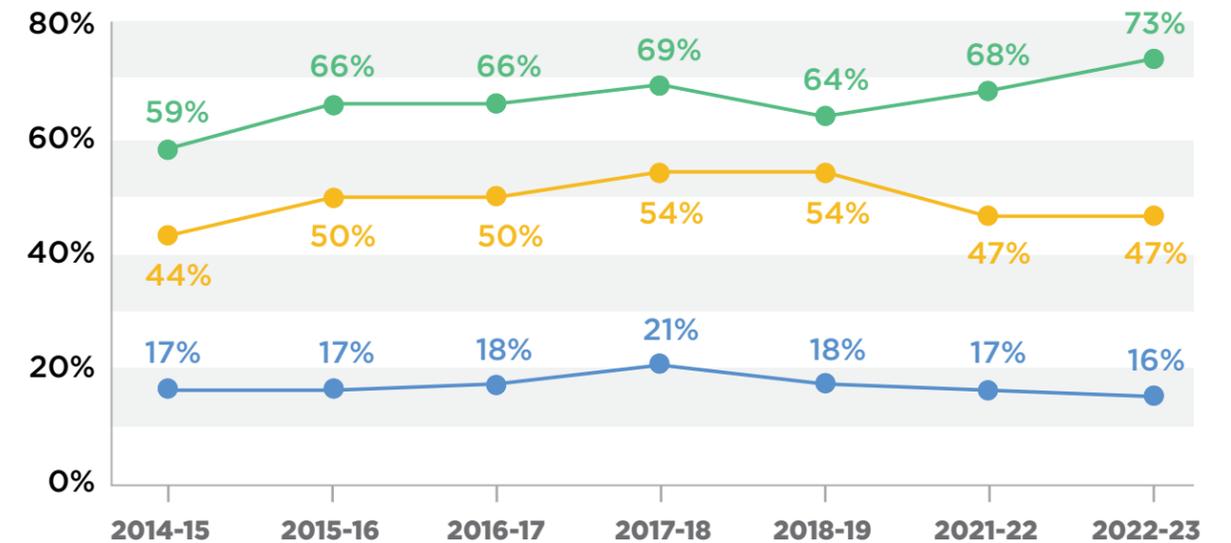
TRENDS IN ELA ACHIEVEMENT

Looking at the trend in ELA progress when comparing outcomes of the 2022-23 school year to previous years, we see some notable trends in EL and RFEP outcomes. Here, we compare 2022-23 outcomes to those of 2021-22 and the pre-pandemic levels.¹⁸

In 3rd grade ELA, the proportion of ELs that met or exceeded standards decreased by one percentage point from 2022 to 2023 and is at the lowest level recorded. RFEP achievement improved by five percentage points and is at the highest level recorded, and RFEPs significantly outperformed EO students (see Figure 5).

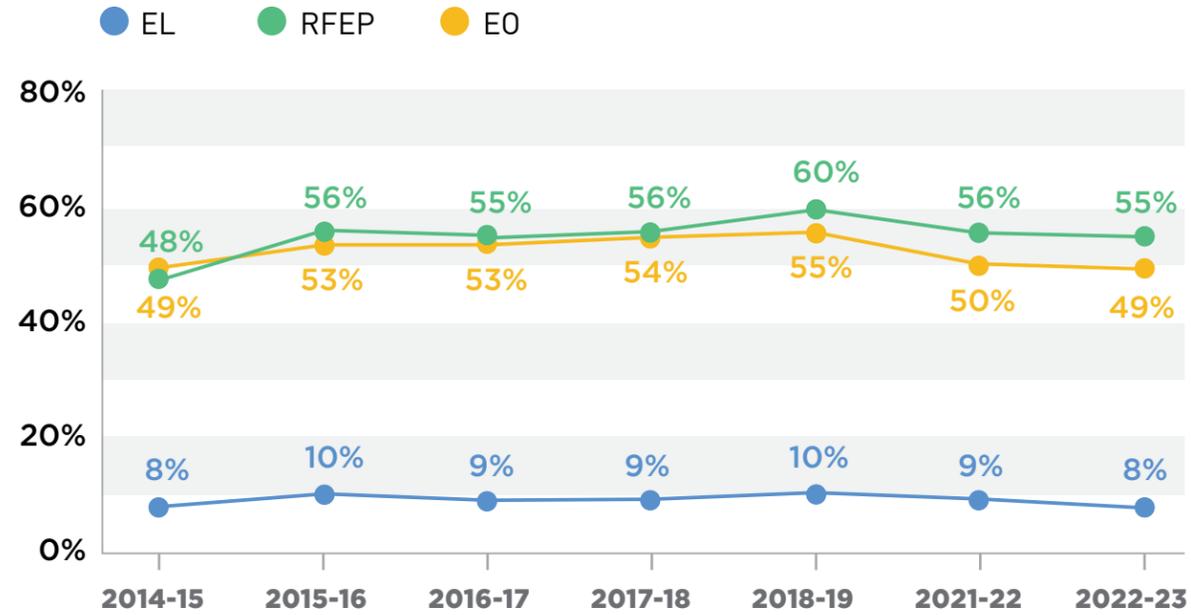
Figure 5: Percentage of 3rd Grade EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded ELA Standards, 2014-15 to 2022-23

● EL ● RFEP ● EO



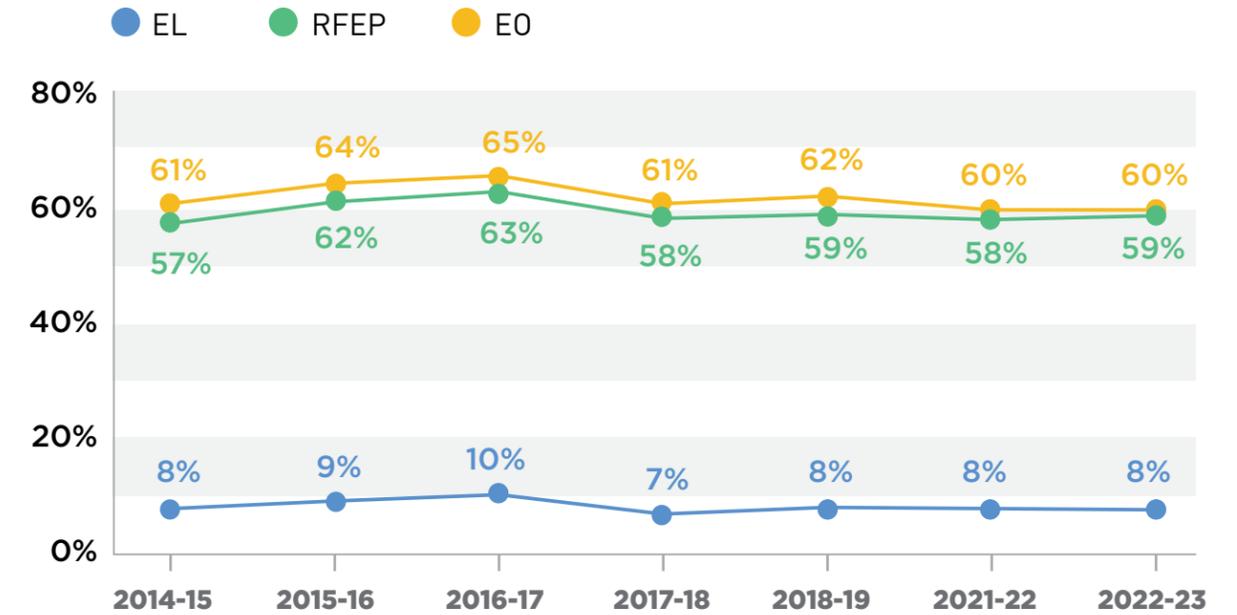
In 6th Grade ELA, the proportion of ELs and RFEPs that met or exceeded standards decreased by one percentage point from 2022 to 2023, and remains below the pre-pandemic (2018-19) levels. RFEPs outperform EO students by six percentage points (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Percentage of 6th Grade EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded ELA Standards, 2014-15 to 2022-23



In 11th Grade ELA, EL achievement has been stagnant from 2019 to 2023. RFEP achievement improved by one percentage point from 2022 to 2023 and is at the same pre-pandemic level. There is a one percentage point achievement gap between RFEP and EO students (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Percentage of 11th Grade EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded ELA Standards, 2014-15 to 2022-23



Progress towards our 2029-30 goals would mean the following outcomes in each grade:

- **3rd grade:** 27 percent ELs and 78 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed ELA standards, and RFEPs continue to outperform EO students.
- **6th grade:** 19 percent ELs and 66 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed ELA standards, and RFEPs continue to outperform EO students.
- **11th grade:** 18 percent ELs and 68 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed ELA standards, and RFEPs reach the same level of achievement as EO students.

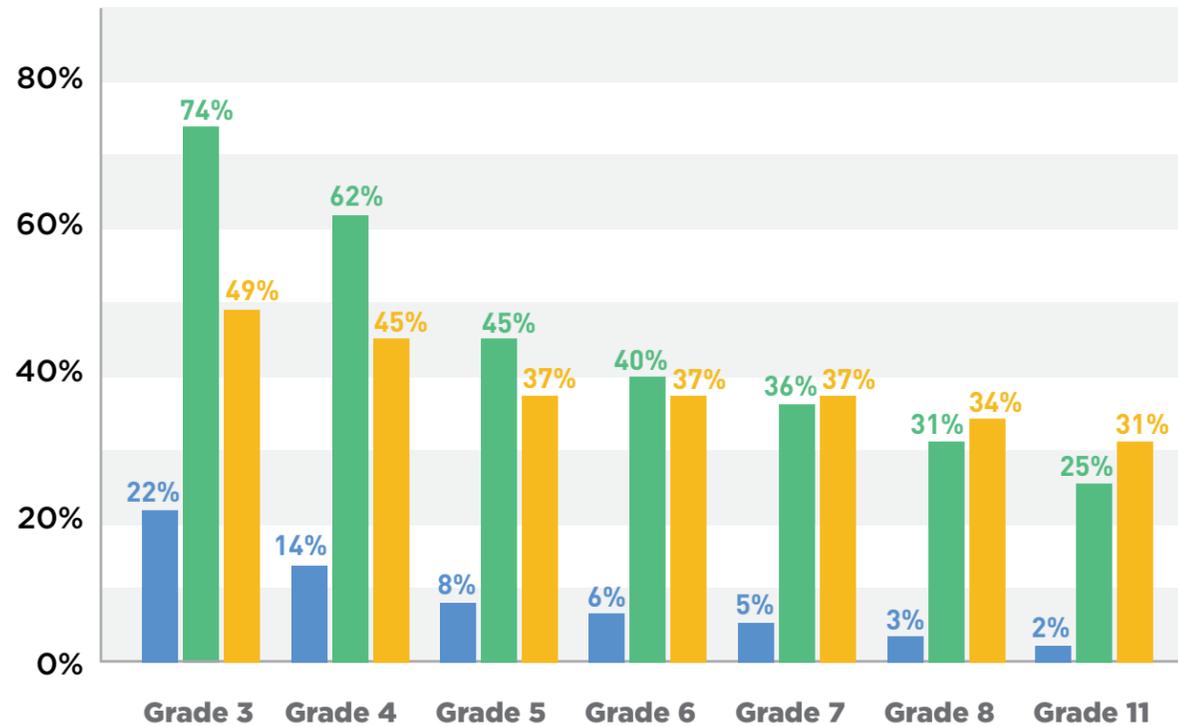
REFLECTION: What proportion of ELs and RFEPs are meeting or exceeding ELA standards in your county, district, or school? How does this achievement compare to that of the state and English-only students? How has achievement changed since 2014-15 and 2018-19?

Mathematics Achievement

The 2022-23 math outcomes reflect that our public education system did not prepare nearly two in three RFEPs and over nine in ten ELs to meet math standards. This is concerning and reflects an opportunity that schools and districts can seize upon to implement the newly adopted 2023 Math Framework with a focus on delivering integrated ELD and primary language instruction across math content, expanding equitable access to rigorous coursework, and adopting instructional materials that can truly meet the needs of ELs. See Figure 8 for grade level analysis.¹⁹

Figure 8: 2022-23 Percentage of EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded Mathematics Standards, by Grade

● Not English Proficient ● English Proficient ● English-Only



The grade level analysis unveils the following trends:

- The proportion of ELs who meet or exceed math standards declines as we move up the grade levels, from 22 percent in 3rd grade to two percent in 11th grade.
- The proportion of RFEPs who meet or exceed math standards also declines as we move up the grade levels, from 74 percent in 3rd grade to 25 percent in 11th grade.

ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN MATH

The EL to EO achievement gap remains constant as we move up the grades, ranging from 27 percent in 3rd Grade to 32 percent in 7th Grade. Moreover, while RFEPs outperform EO students in Grades 3-6, this advantage narrows as we move up the grades, turning into an achievement gap by 8th grade. In 3rd grade, RFEPs have a 25 percentage point advantage over EO students, but this turns into a six percentage point gap by 11th grade. Moreover, the deep decline as we move up the grade levels is a concern for all of California's students (see Table 4).²⁰



Table 4: 2022-23 Math Achievement Gaps by Grade Level, EL-EO and RFEP-EO

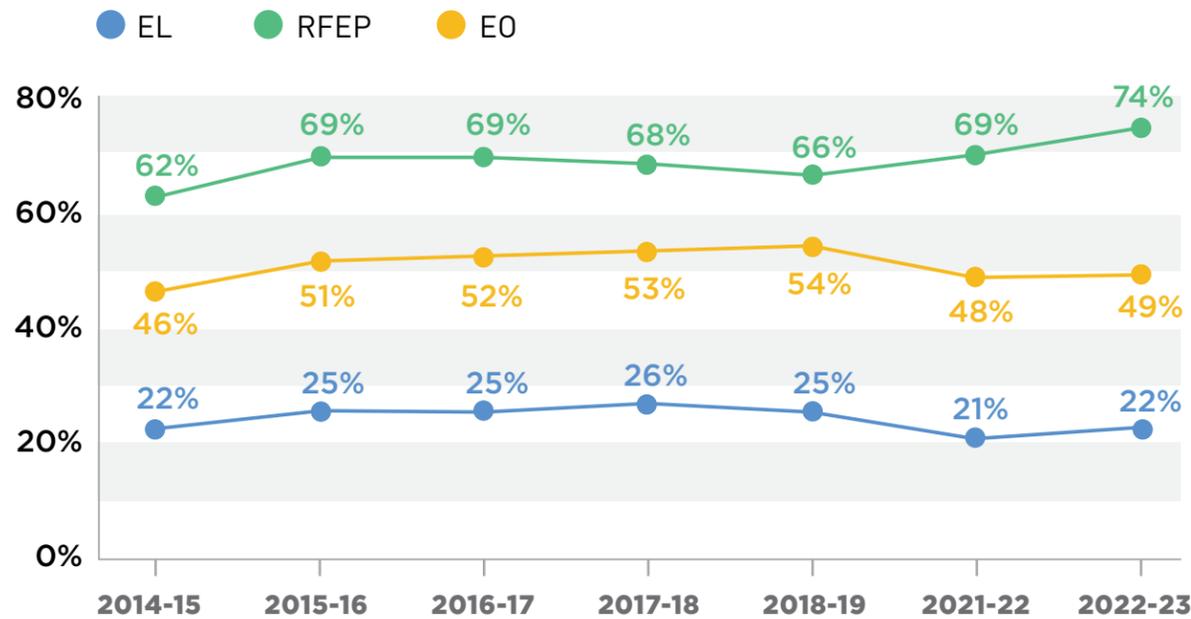
Gap	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 11
EL-EO	-27%	-31%	-29%	-31%	-32%	-31%	-29%
RFEP-EO	+25%	+17%	+8%	+3%	-1%	-3%	-6%

TRENDS IN MATH ACHIEVEMENT

Looking at the trend in Math progress when comparing outcomes of the 2022-23 school year to previous years, we see some notable trends in EL and RFEP outcomes.²¹

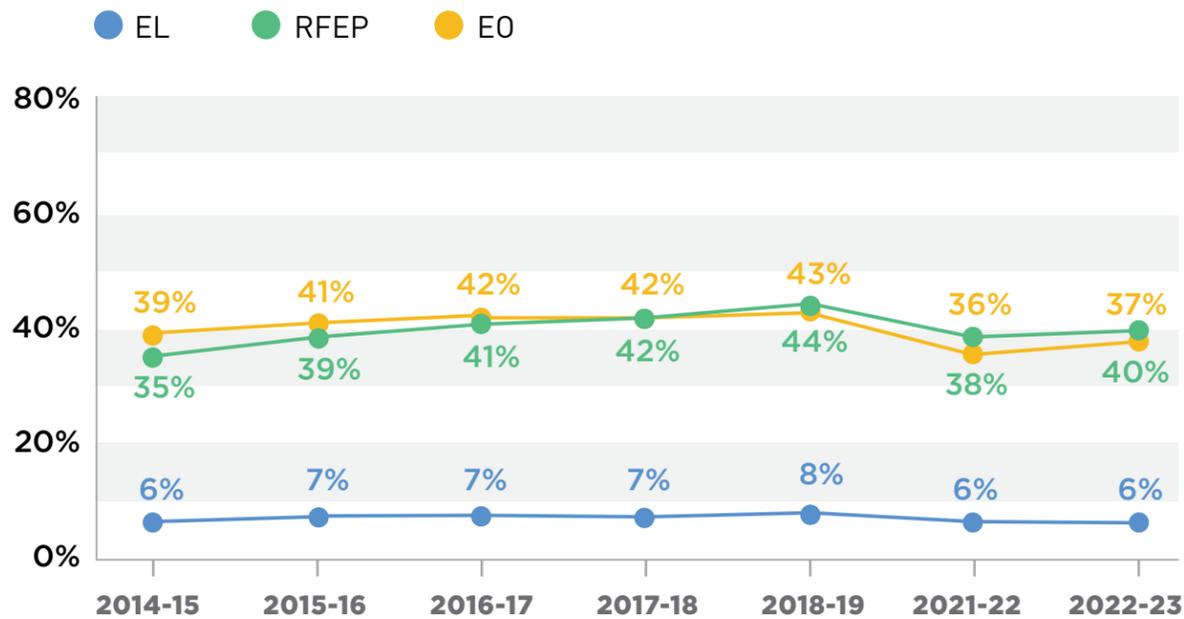
In 3rd Grade math, the proportion of ELs who met or exceeded standards improved by one percentage point from 2022 to 2023, but is below the pre-pandemic levels. The proportion of RFEPs that met or exceeded standards hit the highest level at 74 percent, and RFEPs outperform EO students by 25 percentage points (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of 3rd Grade EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded Math Standards, 2014-15 to 2022-23



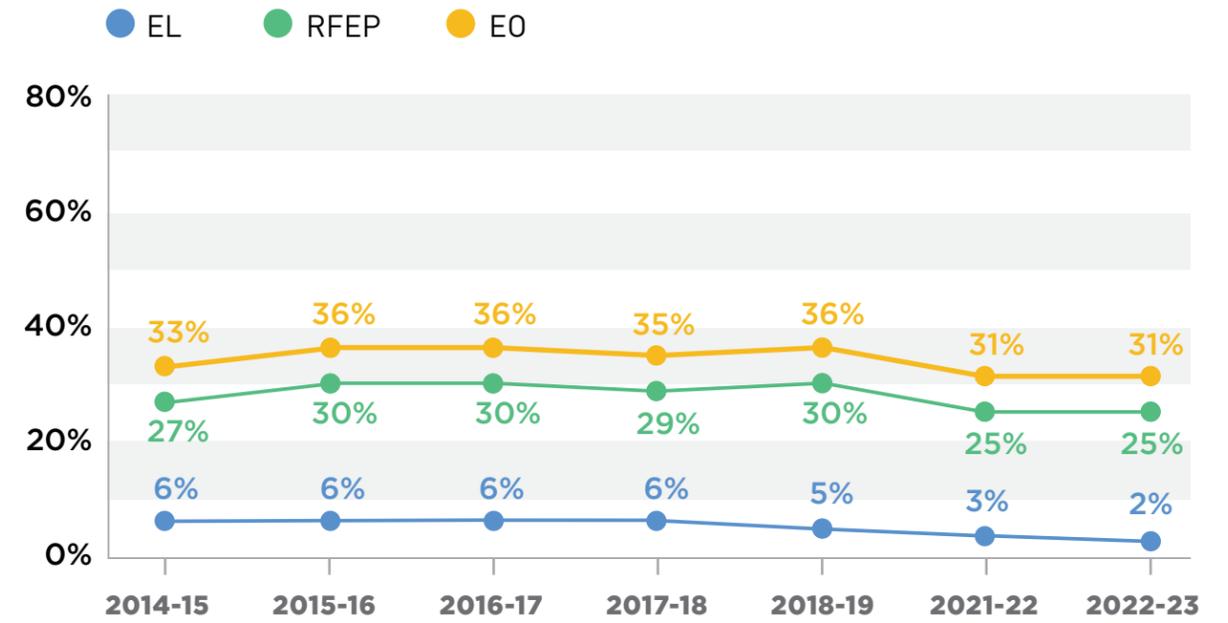
In 6th Grade math, EL achievement has been stagnant from 2022 to 2023 and is below the pre-pandemic level. RFEP achievement improved by two percentage points from 2022 to 2023, but remains below the pre-pandemic level. RFEPs outperform EO students by three percentage points (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Percentage of 6th Grade EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded Math Standards, 2014-15 to 2022-23



In 11th Grade math, EL achievement decreased by one percentage point from 2022 to 2023 and hit the lowest level. RFEP achievement has been stagnant from 2022 to 2023 and is below the pre-pandemic levels. There is a six percentage point achievement gap between RFEP and EO students (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Percentage of 11th Grade EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded Math Standards, 2014-15 to 2022-23



Progress towards our 2029-30 goals would mean the following outcomes in each grade:

- **3rd Grade:** 31 percent ELs and 79 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed math standards, and RFEPs would continue to outperform EO students.
- **6th Grade:** 16 percent ELs and 48 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed math standards, and RFEPs continue to achieve on par or above EO students.
- **11th Grade:** 13 percent ELs and 35 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed math standards, and RFEPs achieve on par with EO students.

REFLECTION: What proportion of ELs and RFEPs are meeting or exceeding math standards in your county, district, or school? How does this achievement compare to that of the state and English-only students? How has achievement changed since 2014-15 and 2018-19?

Science Achievement

The California Science Test (CAST) is relatively new, with its first full administration in the 2018-19 school year. Moreover, unlike the ELA and Math assessment, testing in science only occurs in 5th grade, 8th grade, and one time in high school (which could be in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade).

The 2023 science outcomes reflect that there is much work to be done. Across all grades, 31 percent of RFEPs and just two percent of ELs met or exceeded science standards. Moreover, the five percentage point advantage that RFEPs have compared to EO students in 5th Grade turns into a six percentage point gap in Grade 8 and a nine percentage point gap in high school. The grade level analysis unveils a troubling trend as a lower proportion of ELs and RFEPs meet or exceed science standards as we move up the grades.²²



In 5th Grade, the proportion of ELs who met or exceeded science standards has remained stagnant at four percent. RFEP achievement improved by three percentage points from 2022 to 2023, and RFEPs outperform EO students by five percentage points (see Figure 12).

In 8th Grade, the proportion of ELs who met or exceeded standards dropped to one percent in 2023 from two percent in previous years. RFEP achievement also dropped by one percentage point in 2023 to 28 percent. There is a six percentage point gap between RFEP and EO students (see Figure 13).

Figure 12: Percentage of 5th Grade EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded Science Standards, 2018-19 to 2022-23

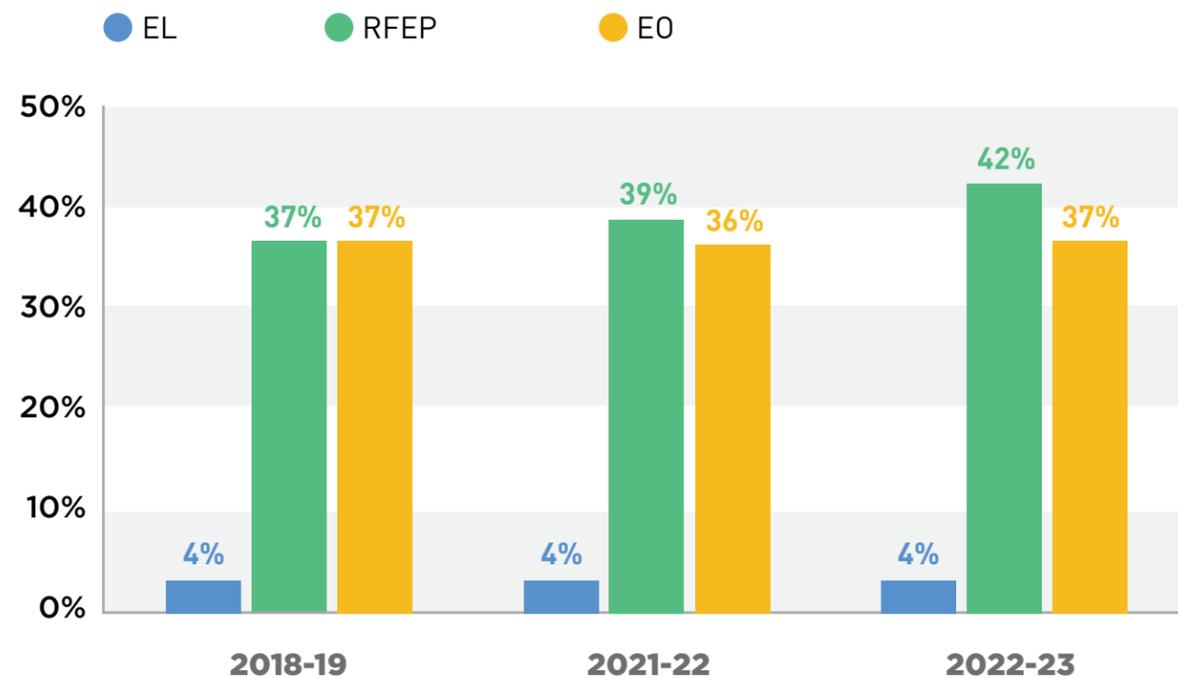
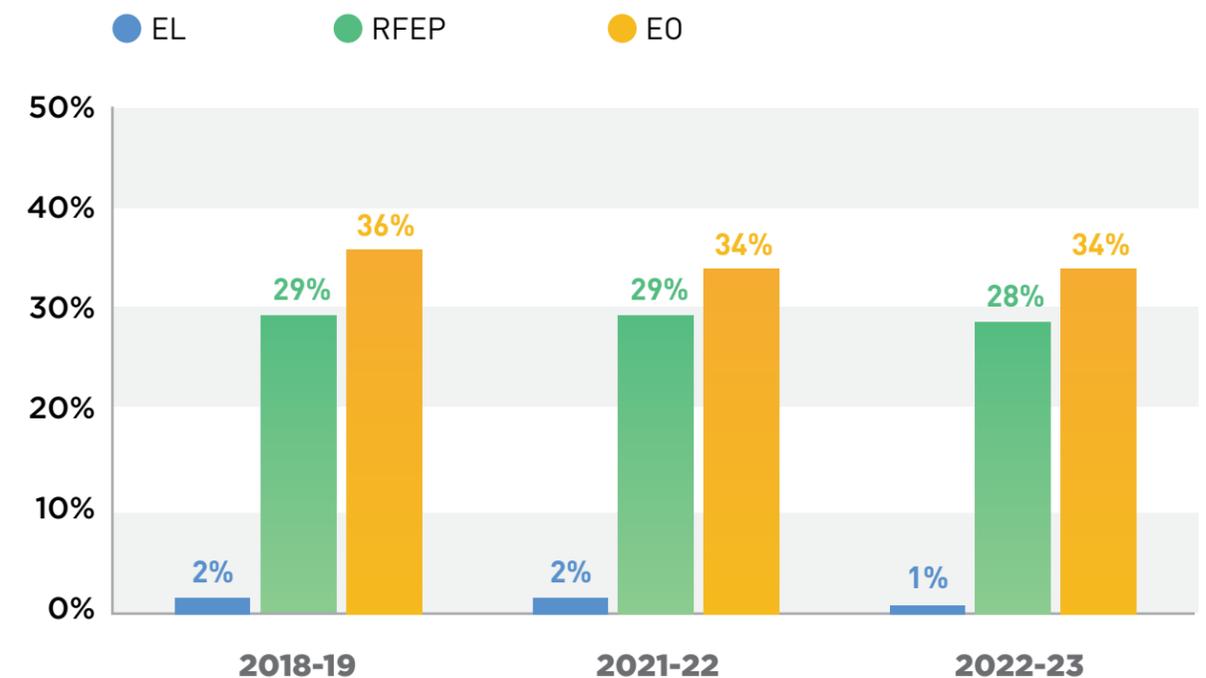
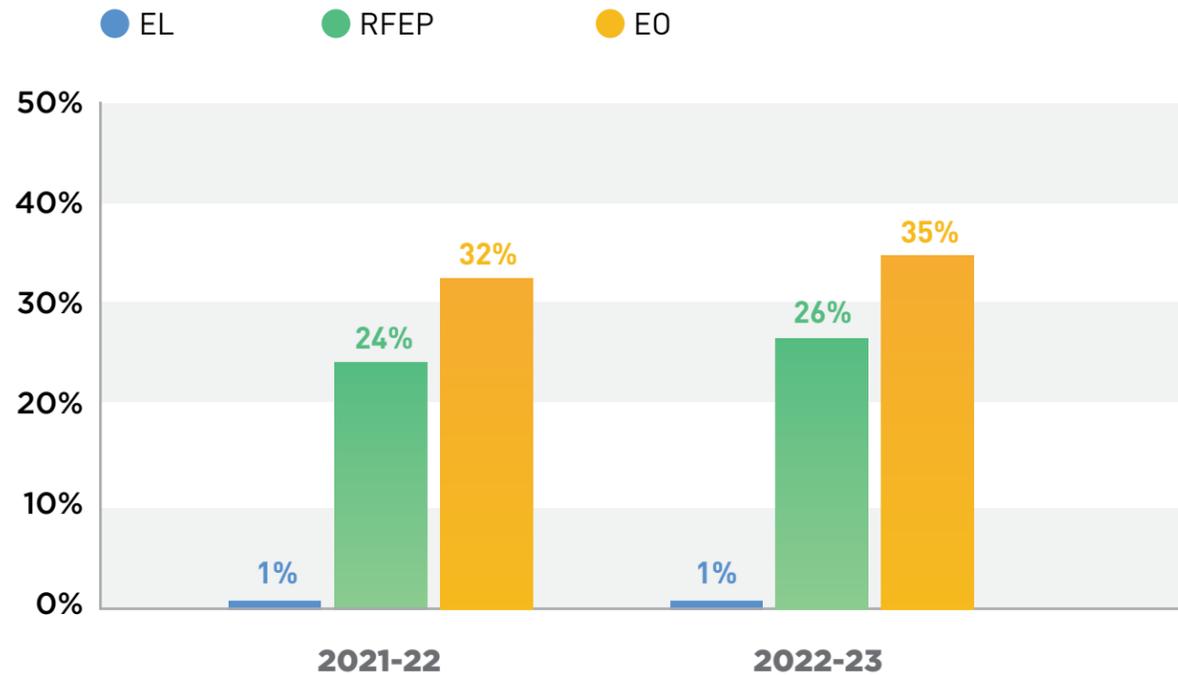


Figure 13: Percentage of 8th Grade EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded Science Standards, 2018-19 to 2022-23



In high school, only one percent of ELs from the class of 2023 met or exceeded science standards, unchanged from the previous year. RFEP achievement in 2023 improved by two percentage points compared to 2022. However, there is a nine percentage point gap between RFEP and EO students (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Percentage of High School EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded Science Standards, Class of 2022 and 2023



Progress towards our 2029-30 goals would mean the following outcomes in each grade:

- **5th grade:** 14 percent ELs and 49 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed science standards, and RFEPs continue to achieve on par or above EO students.
- **8th grade:** 12 percent ELs and 39 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed science standards, and RFEPs achieve on par or above EO students.
- **High School:** 11 percent ELs and 34 percent of RFEPs meet or exceed science standards, and RFEPs achieve on par or above EO students.

REFLECTION: *What proportion of ELs and RFEPs are meeting or exceeding science standards in your county, district, or school? How does this achievement compare to that of the state and English-only students?*

▶ **Summary of Goals Focused on Academic Achievement.**

By the 2029-30 school year, California’s public schools will:

1. **Increase the proportion of Ever-ELs who are reclassified by ten percentage points** (for grades 6-8, from 54 percent in 2023, to 64 percent in 2030; and for grades 9-12, from 69 percent in 2023, to 79 percent in 2030)
2. **Reduce by half the percentage of ELs in grades 6-12 who are LTELs, to 25 percent** (from 49 percent in 2023).
3. **Reduce by half the percentage of ELs who are AR-LTELs in grades 3-5, to 20 percent** (from 40 percent in 2023).
4. **Improve the proportion of ELs and RFEPs who meet or exceed standards in ELA, math, and science by ten percentage points, across each grade** (using 2022 data as the baseline)
5. **Ensure that RFEP ELA, math, and science achievement is above or on par with that of EO students across each grade.**

Conclusion

This section examined the academic achievement of California’s English Learner (EL) population. While data reveals positive strides in reclassification rates, achievement in core subjects like English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science demands focused attention, particularly for Long-Term ELs (LTELs). The analysis presented here paints a portrait of a system that has successfully accelerated some students towards English proficiency. However, it also identifies areas where California’s education system can refine its approach to ensure all ELs reach their full potential.

We propose a set of ambitious yet achievable goals for the 2029-30 school year that will serve as a roadmap for California’s EL success. These goals aim to significantly increase the number of students reclassified as RFEP across all grades, effectively halving the population of LTELs, and boosting achievement in core subjects for both ELs and RFEPs.

These ambitious goals necessitate a collaborative effort. Districts and counties should leverage the data presented here to target program and instructional improvement including more comprehensive implementation of the EL Roadmap, which includes guidance for use of the students’ home languages, interventions, and support for different EL subgroups. By strategically utilizing these findings and fostering strong collaboration between educators, leaders, and families, California can cultivate a robust and equitable education system that empowers all EL students to achieve academic success.



3

SECTION THREE: EXPANDING MULTILINGUALISM

Alignment to the English Learner Roadmap policy. *This section is most closely aligned to Principle One: Assets-Oriented and Needs-Responsive Schools and Principle Four: Alignment and Articulation Within and Across Systems.*

Supporting ELs to maintain their home language while building English proficiency is not just an effective strategy that yields positive outcomes on many indicators, but also ensures that our system is asset based and meets California's workforce needs. Supporting students who speak a language other than English at home must start early and span throughout the different grades, from birth through 12th grade. This is critical when considering that nearly 60 percent of California's birth to five year old children and nearly two in five K-12th grade students speak a language other than English at home.

This section covers California's progress toward building multilingualism in public schools. It reviews California's expansion in the number of districts offering the State Seal of Biliteracy (SBB) and students receiving it since its inception in 2012. It also reviews available data on dual language programs across California counties and districts.

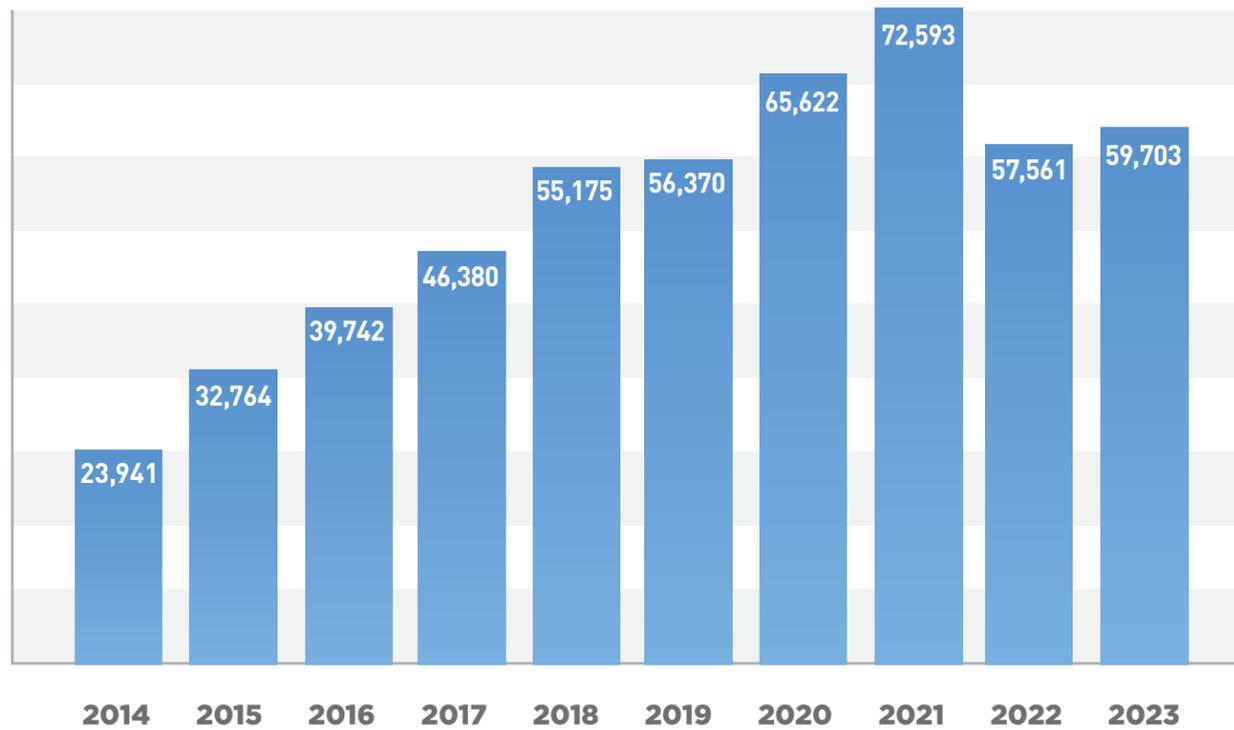
This section borrows and expands upon goals set forth by the California Department of Education's *Global California 2030* (2018), laying out a vision of what is possible by 2030 and beyond.

Recipients of the State Seal of Biliteracy

In 2011, California became the first state to pass a State Seal of Biliteracy law. This sparked a national movement that led to all 50 states and the District of Columbia passing similar legislation. South Dakota became the 50th state to pass legislation in 2024.

Over the past decade, California has made consistent progress in expanding the number of students receiving the State Seal of Biliteracy, increasing every year with the exception of a slight decline in the 2022 school year (see Figure 1).²³

Figure 1: State Seal of Biliteracy Recipients, 2013-14 to 2022-23



The significant increase in 2020 and 2021 might be explained by the flexibility provided to districts in how students could demonstrate their language proficiency during the pandemic. On the other hand, the decline in 2022 could be explained by the rolling back of some of that flexibility. Thanks to AB 370 (Addis), which was signed by the Governor in 2023 and will be implemented during the 2023-24 school year, students will have additional rigorous options for demonstrating proficiency in English and an additional language.²⁴

- ▶ **Expanding Multilingualism Goal #1:**
By 2030, California will triple the number of students who receive the State Seal of Biliteracy, from 55,175 in 2017-18 to more than 165,000 in 2029-30
(from Global California 2030)

Based on data from 2014 to 2023, California is not on track to meet this goal. To meet this goal, California needs to increase the number of recipients by over 100,000 students over the next seven years, an average yearly increase of 15,000 students. This can be achieved if we consider the opportunity represented by our student population. The 2023 number of recipients represents just under 14 percent of high school graduates. In other words, there are nearly 400,000 high school graduates every year that do not attain the Seal of Biliteracy. Moreover, 45 percent of high school students come from a household where another language other than English is spoken at home.

CURRENT AND FORMER ENGLISH LEARNERS ACHIEVING THE STATE SEAL OF BILITERACY

As with any recognition, California must ensure equity in access to the SSB. As much progress as has been made over the past decade, the SSB policy cannot be deemed successful in the state, in counties, or districts unless an increasing number and proportion of recipients are current or former ELs, otherwise known as Ever-ELs (which combines ELs and RFEPs).

During the 2022-23 school year, 27,082 Ever-ELs attained the SSB, representing just 45 percent of total recipients (see Table 1).²⁵

Table 1: Proportion of SSB Recipients who are Ever-ELs, 2019-20 to 2022-23

School Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Proportion of Recipients (Number of Students)	47% (31,004)	49% (35,260)	50% (28,698)	45% (27,082)

This represents the smallest proportion and number of Ever-EL recipients since these data started to be collected for the 2019-20 school year. In fact, the 2022-23 school year had 3,922 fewer Ever-ELs who attained the SSB, when compared to the 2019-20 school year.

- ▶ **Expanding Multilingualism Goal #2:**
By 2030, over half of California Seal of Biliteracy recipients will be Ever-ELs, representing over 82,500 ever-EL recipients in 2029-30.

Meeting this goal would lead to 55,418 more Ever-ELs attaining the SSB in 2030, compared to 2023 and an average yearly increase of 7,917 additional Ever-ELs over the next seven years.

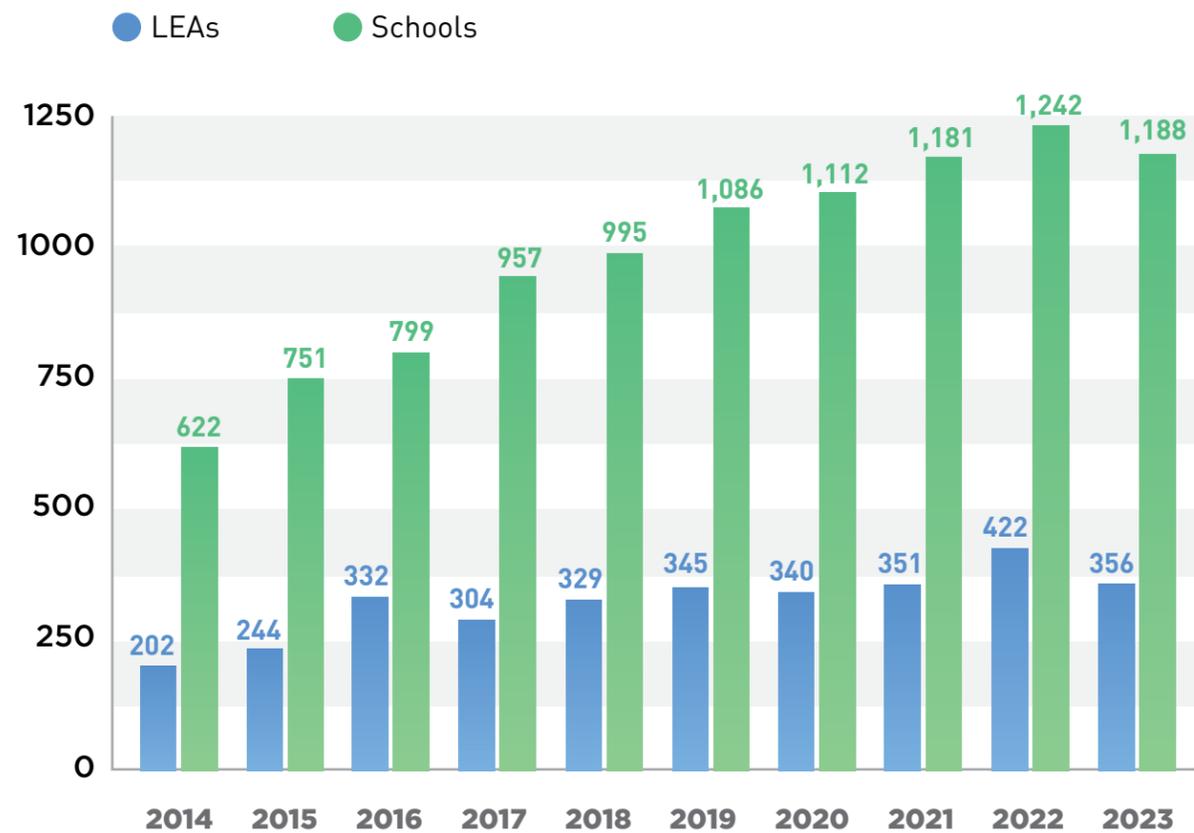
Access to the State Seal of Biliteracy

Ensuring that all eligible LEAs participate in and award the State Seal of Biliteracy is another critical step in achieving its access. An eligible LEA has at least one high school. Moreover, the state tracks eligible LEAs and schools based on whether they awarded at least one SSB, not necessarily on whether it was offered. Therefore, tracking eligible LEAs and schools might be challenging for those with a smaller enrollment of high school students.

As we look at California’s progress over the past decade, we have seen a steady increase in both the number of schools and LEAs awarding the SSB. In 2023, 1,188 schools from across 356 LEAs awarded the SSB. This was a decline of 54 schools and 66 LEAs when compared to the previous year—the first decline since the inception of the SSB.

Given this modest growth, the question of whether all of the eligible school districts are offering the SSB remains. To determine this, we define “eligible school districts” as all unified or high school districts that enroll at least 15 students in 12th grade (note that this does not include the other types of LEAs, including County Offices of Education that are included in the numbers for Figure 2).²⁶

Figure 2: Participating LEAs and Schools, 2014 to 2023



Based on this analysis, California has 421 unified and high school districts,²⁷ of which 403 enrolled 15 or more 12th Grade students during the 2022-23 school year.²⁸ Of these 403 “eligible school districts”, 321 awarded the SSB. This means **that during the 2022-23 school year, 82 “eligible school districts” did not award the SSB, leaving over 22,000 students without access.** Moreover, the 12th grade enrollment of these districts ranged from 15 to over 2,000 students.

► **Expanding Multilingualism Goal #3:**
By 2030, all eligible school districts will offer the State Seal of Biliteracy

It is hoped that this growth will continue and that by 2030, all eligible school districts will adopt the Seal of Biliteracy and provide access for all students across the entire State of California. As data is reviewed in the coming years, it is hoped that more schools and districts will be awarding the SSB.

REFLECTION: *How has attainment of the State Seal of Biliteracy improved in your county or district? Are there districts or schools that are not offering this recognition that could be supported to start?*



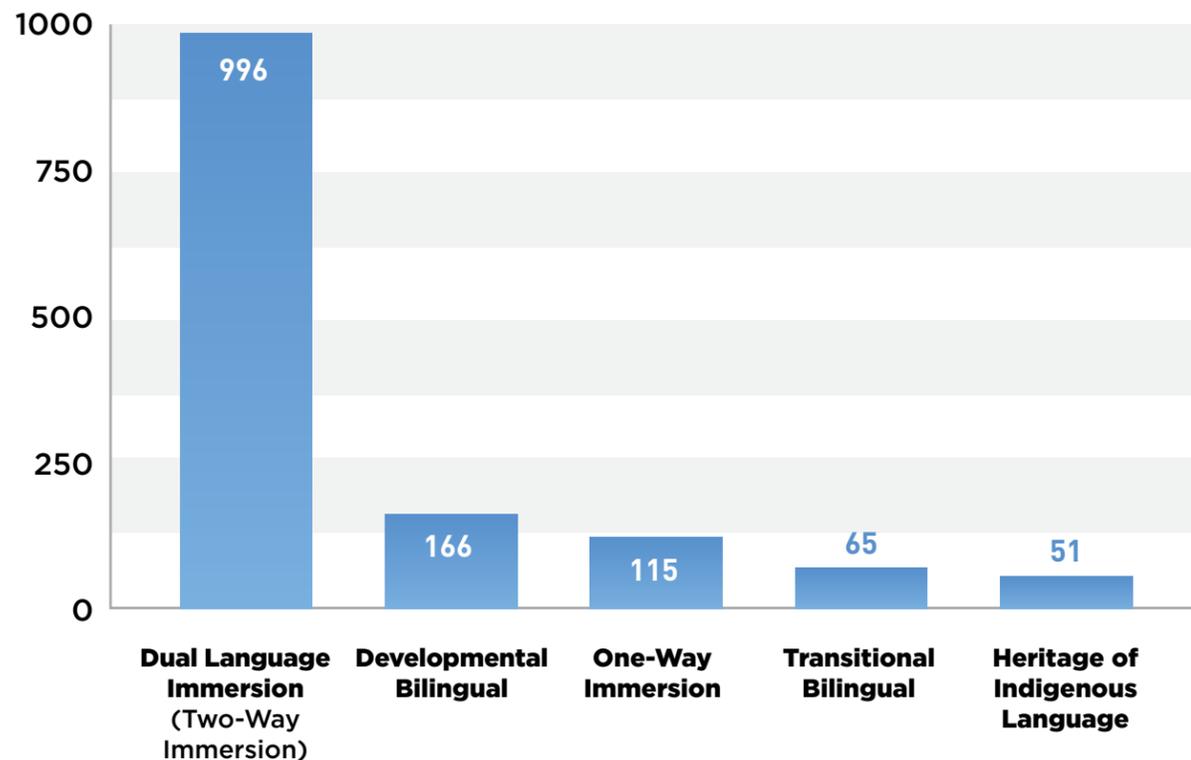
Expanding Dual Language Immersion Programs

Of the multilingual programs offered in California public schools, Dual Language Immersion, also known as two-way immersion, are the most prominent ones. These programs offer “language learning and academic instruction for native speakers of English and native speakers of another language. The goals of dual-language immersion programs are language proficiency and academic achievement in students’ first and second languages, and cross-cultural understanding.”²⁹

While there are other types of multilingual programs that schools offer to serve ELs, the benefits of DLI programs are that ELs share a classroom with fluent English speakers and learn from each other’s languages and cultures. Developmental Bilingual and Transitional Bilingual programs are limited to just ELs, while One-Way Immersion programs can only serve students from one language group (which might include ELs or English speakers). Moreover, Transitional Bilingual programs do not have the goal of language and academic proficiency in English and a second language.

According to 2022-23 data, there were 1,281 schools offering at least one multilingual program, including 996 schools with DLI programs (see Figure 3). These numbers for DLI programs represent an increase of 249 additional schools since 2018.³⁰

Figure 3: Schools with Multilingual Programs, 2022-23



► **Expanding Multilingualism Goal #4:**
Quadruple the number of Dual Language Immersion programs from 407 in 2017-18 to more than 1,600 in 2029-30 (from *Global California 2030*)

Based on the 2023 data and trend over the past five years, California is not on track to meet this goal. In order to achieve the goal of 1,600 DLI programs by 2030, the state must add nearly 600 additional DLI programs over the next seven years, an estimated yearly increase of 86 additional DLI programs per year. However, progress has been made over the past five years that should be commended.

PROPORTION OF ELS ENROLLED IN DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAMS

Based on the data above, we can assume that there is not enough access to Dual Language Immersion programs for all students in California, including ELs. For example there is a Dual Language Immersion program for every 1,117 EL in California. According to 2021-22 Title III program enrollment data from the US Department of Education, **nine percent of California ELs participate in a Dual Language Immersion program** (see Table 2).³¹

Table 2: Table 2: 2021-22 Proportion of ELs in DLI Programs in Top Five EL Enrollment States

State	EL Enrollment	ELs in DLI Programs	% of ELs in DLI Programs
United States	5,264,304	428,728	8%
California	1,127,627	101,515	9%
Texas	1,093,968	212,557	19%
Florida	269,534	7,848	3%
New York	246,985	18,168	7%
Illinois	239,519	32,792	14%

While California is above the US average in the proportion of ELs enrolled in a DLI program, it is more than half that of Texas, which enrolls more than twice as many ELs in DLI programs despite having a smaller number of ELs. Texas actually ranks third in proportion of ELs enrolled in DLI programs, with DC ranking first (28 percent), followed by Alaska (20 percent).

► **Expanding Multilingualism Goal #5:**
One in five ELs will participate in a Dual Language Immersion or Developmental Bilingual program by 2030.

Accomplishing this goal would place California amongst the top five states when it comes to proportion of ELs enrolled in programs leading to proficiency and literacy in two languages and place it as a leader amongst the top five states with the largest EL enrollment. More importantly, it would more than double the number of ELs who are currently enrolled in DLI and Developmental Bilingual programs.

REFLECTION: *What are the available DLI or Developmental Bilingual programs in your county or district? What is the proportion of ELs enrolled in DLI programs? How can you support their further expansion?*



Expanding Multilingual Pathways

In 2022, the California Department of Education launched the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition awards. These awards include the following recognitions:

- **The Biliteracy Program Participation Recognition.** Available to students enrolled in programs leading to biliteracy in preschool, kindergarten, elementary, and middle school.
- **Home Language Development Recognition.** Available to students with a home language other than English in preschool, kindergarten, elementary, and middle school, who demonstrate that they are continuing to develop the home language by engaging in age-appropriate activities in the home language.
- **Biliteracy Attainment Recognition.** Available to students at the end of elementary school and the end of middle school. Awarded to students who meet specific proficiency criteria in English and one or more languages in addition to English, aligned with the criteria for the SSB.³²

In the first year, during the 2021-22 school year, there were 16 counties with 60 participating school districts across 390 schools that awarded 37,429 recognitions. During the 2022-23 school year, there were 22 counties with 71 participating school districts across 637 schools that awarded 32,359 recognitions.³³ While participation is voluntary, it is our hope that more districts provide these recognitions.

► **Expanding Multilingualism Goal #6:**
Half of all K-12 students will participate in programs leading to proficiency in two or more languages, either through a class, a program, or an experience
(from *Global California 2030*)

While we do not have clear data and metrics for measuring this goal, we hope that a continuous increase in the number of districts awarding the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards and awards earned by students will be a way of measuring progress.

OPPORTUNITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

In early childhood education, we are hopeful that the expansion of TK and preschool will incorporate the needs of Dual Language learners. With nearly 60 percent of children from birth to age five coming from a home where a language other than English is spoken at home, it will be important to identify these DLLs in our early childhood education system and ensure that programs can meet their needs. Fortunately, California passed AB 1363 (Rivas) in 2021, which requires California State Preschool Program (CSPP) providers to identify and report key information on the Dual Language Learners (DLLs) they enroll and serve.³⁴ Additionally, AB 393 (Rivas) in 2023 now further requires identification of DLLs in general child care and development programs and Migrant Education preschool programs.³⁵

REFLECTION: *How is your county or district implementing the Biliteracy Pathway Awards? How can you support their further expansion?*

What Can Be Done to Support Expanding Multilingualism

School, district, and county leaders can expand multilingualism, by focusing on the following:

- › **State Seal of Biliteracy:** Ensure all eligible students have the opportunity to earn the SSB. Promote its value to students and families.
- › **Dual Language Immersion and Developmental Bilingual Programs:** Expand DLI and Developmental Bilingual programs to serve more students, particularly ELs. Provide support for teachers to effectively implement these programs.
- › **Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards:** Encourage participation in these awards. Recognize and celebrate students' multilingual achievements.

► Summary of Goals Focused on Expanding Multilingualism.

By the 2029-30 school year:

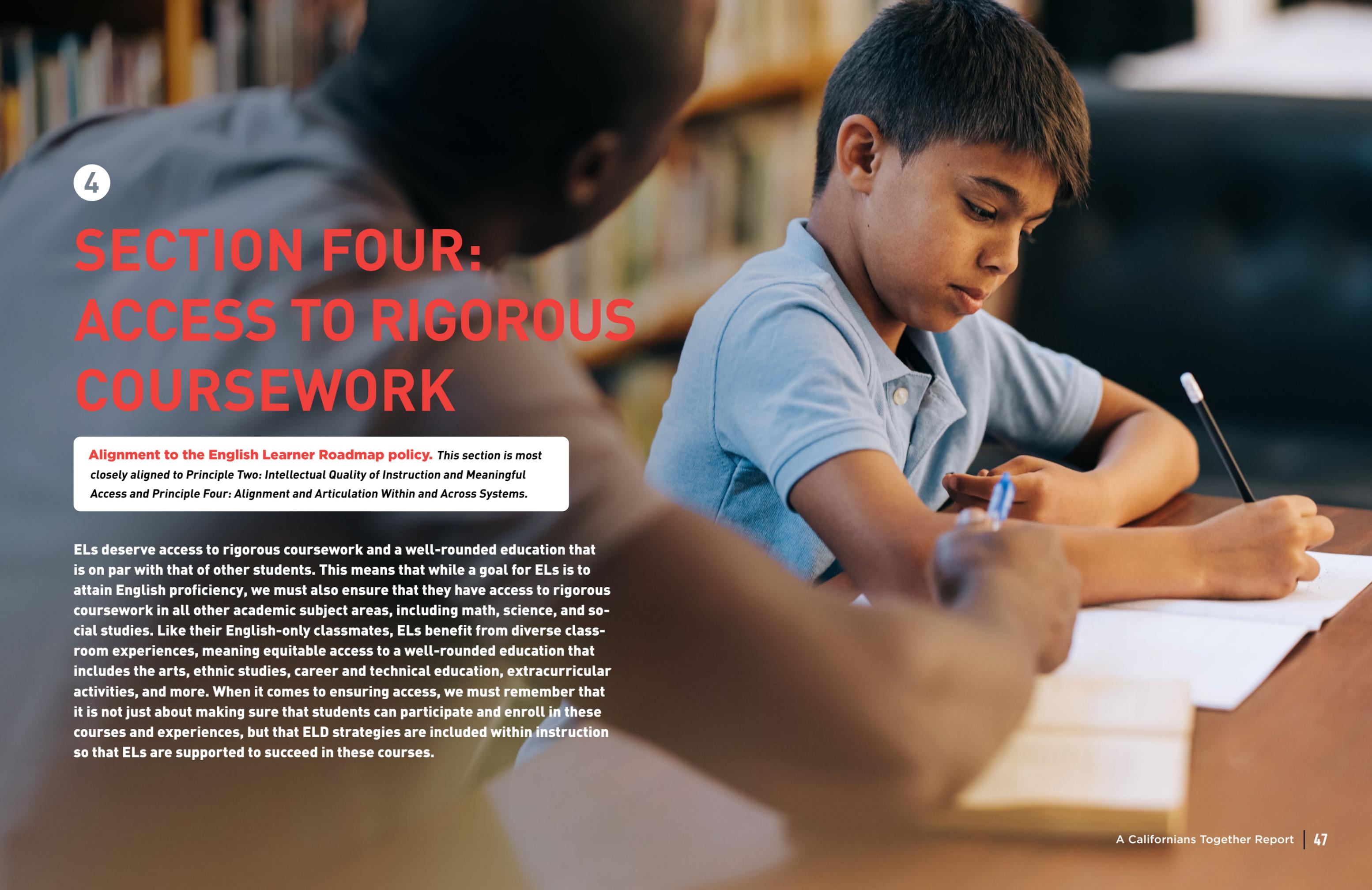
- 1. California will triple the number of students who receive the State Seal of Biliteracy, to more than 165,000,** from 55,175 in 2017-18 and 59,703 in 2022-23 (from *Global California 2030*)
- 2. Over half of California Seal of Biliteracy recipients will be Ever-ELs, representing over 82,500 ever-EL recipients,** from 45 percent representing 27,082 ever-EL recipients in 2022-23
- 3. All eligible school districts will offer the State Seal of Biliteracy**
- 4. Quadruple the number of Dual Language Immersion programs to more than 1,600 in 2030,** from 407 in 2018 and 996 in 2023 (from *Global California 2030*)
- 5. One in five ELs will participate in a Dual Language Immersion or Developmental Bilingual program**
- 6. Half of all K-12 students participate in programs leading to proficiency in two or more languages** (from *Global California 2030*)

Conclusion

This section examined California's progress in cultivating multilingualism within public schools. Data analysis revealed a steady increase in the number of students receiving the State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB) and schools offering Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs. However, to achieve the ambitious goals established for the 2029-30 school year, as outlined in [Global California 2030](#) with further expansion, concerted efforts are required.

The data underscores the need to significantly expand access to the SSB program, particularly for Ever-ELs (current and former English Learners). This can be achieved by ensuring all eligible students are aware of the program's value and providing necessary support for them to demonstrate their biliteracy. Similarly, DLI programs offer a valuable pathway for ELs to develop proficiency in both English and another language. Therefore, expanding the number of DLI programs and providing robust support for their effective implementation is critical.

To facilitate progress towards these goals, this section offers actionable recommendations for school, district, and county leaders. These recommendations focus on promoting the SSB program, advocating for the expansion of DLI programs, and encouraging participation in the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards. By prioritizing these focus areas and fostering a collaborative approach, California can cultivate a robust multilingual education system that equips all students with the linguistic skills to thrive in a global society.



4

SECTION FOUR: ACCESS TO RIGOROUS COURSEWORK

Alignment to the English Learner Roadmap policy. *This section is most closely aligned to Principle Two: Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access and Principle Four: Alignment and Articulation Within and Across Systems.*

ELs deserve access to rigorous coursework and a well-rounded education that is on par with that of other students. This means that while a goal for ELs is to attain English proficiency, we must also ensure that they have access to rigorous coursework in all other academic subject areas, including math, science, and social studies. Like their English-only classmates, ELs benefit from diverse classroom experiences, meaning equitable access to a well-rounded education that includes the arts, ethnic studies, career and technical education, extracurricular activities, and more. When it comes to ensuring access, we must remember that it is not just about making sure that students can participate and enroll in these courses and experiences, but that ELD strategies are included within instruction so that ELs are supported to succeed in these courses.

While we do not have statewide data on course access by student group, we hope that schools and districts are leveraging data in the following areas:

- > A-G Course Completion
 - > Dual enrollment
- > AP coursework
 - > CTE pathways
- > Ethnic Studies
 - > Arts

It is important to note that in 2018, AB 2735 (O'Donnell) was signed into law, prohibiting middle and high school students from being denied enrollment in core curriculum courses or courses required for high school graduation. A core curriculum includes courses in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, history, social studies, and courses required to meet graduation requirements. The bill also includes courses required for college admissions (such as A-G coursework) and advanced courses, such as honors and AP coursework.³⁶ While this law took effect on January 1, 2019, it is unclear what the impact has been. However, this legislation provides powerful guidance for schools, school districts, and county offices of education as they set a vision for access to rigorous coursework for their ELs.

High School Graduates Meeting UC and CSU Admission Requirements

One of the main goals of our education system is to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college, career, and life success. One of the ways in which California measures if high school graduates are prepared for admission into the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) systems is through the completion of A-G coursework in high school. These courses include:

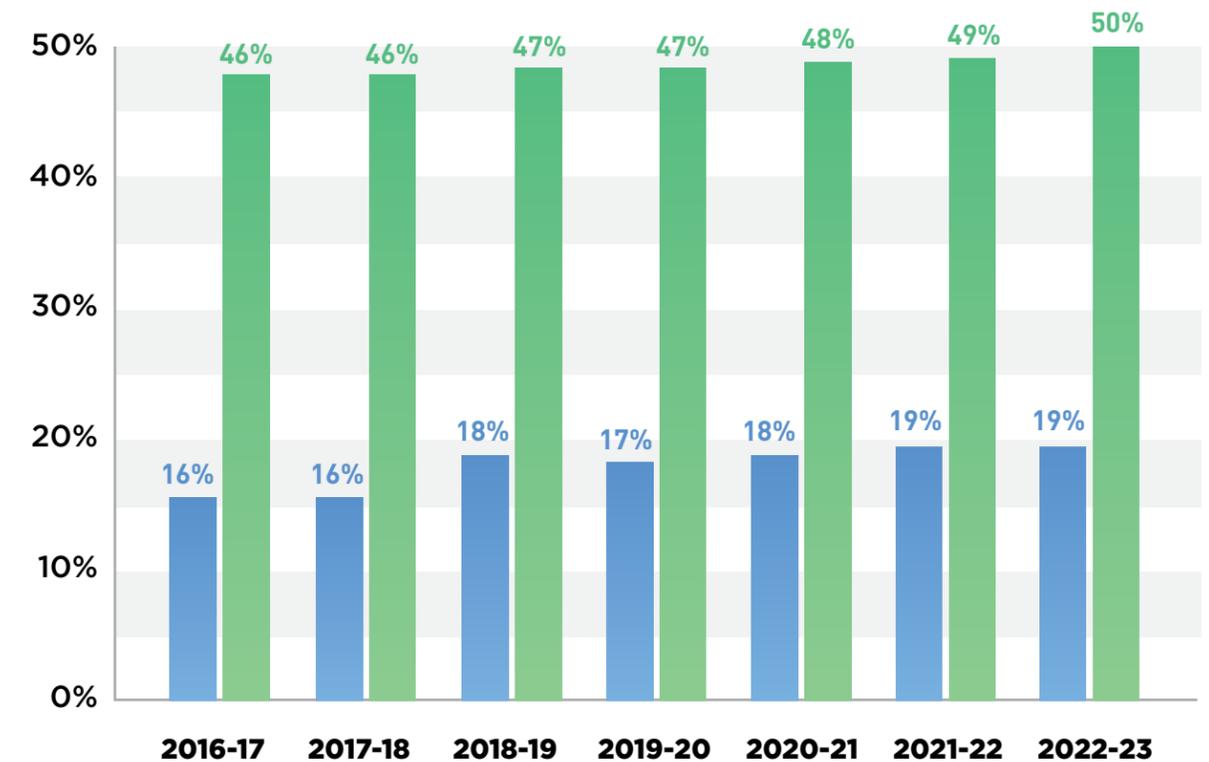


1. **History (Two Years)**
2. **English (Four Years)**
3. **Mathematics (Three Years)**
4. **Science (Two Years)**
5. **Language Other than English (Two Years)**
6. **Visual and Performing Arts (One Year)**
7. **Elective**

The A-G courses that satisfy each of these requirements are approved by the UC and CSU systems. In addition, there are approved exams and college courses that can meet each of these requirements. With the exception of math and languages other than English, these require-

ments must be met during the 9-12th grade.³⁷ Given the depth of these courses, the proportion of students that graduate from high school and meet A-G requirements is a good measure of achievement and rigorous coursework through a broad course of subjects (see Figure 1).³⁸

Figure 1: Proportion of Four-Year EL and Non-EL Cohort Students Who Graduated Meeting A-G Requirements, 2016-17 to 2022-2023



These data show a troubling trend in that just half of non-EL students and 19 percent of ELs in the 2022-23 four-year cohort graduated from high school meeting A-G requirements. This represents a 30 percentage point gap between EL and non-EL students. However, it is important to acknowledge the steady improvement since the 2016-17 school year.

These data are not available for RFEP students, which makes it difficult to see a full picture of A-G completion for nearly two thirds of students who have ever been an English learner (Ever-EL). During the 2022-23 school year, 65 percent of ever-ELs were reclassified in 9th grade.

► **Access to Rigorous Coursework Goal #1:**
By the 2029-30 school year, one in three ELs in a four-year cohort will graduate meeting UC/CSU entrance requirements

Meeting the first goal will require California districts and schools to continue and speed up the steady improvement for California ELs graduating and meeting A-G requirements over the past seven years, increasing the rate by 14 percentage points over the next seven years at an average yearly increase of seven percentage points.

► **Access to Rigorous Coursework Goal #2:**
By the 2029-30 school year, the proportion of RFEPs who graduate meeting UC/CSU entrance requirements in a four year cohort will be on par with that of English-only students

It is unclear if California public schools are already seeing rates of RFEP graduates meeting A-G coursework that is on par with EO students given that these data are not publicly available. We hope that schools and districts are able to track their own local data and for the state to begin publicly releasing these data.

ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

California public schools tend to focus on high school graduation rates as a measure of progress, and this is an area where improvement has been made over the past decade. For example, nearly three in four ELs (73 percent) graduated from high school in 2022-23, up from 68 percent just five years ago in 2017-18. Compared to the 2022-23 graduation rate of non-EL students (89 percent), there is a 16-percentage point gap between EL and non-EL students. While this information is both a reason to celebrate and call for the closing of the gap, it is also misleading when districts and schools do not dig deeper and analyze their A-G completion rates. For example, there are some districts and counties that have a higher high school graduation rate than the state average, but still have a lower proportion of graduates meeting A-G requirements than the state. Just looking at high school graduation rates alone effectively lowers expectations for access to rigorous coursework. For example, district leaders and the public might be led to believe that the graduation rate of all students (86 percent) is acceptable, but it is unlikely that the same assumption would be made when realizing that only 45 percent of all students graduate meeting UC and CSU entrance requirements.

REFLECTION: What proportion of your ELs and RFEPs are graduating from high school and meeting A-G requirements? What is being done to ensure that ELs and RFEPs are enrolled in A-G coursework?

Completion of College-Level Coursework and CTE Pathways

In addition to the A-G completion rates, there are other opportunities for students to access rigorous coursework. The ability to earn college credit in high school is a way to expose students to rigorous coursework, colleges, and universities. It can give them a head start in college by allowing them to earn credit while also instilling the belief that college is for them and they can be successful in these rigorous institutions.

Other opportunities can include participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. These programs often emphasize hands-on learning which can be more engaging for EL students. Furthermore, the focus on career exploration and skill development can foster a sense of belonging and connect students with their future goals. For all of these opportunities, ensuring that ELs and RFEPs have equitable access is critical.



According to a 2024 report, *A Strong Start to College*, ten percent of California public high school students enrolled in a community college course in 2021-22, with participation rates rising as students go up the grade levels (from five percent in 9th grade to 16 percent in 12th grade).³⁹ Across California counties, participation ranges from no students participating to more than one in four students participating. Moreover, previous analysis by the same authors has cited that ELs have amongst the lowest rates of participation when compared to other student groups. For example, amongst the 2018-19 high school graduation cohort, ten percent of ELs participated in college level coursework compared to 16 percent of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and 13 percent of homeless students and foster youth. However, it is important to note that access has increased for all student groups since the 2015-16 school year, when only seven percent of ELs in the high school graduating cohort participated in college level coursework.⁴⁰

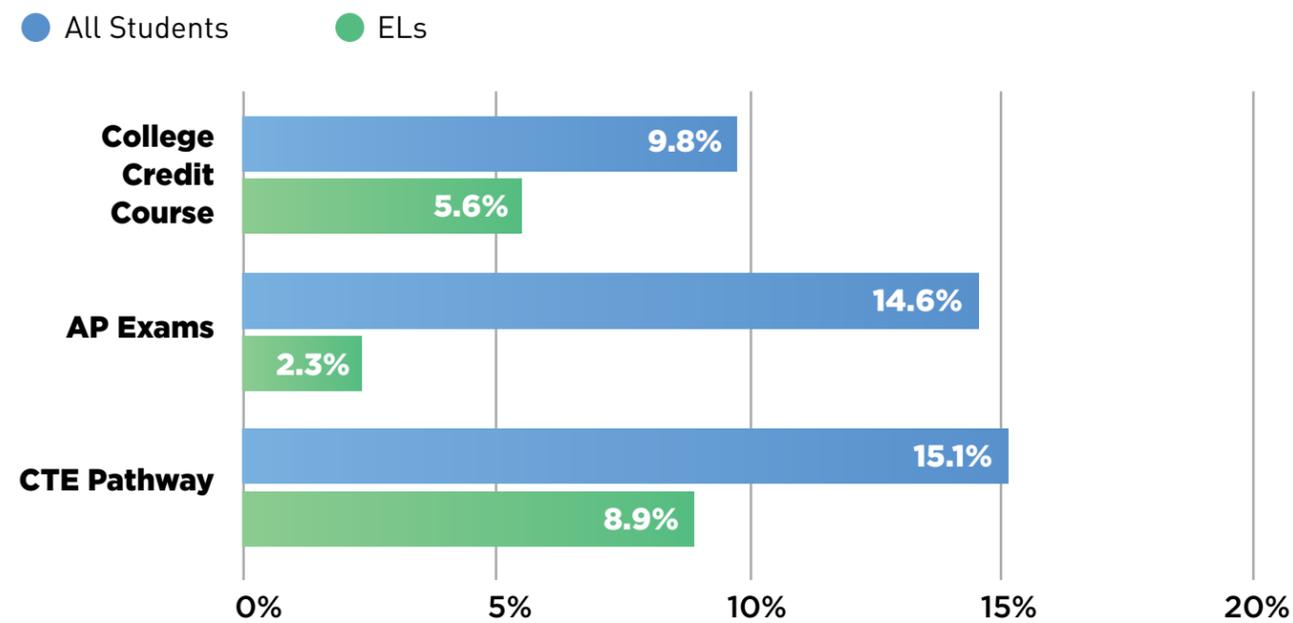
Within the College/Career Indicator of the California Schools Dashboard completion of college credit courses (which can be done through Dual Enrollment), passage of Advanced Placement (AP) exams, and completion of a CTE pathway are amongst the most prominent.

- **Dual Enrollment.** According to the California Community Colleges, “Dual enrollment – also known as concurrent enrollment – enables high school students to take college courses, taught by college professors, at their high school campus. These courses can also count toward your high school diploma, allowing students to get a head start on their higher education goals.”⁴¹
- **Advanced Placement (AP) Courses.** These courses provide another opportunity for California public school students to engage in college-level content while still in high school. Within the College/Career Indicator, a student will meet criteria via AP if they attain “a score of 3 or higher on two Advanced Placement (AP) Exams”.
- **CTE Pathways.** These programs provide students with a clear direction by equipping them with practical skills for high-demand careers. This can translate into immediate post-graduation job opportunities or a strong foundation for further technical training or college studies.

Just like with the A-G data, these data are provided by ELs and can be compared to all students. However, there is no publicly available data in the CCI indicator for RFEP students.

According to data from the 2023 Dashboard, six percent of ELs completed a college credit course (meaning completion of one semester, two quarters, or two trimesters of college coursework with a C- grade or better), two percent passed at least two AP exams (score of 3 or better), and nine percent completed a CTE pathway (with a C- grade or better in the capstone course). This signals a significant gap when compared to all students (see Figure 2).⁴²

Figure 2: Students Completing College Level Coursework, AP Exams, or a CTE Pathway on the 2023 Dashboard, by All Students and ELs



➤ **Access to Rigorous Coursework Goal #3: By the 2029-30 school year, California will double the proportion of ELs completing college level coursework, AP Exams, and CTE pathways**

This goal will mean that by 2029-30 nearly 12 percent of ELs will have completed college level coursework, four percent will have passed at least two AP exams, and 18 percent will have completed a CTE pathway.

➤ **Access to Rigorous Coursework Goal #4: By the 2029-30 school year, the proportion of RFEPs who complete college level coursework, AP exams, and CTE pathways will match that of English-only students**

It is unclear if California public schools are already seeing rates of RFEP students completing college level coursework, AP exams, and CTE pathways that are on par with EO students given that these data are not publicly available. We hope that schools and districts are able to track their own local data and for the state to begin publicly releasing these data.

To meet these goals and ensure equitable access for EL and RFEP students, schools, districts, and county offices of education should focus on the following:

- **Ensure that all content educators are delivering Integrated ELD along with instruction.** This can be done by coordinating and delivering professional learning focused on ELD strategies and ensuring that professional learning delivered on any subject area is coordinated with the multilingual department in order to incorporate ELD strategies.
- **Create and support inclusive and welcoming environments within programs and classes.** This can help to ensure that ELs feel welcomed and supported.
- **Ensure equitable access through enrollment and placement policies and guidelines.** It is essential for schools and districts to review enrollment and course access data, and have policies and procedures in place to ensure equitable access to rigorous coursework and opportunities.

REFLECTION: What proportion of ELs and RFEPs, compared to English-only students, are participating in dual enrollment programs or other types of college-level coursework, AP courses, and CTE pathways in your county, district, or school? What can be done to improve access to these opportunities?

Additional Opportunities that Encompass a Well-Rounded Education

There are additional opportunities and courses that encompass a well-rounded education that all students should have access to. Over the past decade, there have been efforts to improve access in several of these areas, including in ethnic studies and the arts. Given recent investments or policy changes, these are two areas where we see opportunities for growth and increased access over the next decade.

ETHNIC STUDIES

Ethnic studies courses offer a wealth of benefits for California’s public school students. By delving into the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse student groups, these courses foster a more inclusive learning environment and a deeper understanding of the history of California and the US. For ELs in particular, ethnic studies can provide a powerful sense of belonging. By ensuring access to ethnic studies for ELs with appropriate language support, students’ engagement and overall outcomes can improve. For example, a 2021 research paper found that taking ethnic studies in ninth grade had a positive impact on attendance, graduation rates, and college enrollment for students in San Francisco.⁴³

While we do not have yearly statewide data on access to or enrollment in ethnic studies courses in high school, we know from a 2023 research paper, that only half of California public school students attended a high school offering ethnic studies during the 2020-21 school year and only 0.2 percent were enrolled in such courses during 2018-19.⁴⁴

► **Access to Rigorous Coursework Goal #5: By the 2029-30 school year, all ELs and RFEPs will have the opportunity to take an ethnic studies course in high school**

We can expect access to ethnic studies to increase over the next decade. Thanks to AB 101 (Medina) in 2021, all school districts must offer a one-year ethnic studies course by the 2025-26 school year leading to it becoming a high school graduation requirement for the 2029-30 school year.⁴⁵ To further support implementation, the State Board of Education adopted the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum in March 2021, which offers guidance for how schools and districts can implement ethnic studies.⁴⁶ As more high schools offer ethnic studies, it is our hope that there is a priority and support to ensure equitable access for ELs and RFEPs.

ARTS

Arts education offers multiple benefits for students, including helping develop creativity and increasing engagement.⁴⁷ In our ever-evolving world and economy, creativity is a critical skill that can lead to innovation and problem-solving skills that are critical to being prepared for college, career, and life.⁴⁸ For ELs, arts education can be essential for engaging them through other learning modalities and forms of communication, such as visuals and movement. While there is no statewide data on what access to arts education looks like for California public school students, we would hope that all students have the opportunity to participate in the arts, including ELs and RFEPs.

► **Access to Rigorous Coursework #6: By the 2029-30 school year, all ELs and RFEPs will participate in arts education from PK-12th grade.**

Thanks to the passage of Proposition 28 (The Arts and Music in Schools Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act) in 2022, about \$1 billion will be set aside yearly for the expansion of arts education opportunities for California public school students. These funds will be distributed according to enrollment, with 70 percent based on overall enrollment and 30 percent based on Title 1 enrollment. As school boards certify their Prop. 28 budgets annually and submit the information to the California Department of Education, it will be important to ensure that plans for these funds include focus on access to our highest need students, including ELs.⁴⁹

REFLECTION: *Do all ELs and RFEPs in your county, district, and school have access to at least one ethnic studies course by the time they graduate from high school? Is arts education offered at every school site in a way that is accessible to all ELs and RFEPs?*

The Role of High Quality Instructional Materials

Access to rigorous coursework and a well-rounded education cannot be achieved unless the appropriate resources are placed in the classroom to support student learning. This includes ensuring that teachers are prepared to meet the needs of ELs (which we will cover in the next section), and the adoption and availability of high quality instructional materials. Therefore, it is imperative for the State Board of Education recommend, and for school districts to adopt, instructional materials with resources and strategies to meet the needs of our multilingual students. This should include strong alignment to the California ELD standards along with the relevant content standards, including integrated ELD strategies.

A survey of California math teachers commissioned by the English Learner Success Forum, found that only half of teachers indicated that their materials help them to tailor instruction to support ELs. Moreover, the majority indicated that their materials lacked relevance to students and did not support in assessing and providing feedback to ELs in the development of math language.⁵⁰





What Can Be Done to Support Access to Rigorous Coursework

School, district, and county leaders can increase access to rigorous coursework that encompasses a well-rounded education for ELs and RFEPs, by focusing on the following:

- 1. Access and Enrollment in Rigorous Coursework.** This includes increasing opportunities for students to enroll in A-G coursework, courses earning college credit through dual enrollment, AP courses, and CTE pathways. Ensure that supports are in place so that ELs are successful once enrolled.
- 2. Ethnic Studies Implementation.** Implement and expand ethnic studies courses in all high schools. Engage community members in the development of these courses and ensure equitable access for ELs.
- 3. Arts Education Expansion.** Ensure that all ELs have the opportunity to engage in the arts from PK-12th grade.
- 4. Integrated ELD Professional Learning for all Educators.** All educators across all subject areas must receive professional development and support at delivering integrated ELD within instruction. These opportunities should be in conjunction with content area professional learning, not separate.
- 5. Adoption of Instructional Materials that Centers EL Needs.** Adoption processes should ensure that materials are reviewed for alignment with ELD standards and strategies. Reviewers should have strong expertise in the education of ELs.

► Summary of Goals Focused on Access to Rigorous Coursework.

By the 2029-30 school year:

- 1. One in three ELs in a four-year cohort will graduate meeting UC/CSU entrance requirements (from 19 percent in 2022-23)**
- 2. The proportion of RFEPs who graduate meeting UC/CSU entrance requirements in a four year cohort will be on par with that of English-only students**
- 3. Double the proportion of ELs completing college level coursework, AP Exams, and CTE pathways** (from six percent taking a college credit course, two percent passing an AP exam, and nine percent completing a CTE pathway in 2022-23 to 12 percent taking a college credit course, four percent passing an AP exam, and 18 percent completing a CTE pathway in 2029-30)
- 4. The proportion of RFEPs who complete college level coursework, AP exams, and CTE pathways will be on par with that of English-only students**
- 5. All ELs and RFEPs will have the opportunity to take an ethnic studies course in high school**
- 6. All ELs and RFEPs will participate in arts education from PK-12th grade**

Conclusion

This section examined access to rigorous coursework and a well-rounded education for English Learner (EL) and Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students in California. Data analysis revealed persistent disparities in access between EL students and their English-only counterparts. These disparities were evident in A-G course completion rates, and college-level coursework participation (dual enrollment and AP).

Six ambitious goals are established to be met by the 2029-30 school year. These goals target increased participation in A-G courses, dual enrollment opportunities, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways for EL and RFEP students. Additionally, the goals aim to expand access to ethnic studies courses and ensure all graduates meet University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) entrance requirements.

To facilitate achievement of these goals, the section emphasizes the critical role of integrated English Language Development (ELD) strategies. The importance of professional development opportunities for educators in delivering integrated ELD instruction is also highlighted. Furthermore, the section underscores the need for adopting high-quality instructional materials that are aligned with California ELD Standards and content area standards.

Finally, the section calls for improved data collection efforts specifically for RFEP students to gain a clearer understanding of their access to rigorous coursework. By prioritizing these focus areas, California schools can cultivate a more equitable learning environment and ensure all students, regardless of language background, have access to a well-rounded and enriching education.

5

SECTION FIVE: SUPPORTING THE WHOLE CHILD

Alignment to the English Learner Roadmap policy. *This section is most closely aligned to Principle One: Assets-Oriented and Needs-Responsive Schools and Principle Three: System Conditions that Support Effectiveness.*

In delivering a quality education for multilingual learners, it is important to meet the unique needs of individual students. Moreover, while we discussed goals for academic achievement, expanding multilingualism, and access to rigorous coursework in the previous sections, it is important to acknowledge that these goals cannot be accomplished without addressing the basic needs of students and families. True access is not a possibility unless schools establish a welcoming and affirming environment where students feel connected, and the full needs of students and families are met. Therefore, supporting the whole child becomes essential in order to meet all of the goals in this report.

THIS SECTION WILL COVER THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS:

- > Engagement and motivation
- > Expanded learning opportunities
- > Health and wellness

Engagement and Motivation

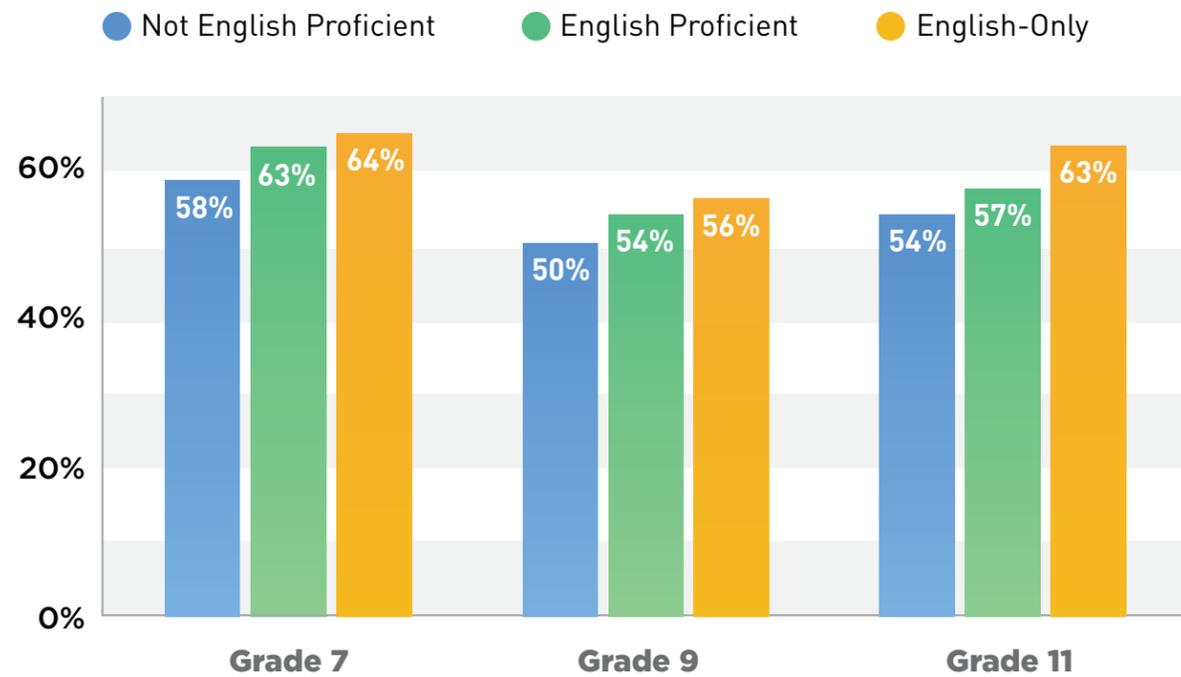
In looking at engagement and motivation, we focus on caring adult relationships and chronic absenteeism. While there are other important factors to look at, these can set the foundation for stronger engagement and motivation for ELs in California.

CARING ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

According to a recent report by the Learning Policy Institute, there is a growing body of research that shows that having supportive relationships in school can improve student motivation, as well as increase attendance, graduation rates, and academic achievement across multiple subjects.⁵¹ These relationships can include teachers, mentors, counselors and other adults in school.

In the latest California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys (CalSCHLS) for 2019-21, students indicated whether they had a caring adult relationship. In the elementary grades, 70 percent of all students indicated having a caring adult relationship in school (meaning that they indicated “Yes, all of the time” or “Yes, most of the time” to whether teachers or other grown-ups at school cared about them, listened when they had something to say, or made an effort to get to know them). These numbers drop for students in the secondary grades, with 63 percent having a caring adult relationship in grade 7, 55 percent in grade 9, and 60 percent in grade 11 (meaning that they indicated ‘very much true’ or ‘pretty much true’ to having a teacher or other adult in school who cares about them, notices when they are not there, and listens when they have something to say). Moreover, a lower proportion of secondary students who have a primary language other than English at home (indicated as English proficient and not English proficient) cited having a caring adult when compared to English-only students in each of these grades (see Figure 1).⁵²

Figure 1: 2019-21 Students Indicating a Caring Adult Relationship



Supporting the Whole Child Goal #1: By 2030, more than 80 percent of all ELs will have a caring adult relationship in school

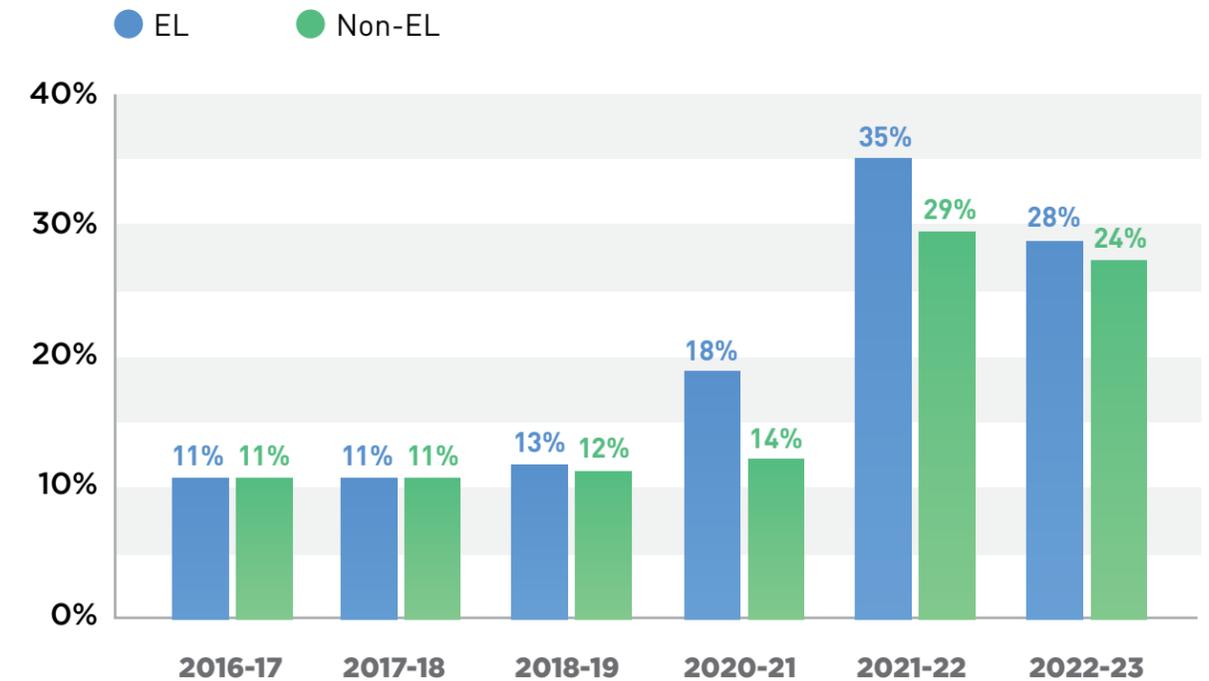
To meet this goal, school districts and schools will need to focus on student experience, and ensure that all staff understand their role in motivating students and improving their outcomes. An aspect of meeting this goal must be in ensuring that there are staff at each school that can speak the home languages of students and their parents. It is essential for schools to monitor and track information about student connections, and center their decisions on the student experience.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

A student is considered chronically absent when they miss 10 percent or more of school for any reason. According to a 2024 publication by Policy Analysis for California Education and Attendance Works, “left unaddressed, chronic absence can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by Grade 3, reaching grade-level standards in middle school, and graduating from high school”.⁵³

Prior to the pandemic, there was little to no gap between the absenteeism rate of ELs compared to non-ELs. However, it should be noted that the harms of missing school can be harsher for ELs as these students can benefit more from in-school support and also have the dual challenge of gaining English proficiency while building academic content knowledge. What we have witnessed since the pandemic is an alarming increase in the chronic absenteeism rate alongside the emergence of a significant gap between EL and non-EL students (see Figure 2).⁵⁴

Figure 2: Chronic Absenteeism Rate, 2016-17 to 2022-23



During the 2022-23 school year, 28 percent of ELs were chronically absent, compared to 24 percent of non-ELs, representing a four percentage point gap. It should be noted that this represents a seven percentage point decrease from 2022 and a decrease in the gap between EL and non-ELs. However, these numbers are still alarming and historically high when compared to the rates prior to the pandemic. Moreover, as previously noted, even with lower rates and with no gap between ELs and non-ELs, we should continue to be concerned about chronic absenteeism as ELs have more to lose from missing school.

► **Supporting the Whole Child Goal #2:**
By 2030, less than 10 percent of ELs will be chronically absent

Meeting this goal would mean that the rates of chronic absenteeism in California will have fallen below the pre-pandemic levels. It would also mean that more ELs feel connected to school and are getting the support they need. Strategies such as student shadowing, the parent teacher home visit project, and others can support school and district efforts at increasing the connection that students have to school and reverse these numbers. Additionally, the role of bilingual staff in administration offices that are able to welcome families in their home language, explain parent enrollment, and do additional outreach, must be emphasized.

REFLECTION: *Do all staff understand their role and ensure students are supported and feel welcomed at school? What do the rates of chronic absenteeism look like in my county, district, and school? What are some strategies that can be put in place to ensure that students attend school and feel a connection to it?*

Health and Wellness

Meeting the students' health and wellness needs necessitates providing all students with culturally responsive mental health care, access to socio-emotional learning, nutrition (including breakfast and lunch in school), and access to healthcare services (including preventative care).

While not all of these health and wellness services are the main or sole responsibility of the public school system, it is clear that schools are well-positioned to play a role since that is the location that students and families are closely connected to and attend regularly. We encourage schools, districts, and counties to consider their role in expanding access to all services that improve student and family health and wellness. Moreover, community schools are a great opportunity to consider how schools might be restructured as a hub for these critical services. As community schools continue to be supported and expanded across California, we encourage district leaders to center the needs of their highest need students in their planning, including ELs and their different typologies, such as newcomer students.

While there is no statewide data on access to health and wellness services for students, the most recent 2019-21 data from the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys provides valuable insights into the state of mental health for students in California.

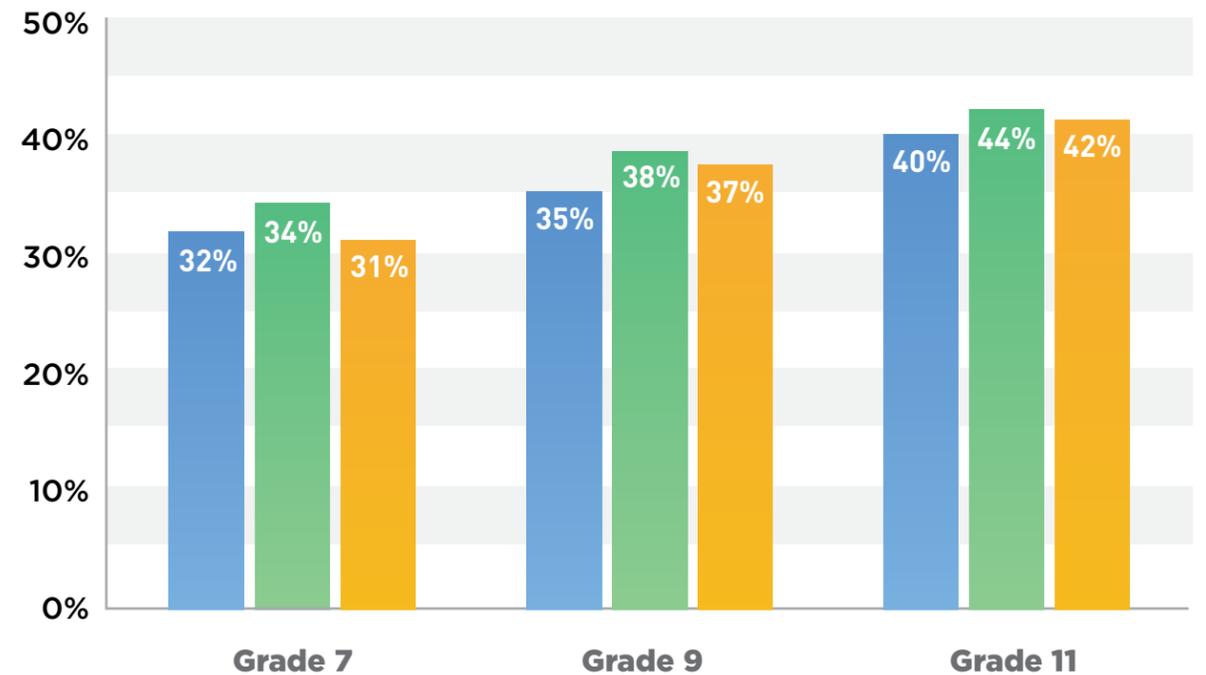
STUDENT SADNESS OR HOPELESSNESS

The California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys from 2019-21 found that one in five (19 percent) elementary school students experienced frequent sadness.⁵⁵ The survey also found that 32 percent of 7th grade, 37 percent of 9th grade, and 42 percent of 11th grade students had experienced chronic sadness or hopelessness. While English language proficiency did not seem to have a significant impact, it is important to reiterate that these rates of student sadness or hopelessness are unacceptable (see Figure 3).⁵⁶

In addition, more than one in seven of secondary students affirmed having seriously considered suicide over the past year.⁵⁷ These data are further confirmed by the staff surveys, where 28 percent of elementary school staff, 59 percent of middle school staff, and 72 percent of high school staff cited "student depression or other mental health problems" as a moderate or severe problem for their school sites.⁵⁸

Figure 3: 2019-21 Students Experiencing Chronic Sadness or Hopelessness, by English Language Proficiency

● Not English Proficient ● English Proficient ● English-Only



It is important to note several factors that greatly reduced the prevalence of students feeling chronically sad or hopeless, including:

- › **In-school instruction:** 33 percent of 9th graders who attended school in-person experienced chronic sadness/hopelessness, compared to 45 percent of remote students.
- › **Breakfast:** 29 percent of 9th graders who had breakfast experienced chronic sadness/hopelessness, compared to 48 percent of students with no breakfast.
- › **Caring Adult Relationship:** 30 percent of 9th graders with a caring adult relationship experienced chronic sadness/hopelessness, compared to 46 percent of students without a caring adult relationship.

▶ **Supporting the Whole Child Goal #3: By 2030, less than 10 percent of ELs will experience chronic sadness or hopelessness in school**

This goal is ambitious given the current status indicated by the data above, however we should strive for a school system where no student feels sad or hopeless. It is our hope that as schools take on the challenge of chronic absenteeism, ensure that there are caring adults on campus, and create partnership to meet the overall needs of students and families, that these rates will go down. One aspect that is not mentioned here that should be tackled is the prevalence of mental health experts in schools that can identify students who are experiencing these challenges and support them sooner.

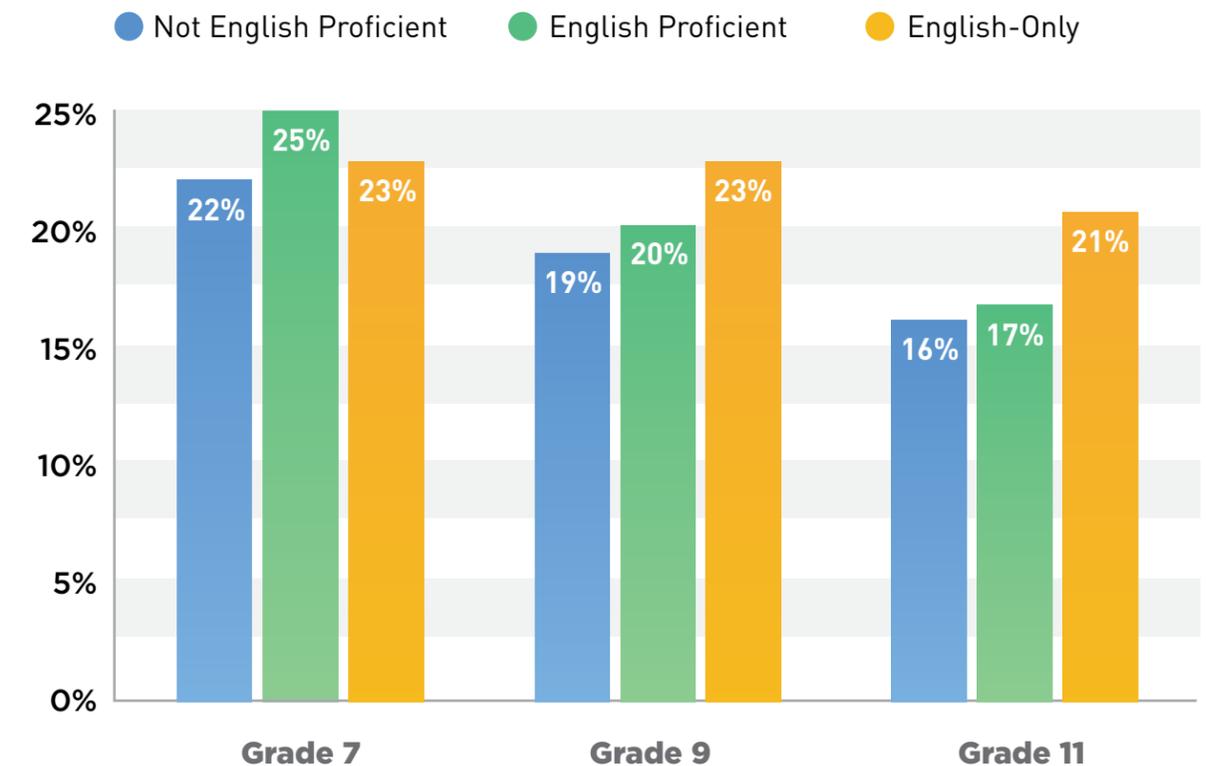


CYBERBULLYING

With students being online more than ever, the prevalence of cyberbullying has been on the rise. The challenge for school and district leaders is that this type of bullying can often go under the radar with staff not having the tools or knowledge to properly address the issue. However, cyberbullying can have very serious real-world consequences and contribute to the data seen in the previous sections on student sadness and hopelessness.

According to the 2019-21 results of the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys, 24 percent of 7th graders, 22 percent of 9th graders, and 20 percent of 11th graders experienced cyberbullying (see Figure 4).⁵⁹

Figure 4: 2019-21 Students Experiencing Cyberbullying, by English Language Proficiency



The prevalence of cyberbullying for English learners and English proficient students (who also speak another language at home) does seem to decrease as students move up the grades. However, we should expect lower rates in school systems with more supportive school cultures. Moreover, it is important to note that these data are student self-reported. Therefore, students that drop out or are otherwise not present in school by 11th grade are not reflected in the results.

BREAKFAST

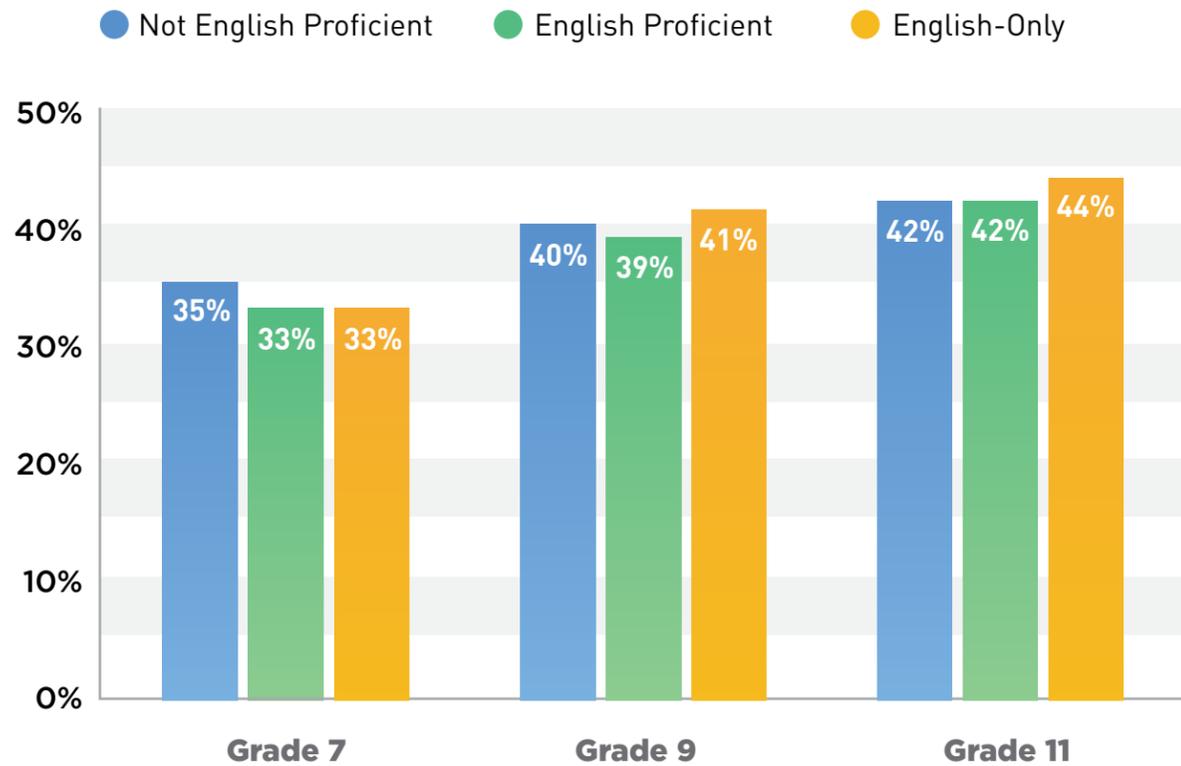
A critical aspect of supporting student health and wellness is in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals. The availability of nutritious meals in school is an equity issue. Research shows 84 percent of ELs are socioeconomically disadvantaged compared to 51 percent of English-only students. Access to breakfast is essential for improving education outcomes for ELs.

The 2019-21 California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys asked students one simple question: “did you eat breakfast today?”. While the vast majority of students across all surveyed grades indicated having had breakfast, the results indicate that there are still too many students attending school without a morning meal. Amongst the surveyed students:

- › 28 percent of elementary school students did not have breakfast;⁶⁰
- › 33 percent of 7th grade students did not have breakfast;
- › 40 percent of 9th grade students did not have breakfast; and
- › 43 percent of 11th grade students did not have breakfast.

The results do not change much when broken down by student English language proficiency. However, it should be noted that more than one in three students in 7th, 9th, and 11th grade indicated not having breakfast (see Figure 5).⁶¹

Figure 5: 2019-21 Students Who Did Not Have Breakfast, by English Language Proficiency



Supporting the Whole Child Goal #4:

By 2030, more than 90 percent of ELs will have a breakfast meal before school

This goal is important to ensure that all of our students come prepared to learn in school. While the data available is not complete, it does offer an important snapshot for school and district leaders to consider.

REFLECTION: *Does the school or district regularly measure whether students are feeling sad or hopeless, or experiencing cyberbullying? Are there supports available and readily accessible for students that might be feeling sad or depressed? How is your school or district ensuring that all students have access to a nutritious meal before school?*

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Considering that only a fraction of a student’s day (and learning opportunities) are spent within school hours, we should not assume the ability to close achievement and opportunity gaps without addressing the potential for out-of-school time learning. According to a 2017 Policy Analysis for California Education brief, “over the last 40 years, upper-income parents have increased the amount they spend on their children’s enrichment activities, like tutoring and extra-curriculars, by 10 times the amount their lower income peers have been able to invest.”⁶² These disparities have resulted in unequal learning time, unequal access to enrichment activities, and unequal access to mentors. Moreover, students’ expanded learning activities can foster strong socio-emotional skills and access to positive adult role models. For English learners, these experiences can be life changing.

According to the California Department of Education, expanded learning “means before school, after school, summer, or intersession learning programs that focus on developing the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs and interests of pupils through hands-on, engaging learning experiences.”⁶³ Currently, there are three sources of funding to help school districts provide these opportunities, including:

- › **Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P)**, which provides funding for afterschool and summer school enrichment programs for TK through 6th grade.
- › **After School Education and Safety Program** which supports the creation of Expanded Learning programs through partnerships with public schools and communities to provide academic and literacy support, and constructive alternatives for youth.
- › **21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Program**, which supports the establishment or expansion of activities that can improve academic outcomes, provide enrichment services, and support family literacy.

In addition, other sources of funds (including LCFF) and initiatives such as community schools can provide additional expanded learning opportunities for students. It is important to remember that access to expanded learning opportunities should be viewed through an equity lens as it is students from lower socioeconomic status that depend on these programs more than their wealthier peers. Moreover, when considering that a higher proportion of ELs are socioeconomically disadvantaged and also have the challenge of needing to gain English proficiency while gaining academic content knowledge, access to expanded learning should be an imperative to providing a quality education for ELs.

► **Supporting the Whole Child Goal #5:**
By 2030, all ELs will have access to expanded learning opportunities

While we do not have data to assess what current access looks like, we hope that the needs of ELs are centered as expanded learning opportunities are extended across California.

REFLECTION: *Does your county, district, and school offer expanded learning opportunities (including afterschool and summer school programs)? Does every student have access to these opportunities? What does access to these opportunities look like for ELs?*

► **Summary of Goals Focused on Supporting the Whole Child.**

By the 2029-30 school year:

- 1. More than 80 percent of ELs will have a caring adult relationship school** (from less than 60 percent in 7th, 9th, and 11th grade according to the 2019-21 California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys)
- 2. Less than 10 percent of ELs will be chronically absent** (from 28 percent in 2023)
- 3. Less than 10 percent of ELs will experience chronic sadness or hopelessness in school** (from over 30 percent in 7th, 9th, and 11th grade according to the 2019-21 California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys)
- 4. More than 90 percent of ELs will have a breakfast meal before school** (from less than half in 7th, 9th, and 11th grade according to the 2019-21 California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys)
- 5. All ELs will have access to expanded learning opportunities**

Conclusion

This section focused on the idea that, to succeed in school, our multilingual learners need to have their basic needs met. While previous sections examine goals around academic achievement, maintaining home language, and access to rigorous coursework, those cannot be achieved if students do not feel healthy and connected to school. That's why supporting the whole child is so important. It is the foundation for everything else in this report.

While not exhaustive, this section focused on three key areas that can support the whole child: keeping students engaged and motivated, making sure they're healthy and well, and giving them learning opportunities outside of school hours. We want to see more students connected with caring adults at school, and fewer missing too many days of school. We also want to make sure students have access to nutritious meals, mental health support, and after-school programs.

By focusing on the whole child, we are not just helping students, but investing in the future of California. We need everyone, including teachers, families, and the entire community to support the whole child approach. When our multilingual students thrive, everyone benefits.



6

SECTION SIX: ACCESS TO WELL-PREPARED EDUCATORS

Alignment to the English Learner Roadmap policy. *This section is most closely aligned to Principle Three: System Conditions that Support Effectiveness.*

Equitable access to a quality education cannot occur without well-prepared, culturally competent educators in front of our highest need students. Based on research, it is worth repeating that teachers are the most important in-school factor contributing to positive student outcomes. For English learners, it is critically important that they have access to educators that are prepared and supported to meet their language needs, and have the cultural competency to support students and their families.

In this section, we explore the growing shortage of bilingual educators (especially when we consider the expansion of preschool and TK), as well as the accessibility of the bilingual authorization within teacher preparation programs. We also explore goals to help ensure equitable access to educators by 2030 and the information that we need to collect to inform progress towards those goals.

All Teachers are Teachers of English Learners

It is important to emphasize that while this section explores bilingual authorizations, all teachers in California are teachers of English learners. The English Learner Authorization authorizes an educator to serve ELs specifically in providing instruction for ELD and Specially Designed Academic Instruction Delivered in English (SDAIE). Since 2003, the English Learner Authorization has been embedded in all teacher credentialing programs. A separate document, (i.e. Cross Cultural, Language and Academic Development (CLAD) Certificate) is no longer issued to candidates who complete a preliminary teaching program in California. However, a CLAD certificate may be issued to out-of-state individuals who complete the requirements to earn the English Learner Authorization.

The Bilingual Educator Shortage

There are two key trends that we must consider when discussing the bilingual teacher shortage: the increasing demand for multilingual programs and expansion of preschool and transitional kindergarten.

If we are to meet the goals around access to multilingual programs and attainment of the State Seal of Biliteracy referenced in the third section of this report, then increasing the number of teachers authorized to teach in these settings is crucial. Moreover, the goals match the demand that districts and schools are getting from families. Unfortunately, there is a well documented demand for bilingual educators. According to the California Budget and Policy Center, when just looking at bilingual authorizations in the top ten languages other than English spoken at home from 2012 through 2022, there is a significant imbalance between the number of students speaking a language other than English and the number of teachers who received an authorization to teach in that language from 2012 through 2022. Just one teacher for every 240 students speaking Spanish at home was authorized during that time period and in Vietnamese, the second most spoken language, that ratio is one per 2,272.⁶⁵

When it comes to the state’s goals to expand preschool and transitional kindergarten, there will be an expected increased demand for teachers in those early grades. A 2022 publication from the Learning Policy Institute estimated that in the academic year 2025–26, more than 300,000 children in California are likely to enroll in TK programs.⁶⁶ It is projected that, in order to accommodate this burgeoning demand, school districts will need to hire between 11,900 and 15,600 additional teachers by the 2025–26 academic year. The realization of this potential, however, is intricately linked to the availability of well-prepared bilingual early childhood education teachers. Moreover, when considering that 60 percent of children under six years of age speak a language other than English at home, we would hope that this expansion centers the needs of dual language learners which would entail instruction in the home language and increasing the number of bilingual teachers in those grades.

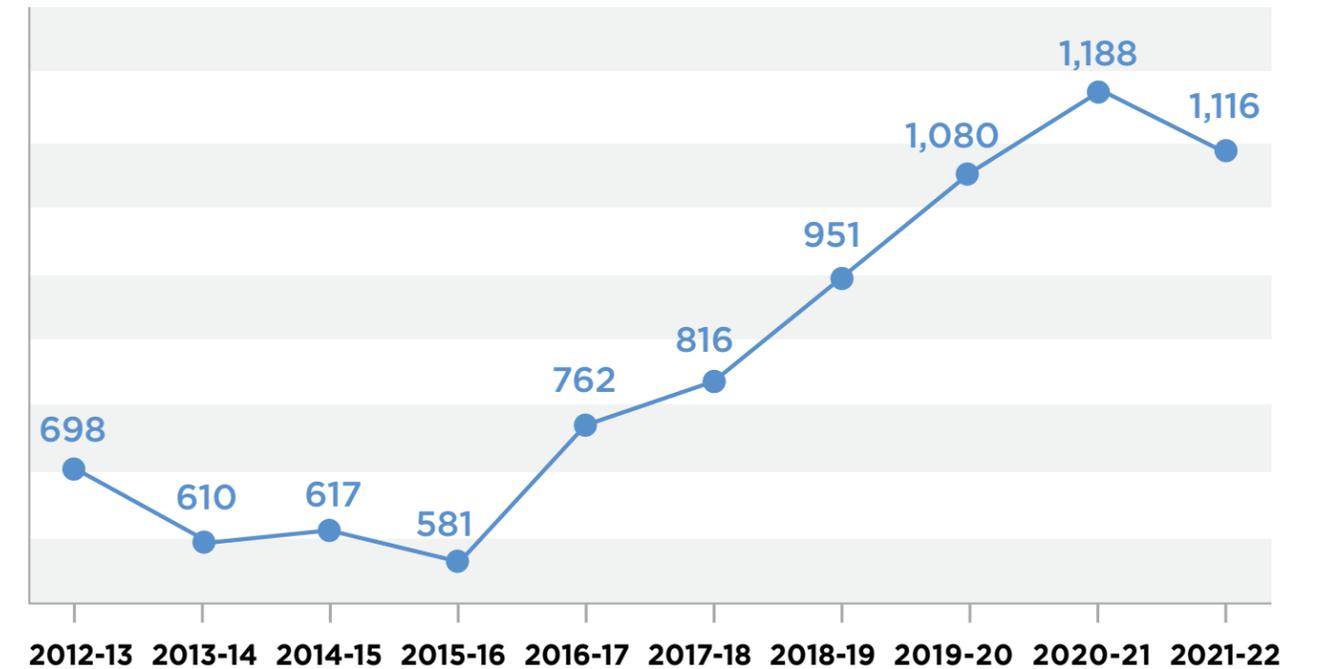
BILINGUAL AUTHORIZATIONS ISSUED

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing releases yearly data on the number of credentials issued every year, including bilingual authorizations. Of note is that from 2012 to 2022, there was a 60 percent increase in the number of bilingual authorizations issued (see Figure 1).⁶⁷

Of the bilingual authorizations issued in 2022, over nine in ten were issued in Spanish while the second language was Mandarin (with 52 credentials issued). Overall, from 2013 to 2022, a total of 8,419 bilingual authorizations have been issued. However, as noted previously, this represents a fraction of the need when considering the number of students who speak a language other than English at home.

- ▶ **Access to Well-Prepared Educators Goal #1:**
Double the number of bilingual authorizations issued, from 816 in 2018 to more than 1,600 in 2030 (from *Global California 2030*)

Figure 1: Bilingual Authorizations Issued, 2012-13 to 2021-22



It is positive to note that California is on track to meet this goal if the current rate continues. Meeting this goal would mean an increase of nearly 500 additional bilingual authorizations issued in 2030, when compared to 2022. This means a yearly increase of nearly 63 additional bilingual authorizations.

What is not known from these data is the total number of bilingual educators across California or the attrition rate. This is information that we hope becomes more readily available in the future.

REFLECTION: *What is the number of educators with a bilingual authorization in your school, district, or county? What is the current and projected need of educators with a bilingual authorization in your school, district, or county? Are there current bilingual educators without a bilingual authorization that might be supported to attain it?*

Bilingual Teacher Preparation Programs

As of 2023, there were 252 approved educator preparation programs across California. Of these, just 49 (19 percent) offer a bilingual authorization. Of note is that the proportion of educator preparation programs offering a bilingual authorization is larger amongst the CSU, UC, and Private/Independent institutions. While these institutions represent just one in three of all approved institutions, they issued 73 percent of credentials in 2022 (see Table 1).⁶⁸

Table 1: 2022 Approved Institutions Offering a Bilingual Authorization

	All	LEA	CSU	UC	Private/Independent	Other
Approved Institutions	252	167	23	9	52	1
w/ Bilingual Authorization	49	3	20	9	17	0
Proportion with Bilingual Authorization	19%	2%	87%	100%	33%	0%

The latest figures in the number of bilingual teacher preparation programs represents an increase of 19 programs from just seven years ago when there were 30 programs. Of the programs offering bilingual authorizations, more than half came from California’s public university systems (CSU and UC), despite representing just 13 percent of all educator preparation programs. A significant area of improvement is in the LEA- approved educator preparation programs, where just three offered a bilingual authorization.

► **Access to Well-Prepared Educators Goal #2:** Expand the number of bilingual teacher preparation programs at state-approved educator preparation programs, from 30 in 2016 to 100 by 2030 (from *Global California 2030*)

Based on the trend over the past seven years, California is not on track to meet this goal. However, there are opportunities for improvement over the next seven years. Of note is the opportunity to ensure that more of the LEA programs offer a bilingual authorization. Additionally, the implementation of the new PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential offers an opportunity and call for action for new programs to also offer the bilingual authorization. Moreover, just increasing the number of institutions that offer bilingual authorization is not enough if we are to meet the bilingual teacher shortage. Looking at the access to such authorizations in each institution is critical as is ensuring that they have sufficient bilingual professors that can offer the required coursework.

REFLECTION: *What are the teacher preparation programs around your school district or county, and do they offer a bilingual authorization?*



Addressing the Bilingual Teacher Shortage in PK and TK

As mentioned previously, to meet the needs of the more than 300,000 students that are expected to enroll in TK by 2025-26, California will need to hire between 11,900 and 15,600 additional teachers. This coupled with the new PK-3 ECE Specialist credential offers an opportunity to set a vision for how implementation of this new credential can help build on California's bilingual vision. DLLs in PK and TK at this young age are in the process of developing their home language. PK and TK need to build upon their home language while learning English. It is critical in these early years to have programs supporting development of both languages to avoid language loss of home language which negatively impacts language and academic development and family communications.⁶⁹

- ▶ **Access to Well-Prepared Educators Goal #3:**
Sixty percent of bilingual teacher preparation programs offering the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential will offer a bilingual authorization

Meeting this goal will ensure that educators seeking the new credential have access to the bilingual authorization. It would also be encouraged for these new credential programs to provide incentives or even integrate the bilingual authorization within the program models.

REFLECTION: *Are there educator preparation programs near your school district or county that will be offering the new PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential? Do these institutions also offer a bilingual authorization?*

Supporting Current Educators

Teacher retention and support is another important aspect of ensuring that ELs have access to well-prepared educators and bilingual educators. Teacher burnout is a significant threat to retaining qualified educators, especially for teachers of ELs. These instructors face a unique set of challenges that contribute to mental strain. Prioritizing teacher mental health through initiatives like providing access to mental health resources, fostering collaboration to share best practices, and reducing non-essential workload can go a long way in keeping these dedicated educators in classrooms where they are most needed.

While there is no yearly reported state data of teacher attrition in California, a 2018 Learning Policy Institute report found that over eight percent of teachers left the profession or state each year.⁷⁰ We hope this is a measure that California begins to track (including by teacher ethnicity and type of credential) each year in order to better understand the conditions of the teaching profession in California.

Additionally, supporting current educators in all content areas to effectively support ELs in the classroom is critical. This ensures a school-wide approach that goes beyond just specialized EL instructors. By equipping all teachers with strategies for differentiated instruction, language acquisition techniques, and cultural competency, ELs can thrive in any learning environment. This must include professional learning in integrated English language development (ELD), where language learning is embedded within content instruction. When all teachers understand and implement these strategies, they foster a seamless learning experience for ELs.

- ▶ **Access to Well-Prepared Educators Goal #4:**
All teachers will have access to a supportive school environment and high-quality professional learning that includes designated and integrated ELD strategies.

REFLECTION: *What is the teacher attrition at your school, district, or county? Are there specific types of teachers (by ethnicity, years of experience, credential type, or other factors) that have higher rates of attrition that could benefit from additional support? Do teachers in your school, district, or county receive sufficient support and professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of ELs?*

Opportunities to Improve Educator Pipelines

There are several notable opportunities that can improve and accelerate the recruitment of bilingual educators:

- ▶ **Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program (BTPDP).** This program received renewed funding of \$30 million from the 2023-24 California Budget. The purpose of the BTPDP is to increase the number of bilingual teachers in multiple languages to staff bilingual classrooms by offering professional development that can lead to a bilingual authorization. These grants will be awarded to LEAs in 2024 for a five-year period ending with fiscal year 2028-29.⁷¹
- ▶ **Teacher Residencies.** Teacher residency programs in California address teacher shortages by combining university coursework with hands-on training in high-need subjects. Residents gain practical experience alongside mentor teachers while earning their credentials, and some programs even offer financial aid to ease the financial burden. These programs offer additional opportunities to ensure that candidates receive a bilingual authorization. Of note is that, amongst the four cohorts (2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23) one in four or more enrolled in a bilingual program, with the most prominent being those receiving a multiple subjects credential.⁷²
- ▶ **Pathways for Seal of Biliteracy Recipients.** An additional opportunity is to create pathways to the teaching profession (and other high-need fields where bilingual staff are needed) for students that are on the path toward the State Seal of Biliteracy. This can be done by leveraging partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts in order to motivate and inform students about what a career in education can look like for them. With nearly 60,000 students attaining the SSB every year, having just three percent of recipients attain a bilingual authorization would meet the goal of having 1,600 new bilingual authorizations in 2030.

► **Summary of Goals Focused on Access to Well Prepared Educators.**

By the 2029-30 school year:

- 1. Double number of bilingual authorizations issued**, from 816 in 2018 to more than 1,600 in 2030 (from *Global California 2030*)
- 2. Expand the number of bilingual teacher preparation programs at state-approved educator preparation programs**, from 30 in 2016 to 100 by 2030 (from *Global California 2030*)
- 3. Sixty percent of bilingual teacher preparation programs offering the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential will offer a bilingual authorization**
- 4. All teachers will have access to a supportive school environment and high-quality professional learning that includes designated and integrated ELD strategies**

Conclusion

This section highlighted the critical role well-prepared educators, particularly bilingual educators, play in ensuring equitable access to a quality education for ELs. A key finding is the significant shortage of bilingual teachers, especially in relation to the growing demand for multilingual programs and the expansion of preschool and transitional kindergarten. While California is making progress in issuing bilingual authorizations, there's a need to increase the number of bilingual teacher preparation programs and ensure they have sufficient resources.

The section proposes several goals to address the bilingual teacher shortage by 2030. These include doubling the number of issued bilingual authorizations, expanding bilingual teacher preparation programs, and ensuring a significant portion of PK-3 ECE programs offer bilingual authorizations. Additionally, supporting current educators through professional development and fostering a school-wide approach to EL instruction are crucial aspects. By meeting these goals, California can move closer to ensuring all teachers are equipped to support ELs and that EL students have access to well-prepared, culturally competent educators in their native languages.





7

SECTION SEVEN: ACCOUNTABILITY

Alignment to the English Learner Roadmap policy. This section is most closely aligned to Principle Four: Alignment and Articulation Within and Across Systems.

California's accountability system is not working for ELs. Since the passage of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) ten years ago, the state has created an accountability system based on multiple measures. The stated goal of LCFF was to move toward a system focused on local control and equity. However, the system has not set ambitious goals for ELs, has created indicators that obscure EL needs, has not allocated sufficient resources to ensure that their needs are met, and has failed at designing an appropriate approach to EL accountability. Moreover, the challenge of supporting struggling districts has resulted ten years later in an accountability system that falls short on its promise of equity and continuous improvement for ELs.

The concerns around Californian’s accountability system were outlined in 2021, when Californians Together released [The Accountability System English Learners Deserve: Framework for An Effective and Coherent Accountability System For ELs](#).⁷³ Here we reiterate the vision set forth in our accountability framework:

- › **Increase transparency.** The current system hides outcomes for ELs by its current definition of the EL subgroup for the academic indicators, which combines ELs and RFEPs. This aggregation has masked outcomes for ELs and RFEPs, leading to just 152 school districts identified for Differentiated Assistance based on the performance of their ELs in 2023. To improve the system, the definition of the EL subgroup should be changed to include only current ELs and report RFEPs separately so that their true outcomes can be transparent.
- › **Set high expectations.** The current system sets expectations largely based on current unacceptable outcomes, not based on a vision of what an equity-focused system should produce. This is evident in the low cut scores established for the English Learner Progress Indicator, which only identified 24 school districts with a “very low” rating in 2023, representing less than half of a percent of EL enrollment. The lack of urgency is evident when considering that over half of ELs in the state are not making annual expected language proficiency growth. To improve the system, we ask for the ELPI cut scores to set more ambitious goals for the system and for other indicators to also set high expectations.
- › **Proactively Close Gaps.** As evident in [In Search for Equity for English Learners](#), very few school districts set goals specific to ELs in their plans and just 5 of 26 districts reviewed for this report set differentiated goals to close gaps for ELs.⁷⁴ School districts that get supplemental and concentration funds for each English learner enrolled, have significant opportunity and achievement gaps for ELs, yet too few districts include goals, actions and services focused on English learners. In the new three-year template for 2024-27, school districts are now required to use metrics that will address disparities in outcomes and opportunities. It will be important to see how the districts target gap closures.

Measuring EL Performance on the 2023 Dashboard

School districts are identified for Differentiated Assistance on the California Schools Dashboard based on the following:

- › Student group performance in two or more LCFF state priority areas;
- › Local indicator performance in two or more priority areas; or
- › A combination of student group performance in one state priority area and local indicator performance in a different priority area.

There are eight LCFF state priority areas that school districts are held accountable for, which are highlighted in Table 1 below. The table also highlights in green the indicators that are measured by the state, as opposed to local indicators.⁷⁵

Table 1: LCFF State Priority Areas for School Districts

<p>Priority 1: Basic Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Indicator</p>	<p>Priority 2: Implementation of State Academic Standards Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Indicator</p>
<p>Priority 3: Parent Engagement Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Indicator</p>	<p>Priority 4: Student Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red on both ELA and Mathematics Indicators; or • Red on ELA or Math Indicator and Orange on the other indicator, or • Red on English Learner Progress Indicator
<p>Priority 5: Student Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red on Graduation Rate Indicator; or • Red on Chronic Absenteeism Indicator. 	<p>Priority 6: School Climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red on Suspension Rate Indicator • Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Performance Indicator
<p>Priority 7: Broad Course of Study Access Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Indicator</p>	<p>Priority 8: Broad Course of Study Outcomes Very Low Status on College/Career Indicator</p>

Based on this structure, it is important to note that while a district might be flagged for low performance on one (or multiple) academic indicators, this by itself does not flag the school district for Differentiated Assistance. For example, a district might get the lowest performance rating (red) on both ELA and Math for EL outcomes, which only meets the trigger for one state indicator. This same district would not be flagged for Differentiated Assistance unless it meets the criteria for another indicator, such as, student engagement.



School Districts Identified for Differentiated Assistance Based on EL Performance

This framework led to 152 school districts being identified for Differentiated Assistance based on EL performance. These districts enrolled one in three ELs across California. Of these school districts, qualification for Differentiated Assistance was based on meeting criteria in the following LCFF state priority areas (two required):

- > **Student Achievement**
 (93 percent of identified school districts)
 - Red on ELA and Math
 - Red on ELA or Math, and Orange on the other
 - Red on ELPI
- > **School Climate**
 (37 percent of identified school districts)
 - Red on Suspension Rate
- > **Student Engagement**
 (33 percent of identified school districts)
 - Red on Chronic Absenteeism
 - Red on Graduation Rate⁷⁶
- > **Broad Course of Study**
 (41 percent of identified school districts)
 - Very Low Status on College/Career

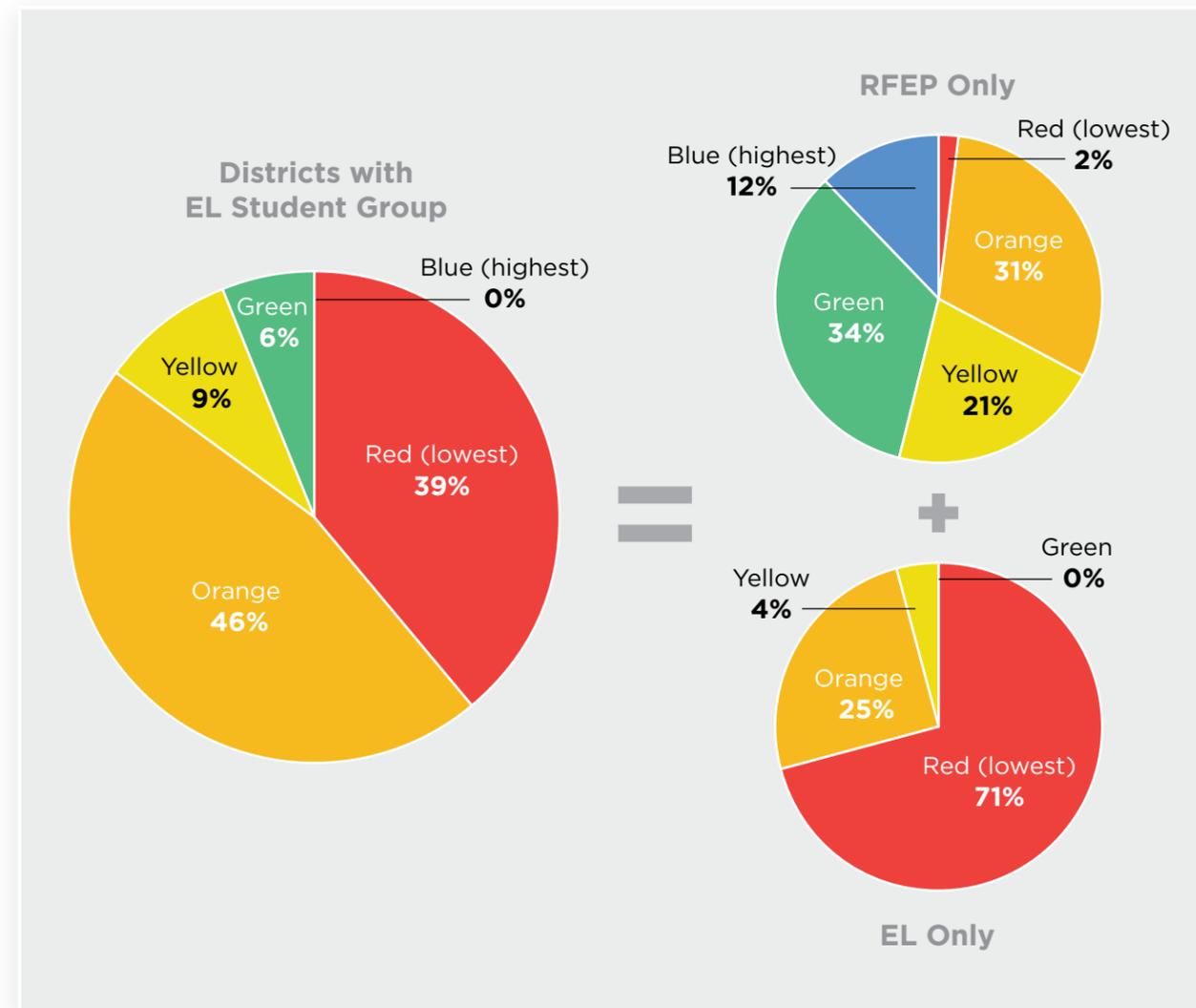
Note that a school district might meet criteria in more than two of the state priority areas.



Transparency Concern: EL Definition in the Academic Indicator

Another important note is the definition used for ELs in the academic indicators of ELA and Math. Since the inception of the dashboard, the EL definition for the academic indicators has included students who are ELs during the testing year and students who were reclassified fluent English proficient within the past four years. We believe that this is an issue that decreases transparency in the system. The impacts of this definition can be seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2.⁷⁷

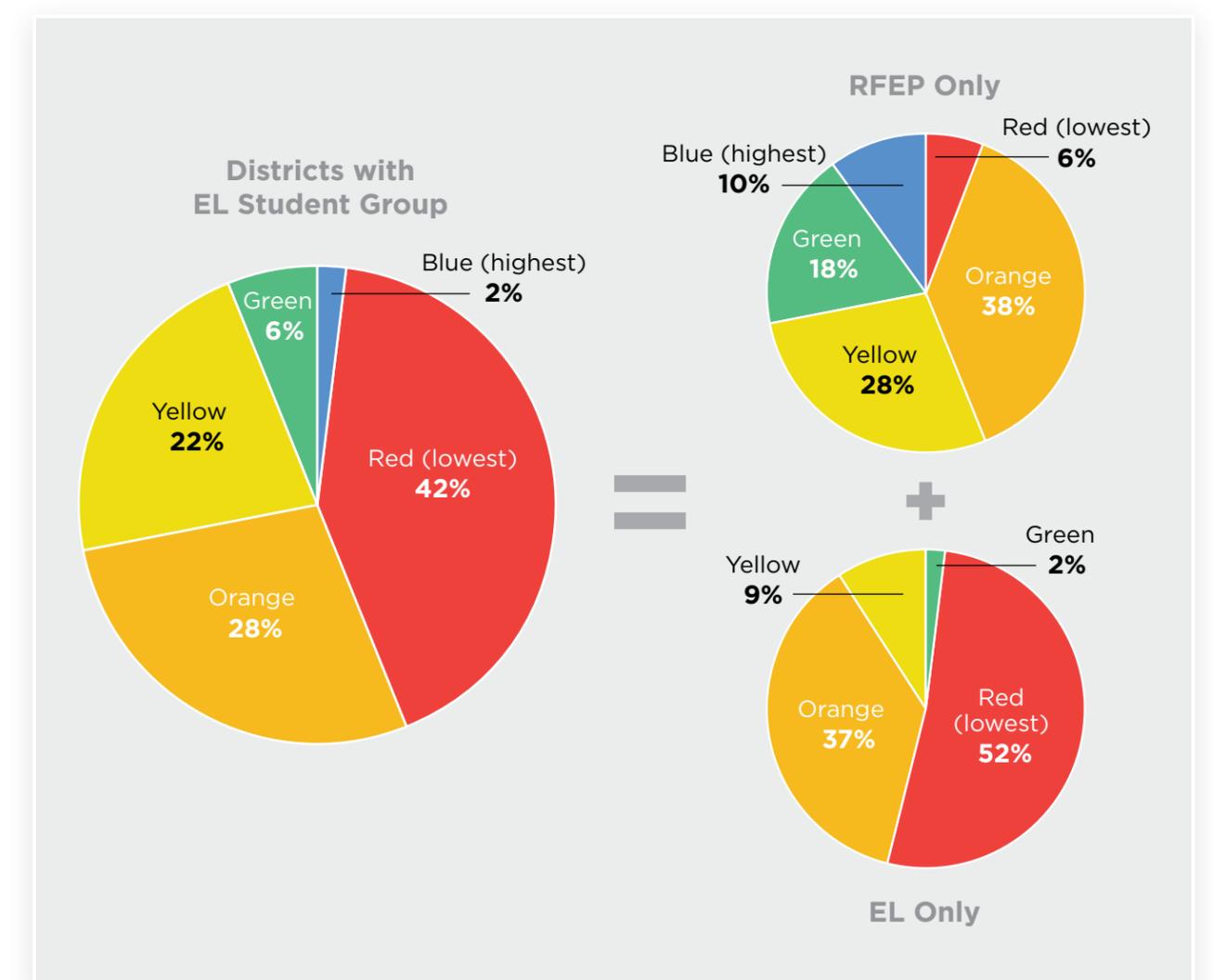
Figure 1: Disaggregated 2023 ELA Academic Indicator for the EL Student Group



Just focusing on Math, we see that 231 school districts (42 percent of districts with a rating) receive the lowest performance level based on EL achievement. However, this is masking the real need in that 317 school districts would be identified if we are looking at just EL achievement. This is also hiding the good outcomes that school districts are achieving with their RFEP students.

Again, it is important to note that disaggregating the EL data would not automatically equate to every district achieving a red rating on ELA or Math being flagged for Differentiated Assistance since this might only meet criteria for the academic indicator.

Figure 2: Disaggregated 2023 Math Academic Indicator for the EL Student Group



Low Expectations Concern: English Learner Progress Indicator

An area of concern are the low expectations set by the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI). These low expectations are the result of the cut scores set by the State Board of Education, allowing a school district to achieve a medium rating if only 45 percent of their ELs make or maintain progress (see Table 2). It is important to note that ELPI is not based on proficiency, but on expected yearly progress. Therefore, we should expect more ELs to make progress.

Table 2: English Learner Progress Indicator Cut Scores

Status Level	Status Cut Scores
Very Low	Less than 35% of ELs make or maintain progress
Low	35% to less and 45% of ELs make or maintain progress
Medium	45% to less than 55% of ELs make or maintain progress
High	55% to less than 65% of ELs make or maintain progress
Very High	65% or more ELs make or maintain progress

The result of these cut scores and low expectations is that little pressure is placed on the system and school districts to improve outcomes for ELs. Moreover, less ELs receive much needed support. As previously mentioned, just 24 school districts received a “very low” status level in 2023.

When looking at 2023 Dashboard color ratings, which combine status and progress, just 60 school districts received a “red” rating. Further, of these 60 school districts, only 28 ended up being flagged for Differentiated Assistance, given the requirement to meet criteria in two or more of the state priority areas.⁷⁸

Positive Developments: Long-Term ELs in the Dashboard

A positive development that will impact the drafting of new 2024-27 three-year LCAPs is that Long-term English learners (LTELs) are to be reported as a separate student group in addition to ELs for accountability purposes. This means that as LEAs draft their LCAPs, those that have a numerically significant EL student group and/or a numerically significant LTEL student group must include specific actions in the LCAP related to, at a minimum, the language acquisition programs. These actions must be for ELs and/or LTELs separately. Moreover, we look forward to seeing future Dashboards results outline performance for LTELs separately across several of the state indicators.

REFLECTION: *How many districts in your county are identified for differentiated assistance based on their performance for ELs? How do your current EL and RFEPs outcomes on academic indicators compare?*

Conclusion

California’s accountability system for ELs has shortcomings that prevent it from effectively serving this student group. The system lacks transparency due to the way it combines EL and RFEP students, and it sets low expectations for EL progress. This combination obscures the true performance of ELs and allows districts with struggling EL populations to avoid being flagged for needing additional support.

There are, however, positive developments. The upcoming inclusion of LTELs as a separate subgroup in the accountability system offers a more nuanced view of EL progress. This will require districts to develop targeted strategies to improve outcomes for all EL student groups.

There are key areas of improvement that can be seized to improve the system. We can increase transparency by reporting EL and RFEP data separately and set high expectations for EL progress by raising cut scores on the ELPI. Through the LCAP process, school districts can also allocate sufficient resources to address the specific needs of ELs.



STATE AND LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This report reviewed key data on English learner (EL) characteristics, academic outcomes, access to rigorous coursework, the expansion of multilingualism, supporting the whole child, access to prepared educators, and accountability. Each section sets goals for California to meet by 2030 (summarized in Appendix: Summary of 2030 Goals). Here we elevate state and local recommendations to consider as we strive to create a better education system for ELs and multilingual students. These recommendations are not exhaustive but can be a starting point for further discussion.

State Recommendations

The following are recommendations for state leaders, including the Legislature, and state agencies and boards, such as the California Department of Education, State Board of Education, and California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Recommendation 1: Set Clear Statewide Goals for EL Outcomes and Track Progress.

While California has made significant progress in passing laws and guidance that support EL outcomes, what has been lacking are clear goals for the state and their tracking. We have an opportunity to reaffirm the vision and goals set forth in [Global California 2030](#) and establish clear statewide leadership focused on the implementation of the English Learner Roadmap Policy (EL Roadmap). We call on state leaders to reflect on the 2030 goals in this report to develop state goals for EL success and an implementation plan for the EL Roadmap.

Recommendation 2: Improve Publicly Reported Data.

In the drafting of this report, we uncovered areas in which there is a lack of clear data that can better inform the state of ELs in California public schools. Making public data available in the following areas would develop a better understanding of the challenges and achievements of ELs:

- **High School Graduation and Outcomes for RFEPs.** High school graduation and outcome data (such as A-G completion) are only reported for ELs, leaving a gap in understanding how RFEPs are achieving compared to EO students. the proportion of diverse language classification of students (RFEPs, ELs, IFEPs, etc.) enrolled. Moreover, identifying students by the type of bilingual program and their outcomes can help determine the impact of these programs.
- **Equitable Access to Rigorous Coursework.** While AB 2735 (O'Donnell) in 2018 prohibited middle and high school ELs from being denied enrollment in core curriculum courses or courses required for high school graduation, there is no data to determine whether access has improved. The state should collect and publish data on EL and RFEP participation in dual enrollment, career and technical education (CTE) pathways, Advanced Placement (AP), and elective courses such as music and arts.
- **Dual Language Learners (DLLs) in ECE.** As California State Preschool Programs (CSPPs) and other preschool providers implement identification of DLLs, data on their enrollment should be reported, including by the types of programs across the mixed delivery system.
- **Teacher Attrition and Overall Supply.** While the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing is a source of data on new credentials each year, there is no yearly data on the overall number of teachers by credential type (including bilingual authorization), ethnicity, and attrition across each county and district. These data would inform the condition of the profession and highlight shortages.

Recommendation 3: Invest in the Expansion of Bilingual Pathways and Programs.

Over the past decade California has been a national leader in being first in the nation to establish a State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB). Unfortunately, due to the longstanding barriers to bilingual education programs that the state terminated in 2016 (through passage of the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative), access to bilingual programs is still a challenge for many ELs. This establishes a need for continued state support and leadership in encouraging districts to expand bilingual pathways from PK-12th grade is critical at this moment in time. The state can:

- Support districts and schools in the implementation and expansion of the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards and in expanding biliteracy programs.
- Establish a state recognized award of “multilingual excellence” for districts and schools when at least half of ELs are enrolled in bilingual programs and pathways leading to the SSB.
- Ensure that preschool and TK programs include primary language development, when possible, for DLLs.

Recommendation 4: Continue Investments in Community Schools and Initiatives Supporting the Whole Child.

Students cannot have full access unless their foundational needs are met. Supporting districts and schools to provide nutritious meals, mental health supports, and caring adults that are bilingual and speak the home languages of students and families is critical. The state’s continued investment in Community Schools must be celebrated and seized upon to ensure schools and districts center the needs of ELs. Community Schools should be a lighthouse for supporting bilingualism and biliteracy and be encouraged to include this in their plans. The state should provide continued guidance for Community Schools and other investments in student mental health and well-being to be aligned to the EL Roadmap (see brief, [Alignment of Community Schools to the English learner Roadmap Policy](#)).

Recommendation 5: Address the Bilingual Teacher Pipeline.

Addressing the bilingual teacher pipeline needs to focus on the recruitment and preparation of new educators and in supporting teachers currently in the profession. The state can:

- Continue to invest in proven programs such as Bilingual Teacher Residencies and the Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program (BTPDP).
- Remove barriers to attaining a bilingual authorization in credentialing programs, by providing grants for teacher candidates and for credentialing programs to hire the necessary faculty to increase their capacity to expand the numbers of bilingual teacher candidates. Institutions offering the new PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential must also provide the bilingual authorization concurrently.
- Leverage CTE Pathway funds to help districts establish educator pathways, with a focus on encouraging students on the path to the SSB to participate and then support their enrollment in bilingual teacher preparation programs. .

Recommendation 6: Improve the Accountability System.

The vision of a coherent and transparent accountability system set forth in the 2021 brief, [The Accountability System English Learners Deserve: Framework for An Effective and Coherent Accountability System For ELs](#), must be implemented. This will require increasing transparency by separating ELs and RFEPs from the EL academic indicators and in any proposed growth model, setting high expectations for ELs in the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI) and other indicators in order to ensure that school districts set clear and ambitious goals to address the needs of ELs. Additional accountability would be welcomed to ensure that Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funding generated by ELs is truly invested toward meeting their needs.

Local Recommendations

The following are recommendations for local leaders, including those in county offices of education, school districts, and schools.

Recommendation 1: Set Goals for EL Outcomes, Track Progress, and Invest Adequate Resources.

Local leaders should reflect on the [Global California 2030](#) goals in this report, and develop their own aspirational goals for outcomes for ELs by 2030 and beyond. We encourage goals to be focused on key areas, including academic achievement, English language proficiency, access to bilingual pathways, access to rigorous coursework, and supporting the whole child. These goals should also be coupled with sufficient investments in LCAPs and with progress tracked every year.

Recommendation 2: Expand Bilingual Pathways Leading to the State Seal of Biliteracy.

County offices of education and school districts must continue to participate in the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards and expand bilingual pathways and programs. All school districts with high school students should encourage and support all of their EL and RFEP students to attain the SSB.

Recommendation 3: Provide Adequate Support and Counseling to Increase Access to Rigorous Coursework.

Local leaders can increase access to rigorous coursework for ELs and RFEPs, by investing in counselors who are bilingual and tasked with ensuring that these students enroll and are successful in A-G coursework, dual enrollment, AP courses, and CTE pathways. Additional support within rigorous courses are also critical, including access to high quality instructional materials (HQIMs) that center the needs of ELs. Resources to support the local adoption of instructional materials, including a [definition of HQIMs](#) that center the needs of multilingual students can be found on the [California HQIM Learning Partners Coalition Resource Page](#).

Recommendation 4: Center ELs in Community Schools.

As schools across the state continue to transform into Community Schools and build partnerships to meet the needs of the whole child, planning and implementation must center the needs of ELs and in particular, those that are newcomers and socioeconomically disadvantaged. When possible, courses leading to the development of biliteracy should be included in the community school design. Local leaders can ensure that families of ELs are engaged in the planning process in their home languages, and that Community Schools are aligned to the EL Roadmap (see [Alignment of Community Schools to the English Learner Roadmap Policy](#)).

Recommendation 5: Ensure Integrated ELD Professional Learning for All Educators.

Educators across all subject areas must receive professional learning and support in delivering integrated ELD within instruction. County and district leaders should support content area departments and those responsible for EL education and special education to collaborate in development and delivery of professional learning.

Recommendation 6: Build Partnerships to Address the Bilingual Teacher Pipeline.

Local leaders can create partnerships between county offices of education, school districts, colleges and universities, and other partners in order to recruit current staff and students who are bilingual into the teaching profession. The following are several opportunities that local leaders can seize upon to improve and accelerate the local recruitment of bilingual educators:

- **Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program (BTPDP).** This program received renewed funding of \$30 million from the 2023-24 California Budget. The purpose of the BTPDP is to increase the number of bilingual teachers in multiple languages by offering professional development that can lead to a bilingual authorization.
- **Bilingual Teacher Residencies.** Teacher residency programs in California address teacher shortages by combining university coursework with hands-on training in high-need subjects. These programs can offer additional opportunities to ensure that candidates receive a bilingual authorization.
- **Pathways for State Seal of Biliteracy Recipients.** Local leaders can create pathways to the teaching profession (and other high-need fields where bilingual staff are needed) for students that are on the path toward the State Seal of Biliteracy. This can be done by leveraging partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts in order to motivate and inform students about the needs and benefits of becoming a bilingual teacher and what a career in education looks like.



Conclusion

This report has provided analysis of key data on the state of English learners (ELs) in California public schools across six critical areas: understanding our students, academic achievement, expanding multilingualism, access to rigorous coursework, supporting the whole child, access to well-prepared educators, and accountability. Within each area, the aim was to establish a better understanding of the strengths and challenges of ELs and multilingual students, and to set ambitious goals for California's education system by the year 2030.

It is our hope that this report will lead to critical reflections by state, county, district, and school leaders. The reflection questions within each section can support discussions about the strengths and challenges in your own context. Moreover, the goals in each section (summarized in Appendix: Summary of 2030 Goals), along with the state and local recommendations can further inspire action to improve the condition and outcomes for ELs and multilingual students across California.

State and local leaders should remember that while this report presents important information, it does not include all of the information about ELs. Local data that can be gathered through practices such as student shadowing, instructional rounds, and equity walks are just as important. Two critical points are emphasized here:

- › Students are individuals with multiple identities, strengths, and challenges, not just a number or an assessment score; and
- › Challenges and gaps identified within this report are deficits in the system for state and local leaders to address, not deficits in our students.

There is much work ahead as we strive to meet the goals outlined by 2030. Our students continue to bring to school valuable strengths in their cultures and languages that must continue to be celebrated and form the basis for improvements in our public education system. Moreover, these improvements that will positively impact the lives of thousands of students and families will happen, if state and local leaders continue to build on the legislative and policy achievements of the past 15 years. California has much to celebrate and much to improve upon. The state of English learners in California public schools is one of urgency in the lack of access for too many ELs, but also of promise as we seize upon the strengths of our students, schools, and communities.

Appendix: Summary of 2030 Goals

Academic Achievement. By the 2029-30 school year:

1. **Increase the proportion of Ever-ELs who are reclassified by ten percentage points** (for grades 6-8, from 54 percent in 2023, to 64 percent in 2030; and for grades 9-12 from 69 percent in 2023, to 79 percent in 2030)
2. **Reduce by half the percentage of ELs in grades 6-12 who are LTELs, to 25 percent** (from 49 percent in 2023)
3. **Reduce by half the percentage of ELs who are AR-LTELs in grades 3-5, to 20 percent** (from 40 percent in 2023)
4. **Improve the proportion of ELs and RFEPs who meet or exceed standards in ELA, math, and science by ten percentage points, across each grade** (using 2022 data as the baseline)
5. **Ensure that RFEP ELA, math, and science achievement is above or on par with that of EO students across each grade**

Expanding Multilingualism. By the 2029-30 school year:

1. **California will triple the number of students who receive the State Seal of Biliteracy, to more than 165,000**, from 55,175 in 2017-18 and 59,703 in 2022-23 (from *Global California 2030*)
2. **Over half of California Seal of Biliteracy recipients will be Ever-ELs, representing over 82,500 ever-EL recipients**, from 45 percent representing 27,082 ever-EL recipients in 2022-23
3. **All eligible school districts will offer the State Seal of Biliteracy**
4. **Quadruple the number of dual immersion programs to more than 1,600 in 2030**, from 407 in 2018 and 996 in 2023 (from *Global California 2030*)
5. **One in five ELs will participate in a Dual Language Immersion or Developmental Bilingual Program**
6. **Half of all K-12 students participate in programs leading to proficiency in two or more languages** (from *Global California 2030*)

Access to Rigorous Coursework. By the 2029-30 school year:

1. **One in three ELs in a four-year cohort will graduate meeting UC/CSU entrance requirements** (from 19 percent in 2022-23)
2. **The proportion of RFEPs who graduate meeting UC/CSU entrance requirements in a four year cohort will be on par with that of English-Only students**

3. **Double the proportion of ELs completing college level coursework, AP Exams, and CTE pathways** (from six percent taking a college credit course, two percent passing an AP exam, and nine percent completing a CTE pathway in 2022-23 to 12 percent taking a college credit course, four percent passing an AP exam, and 18 percent completing a CTE pathway in 2029-30)
4. **The proportion of RFEPs who complete college level coursework, AP exams, and CTE pathways will be on par with that of English-Only students**
5. **All ELs and RFEPs will have the opportunity to take an ethnic studies course in high school**
6. **All ELs and RFEPs will participate in arts education from PK-12th grade.**

Supporting the Whole Child. By the 2029-30 school year:

1. **More than 80 percent of ELs will have a caring adult relationship school** (from less than 60 percent in 7th, 9th, and 11th grade according to the 2019-21 California Healthy Kids Survey)
2. **Less than 10 percent of ELs will be chronically absent** (from 28 percent in 2023)
3. **Less than 10 percent of ELs will experience chronic sadness or hopelessness in school** (from over 30 percent in 7th, 9th, and 11th grade according to the 2019-21 California Healthy Kids Survey)
4. **More than 90 percent of ELs will have a breakfast meal before school** (from less than half in 7th, 9th, and 11th grade according to the 2019-21 California Healthy Kids Survey)
5. **All ELs will have access to expanded learning opportunities**

Access to Well Prepared Educators. By the 2029-30 school year:

1. **Double number of bilingual authorizations issued**, from 816 in 2018 to more than 1,600 in 2030 (from *Global California 2030*)
2. **Expand the number of bilingual teacher preparation programs at state-approved educator preparation programs**, from 30 in 2016 to 100 by 2030 (from *Global California 2030*)
3. **Sixty percent of bilingual teacher preparation programs offering the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential will offer a bilingual authorization**
4. **All teachers will have access to a supportive school environment and high-quality professional learning that includes designated and integrated ELD strategies**

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CALIFORNIANS TOGETHER

CHAMPIONING THE SUCCESS
OF ENGLISH LEARNERS