# Similar English Learner Students, Different Results: Why Do Some Schools Do Better?

IN SPRING 2006, CALIFORNIA RELEASED its first-ever school-level Academic Performance Index (API) scores for English learners (ELs). These EL-API scores were based on California Standards Tests (CSTs) in English language arts and math taken in the spring of 2005. The EL-API makes it possible to identify how well schools are doing with their English learner student population in the same way that the schoolwide API measures progress for all of a school's students.

Identifying how well EL students in California are doing is vital to the state's future because their numbers and the proportion of all students they represent has grown dramatically since 1980. (See Figure I.) Today, nearly 1.6 million pupils in California's K–12 public education system—or one in four—are English learners. At the elementary level, EL students comprise 33% of the total. And California currently educates close to one-third of all the English learners in the nation, according to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. EL students are enrolled in almost every California district and in the vast majority of schools.

Although almost 100 languages are spoken in the homes of California students, approximately 85% of California's EL students are Spanish speaking. That uniformity in regard to primary language, however, masks important variations in the family background, English language abilities, and academic readiness these students bring to their school experience. All of these factors influence EL students' performance on state tests, which are given in English. Nevertheless, the EL-API offers the best information

figure 1 | **California's K–12 English learner (EL) population has grown from 8% to 25% in 25 years**
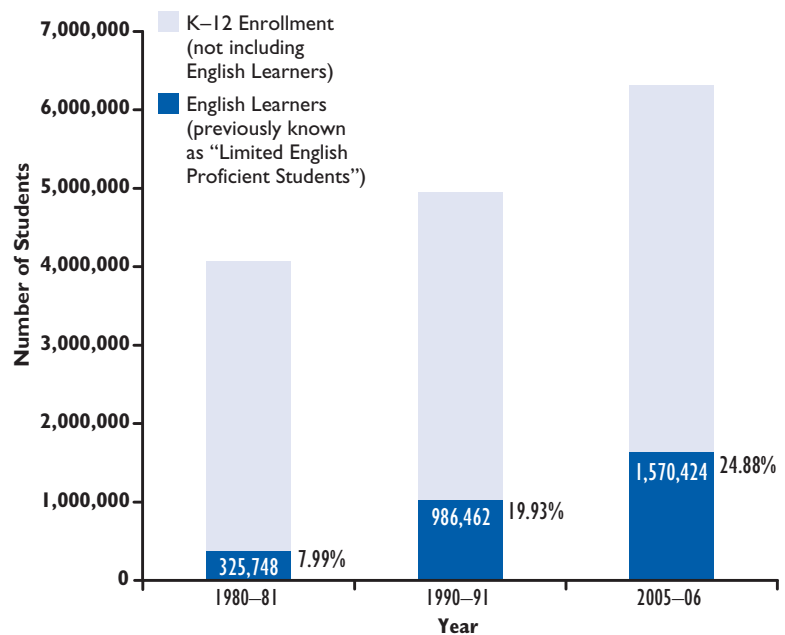
Data: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE)   EdSource 9/07

available for all regular public schools in California concerning the achievement of this important student population.

Elementary schools vary widely in their ability to help their English learner students meet the state's academic content standards in English language arts and mathematics. Even schools that are relatively similar in terms of student ethnicity, parent education level, socioeconomic level, and concentration of EL students vary in their performance.

A collaborative research team from EdSource, Stanford University, and the American Institutes for Research (AIR), aided by

consultation with WestEd, took a look at the first EL-API scores for a group of elementary schools that educate similar students. The study was the first analysis of its kind of California elementary school practices and their relationship to the EL-API.

All of these schools have large proportions of low-income and Spanish EL students, yet they showed a range of 303 points on their EL-API scores out of 800 possible points. (See Figure 2 on page 4.) Relying on survey responses from principals and teachers, the researchers tried to answer the following questions:

About This Summary Report

This EdSource report summarizes the May 2007 *Report of Findings* from a study conducted by EdSource, Stanford University, and the American Institutes for Research (AIR), with consultation from WestEd. While the official study findings were the work of the entire team, EdSource takes full responsibility for the contents of this summary and for any errors or misrepresentations it may contain.

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Inside This Report

- Why do these differences in achievement occur among California elementary schools serving similarly high proportions of low-income and EL students?
- Are the explanations similar to or different from those found in a previous study by

EdSource and its collaborative research partners of this same set of schools in relation to their schoolwide API?

- What, if any, specific instructional practices aimed at EL students might also be having an effect?

This report is EdSource's summary of the researchers' results published in 2007—*Similar English Learner Students, Different Results*. EdSource takes full responsibility for its final form and any inaccuracies or misrepresentations it might contain. In addition to addressing the three questions above, this summary also reflects the researchers' discussions of the findings and possible implications for both policy and practice in California.

Within the band of schools examined for this study, the range in EL-API scores was 303 points. This study explored possible differences in school and district practices that can explain at least some of this difference in the achievement of EL students.

Descriptive Statistics:
What the Schools Are Like and How They Are Teaching English Learners

This study focused on 237 elementary schools that had an EL population greater than 15% and were in the *Similar Students, Different Results* study sample (see the box on page 8). These schools were in 138 school districts, with 51 districts having more than one school in the study. A total of 4,700 K–5 classroom teachers in the sample of 237 California elementary schools responded to the researchers' surveys. The vast majority of those teachers—95% or 4,467—reported that they had EL students in their regular classroom.

These schools face greater challenges than the typical California elementary school

According to 2004–05 data for the study's schools, the median school enrollment was 598 students, slightly higher than the median for all elementary schools (567). (The median school is the school that is in the middle. Half of the schools have more students; half of the schools have fewer students.) Of the 237 schools:

- 33% were in elementary school districts, and the remaining 67% were in unified school districts.
- 8% of the schools operated on a year-round calendar (compared to 20% of elementary schools statewide).

What sets this study apart

Many of the available reports on best instructional practices for English learner (EL) students are based upon case studies and research reviews. This study differs in several ways:

- The sample of districts, schools, teachers, and principals is unusually large and representative of the overall population of schools with very strong response rates.

- It examines the effects of a broad range of standards-based district, school, and classroom practices and policies on the academic achievement of the school's EL students.

- It also examines a small set of survey questions on specific EL instructional practices against those same student outcomes.

- It analyzes a variety of student outcome measures used for state and federal accountability purposes and for measuring academic and English language proficiency.

Sample of Schools

This extended analysis is based on a sample of 237 schools from the 25th to 35th percentile band of the School Characteristics Index (SCI), which means their student populations are similar in terms of low parent education levels, high poverty levels, and high proportions of Spanish-speaking English learner (EL) students. (See the box on page 4.) Among these schools, the student demographic challenge factors are substantial but not the most severe in California. The sample was randomly selected, then narrowed to only include schools with an EL-API (the Academic Performance Index for English learners). The EL-API score—released for the first time in spring 2006—was based on spring 2005 California Standards Tests (CSTs) and includes EL students enrolled in California schools for one year or more and former EL students redesignated as fluent English proficient (RFEP). The survey responses upon which this study is based were also collected in spring 2005.

The Survey

This analysis used the results of surveys completed in spring 2005 from 237 principals and 4,700 teachers. The survey questions addressed classroom, school, and district practices and policies conceptually grouped into seven broad domains: implementing a coherent, standards-based instructional program; involving and supporting parents; using assessment data to improve student achievement and teacher practice; encouraging teacher collaboration and professional development; ensuring instructional resources; enforcing high expectations for student behavior; and prioritizing student achievement by using measurable and monitored objectives.

Methodology

A brief description of survey responses is presented here to provide information about what EL practices look like in California elementary schools. However, the main focus of this new analysis was to determine what correlations might exist between various broad effective-schools practices and the academic achievement of the English learner students in the sample of schools. To that end, the researchers conducted multiple regression analyses using as school-level outcome variables the 2005 Base EL-API, the mean (average) scale scores on CSTs in English language arts and math in grades 2–5, percent of students proficient on those CSTs, and annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) 1 and 2. These AMAOs measure EL students' progress in learning English based on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT).

Limiting the sample to a narrow SCI band helped control for student demographics. To do so further, the research team controlled separately for parent education, school size, student ethnicity, percent of students enrolled in the free and reduced-priced meals program, percent of students new to the school, percent English learners, and percent enrolled in migrant education. For this EL analysis, the team also controlled for the concentration of EL students in the school using indicators for low (less than 33%), mid-range (33% to 50%), and high (greater than 50%) concentrations. In addition, the researchers controlled for the stability of the school's EL population through the ratio of initial CELDT test takers to all EL test takers in grades 2–5.

Further, the surveys to teachers and principals asked several questions related to specific practices and policies for the instruction of English learner students.

- 99% received federal Title I funding, and 35% participated in Program Improvement. Statewide in 2004–05, 69% of all elementary schools received federal Title I funding and 17% participated in Program Improvement, which is an intervention program for underperforming schools under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. That means that for two consecutive years these Title I schools had not met the federal "adequate yearly progress" benchmark of a certain percentage of their students scoring proficient or advanced in English and math standards tests.

- The students in these 237 schools faced particular challenges. For example, at the median school, 42% of the students were English learners. That compares to 24% in the median California elementary school. The median school in the study had more former EL students redesignated as fluent English proficient (14% vs. 4%), more low-income students (78% vs. 58%), and more parents who had not graduated from high school (32% vs. 15%) compared to the statewide median school. (Income level was determined by the number of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals.)

  In terms of student ethnicity, the median school in the study had more Hispanic (68% vs. 41%) and fewer white (13% vs. 28%) students than the median California elementary school. In most schools in the study, the majority population was Hispanic. The median for African

figure 2 | **In 2005, schools in the 25th–35th percentile band on the School Characteristics Index (SCI) have a wide range of EL-API scores**

25th–35th Percentile
Number of Schools with EL-API: **485**
EL-API Scores
Max: **811**
Median: **663**
Min: **508**
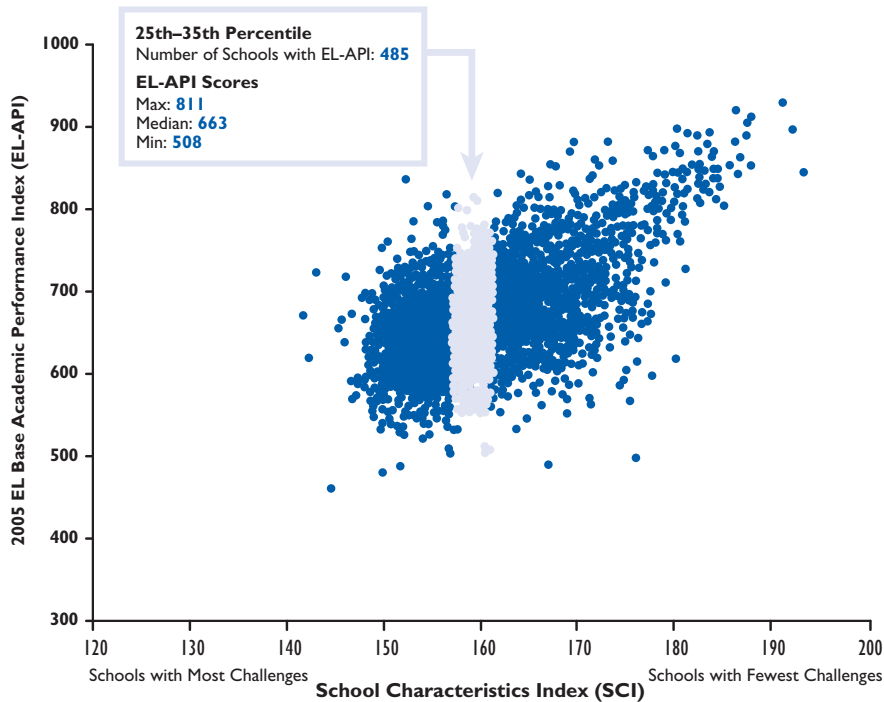
DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE)   EDSOURCE 9/07

American students was similar (4% study vs. 3% statewide) and for Asian students the same (3%). In the study schools, the median value for the combination of Native American, Filipino, Pacific Islander, multiethnic students, and those who did not indicate an ethnicity was 12%.

As a whole, 88% of the EL students in the schools were Spanish speakers. Figure 3 on page 5 illustrates the relative concentrations of EL students, Spanish-speaking students, and non-Spanish-speaking English learners (students with a primary language other than English or Spanish). Statewide, 85% of EL students were Spanish speakers.

In addition, in the median study school, 98% of the teachers were fully credentialed in 2004–05. That compared to 100% statewide, which means that in at least half of all elementary schools in California, all teachers were fully credentialed.

Survey responses show that schools vary in some aspects of their approach to EL instruction

The teacher and principal surveys focused primarily on a wide range of effective-schools practices. But they also included concrete items related to the state's standards-based policies. The survey of 60-plus questions (more than 350 items) included over a dozen questions related more specifically to school and classroom practices for English learners. Descriptive statistics based on teacher and principal responses to those specific EL questions follow. These statistics help illuminate how EL students are being taught in these California elementary schools and how much that varies among schools.

Survey responses regarding explicit English language development show some notable variations in practice

English language development (ELD) is instruction in English as a second language based on the student's proficiency level in

The School Characteristics Index (SCI) summarizes factors associated with student performance

California has created a composite index, the School Characteristics Index (SCI), to summarize multiple factors that are associated with student performance on state tests but are largely beyond the control of the students themselves. This study looked at elementary schools in the 25th–35th percentile based on their SCI scores. The SCI in 2005, when the schools were surveyed, included these factors:

- Student ethnicity: percent in each of seven ethnic categories;
- Average parental education level;
- Percent of English learners;
- Percent of students with disabilities;
- Percent of students in the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program;
- Percent of students who have been reclassified from English learner to fluent English proficient (RFEP)—these students have the same impact as English learners on a school's SCI;
- Percent of migrant education students;
- Percent of students in the free and reduced-priced meals program;
- Percent of fully credentialed teachers;
- Percent of teachers with emergency permits;
- Average class size;
- Student mobility: percent of students enrolled since the beginning of the school year;
- Whether the school operates a multitrack, year-round educational program;
- Percent of enrollment in various grade spans, and
- Percent of students in reduced class size for a full day.

English and on the student's age and grade. (See the box on page 6.) The state's ELD standards address listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Schools must provide all English learners with ELD instruction from an authorized teacher until the district reclassifies the student as fluent English proficient.

figure 3 | **In the study sample of schools, 88% of English learner (EL) students speak Spanish**
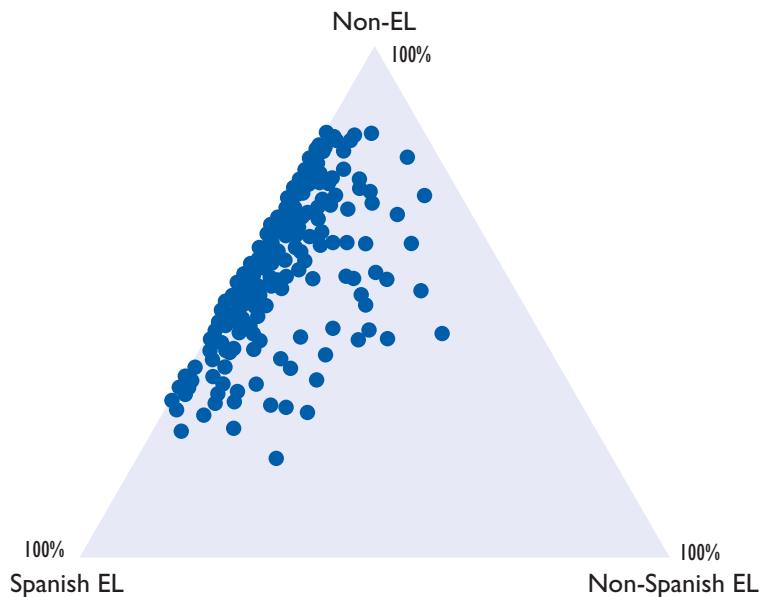
Each dot in this diagram represents a school and is placed in the diagram based on the percentage of English learners, Spanish-speaking English learners, and non-Spanish-speaking EL students. As a whole, 88% of the EL students in the sample schools were Spanish speakers.

Data: California Department of Education (CDE)   EdSource 9/07

Teachers become authorized to provide ELD in several ways, such as earning a CLAD or BCLAD certificate. (See the discussion beginning on page 11.) In the sample of 237 schools, 69% of the K–5 classroom teachers reported that they had a CLAD (cross-cultural, language, and academic development) or BCLAD ("B" stands for "bilingual") credential. And 35% of the teachers reported being comfortable conversing in a language other than English. Of those, 80% said the language was Spanish.

Among the teachers reporting that they had EL students in their regular classrooms, 92% (or 4,127) said they were in schools that provided explicit instruction in ELD. Teachers in this subset were then asked *how that instruction was delivered* to EL students, and their answers showed wide variation. Asked to check all options that applied, the teachers responded as follows:

- 36% said in the whole class (English learners only);
- 36% said by ELD level within the class;

- 36% said that instruction was by ELD level but through teaming with other teachers, and
- 19% said ELD was provided through a pull-out program (e.g., a resource teacher provided instruction separate from the classroom).

The state also requires that teachers who provide ELD be authorized to do so. Teachers in this subset were asked *who taught explicit* ELD to their students, and their responses were relatively uniform. Asked to check all options that applied, 81% replied "myself," a third said another teacher with an EL credential, and 10% said a resource teacher. However, 18% replied an instructional aide, and 4% replied another teacher without an EL credential.

In a related question, the survey asked principals whether their schools have access to an English language learner specialist, and 15% said they did not. Another 35% said they had such a specialist at their school, and 49% said they had access to a district specialist.

The state expects schools to provide at least 30 minutes of daily ELD instruction to English learners. The majority—57%—of the subset of teachers reported that their school met this requirement, providing 30 minutes. Another 31% said their school exceeded the mandate, including 4% who reported 75 minutes or more. And 10% said their school did not meet the requirement.

All teachers with EL students were asked how much "supplemental instruction," in addition to explicit ELD instruction, their EL students received to move them to the next English proficiency level. More than a third (38%) reported none, and a nearly equal proportion of teachers (37%) reported 30 minutes. The remaining responses were about equally split between 60 minutes (9% of teachers) and 90 minutes or more (10% of teachers).

Survey questions explored math instruction and English language arts curriculum choices in California

California does not mandate a set approach to classroom configurations or instructional techniques for English learners, but it does have requirements regarding instructional materials. The survey asked questions about how instruction was delivered in math and about the materials used for English language arts.

The researchers asked teachers how their EL students were taught mathematics and to indicate all the approaches that applied. The majority (74%) of the responding teachers said students received math instruction in a mainstream classroom, and 47% said math instruction was provided using ESL (English as a second language) or immersion techniques (specially designed academic instruction in English or SDAIE). Nearly a third also reported that EL students received some primary language assistance either from the teacher (19%), an instructional aide (12%), or a resource teacher (1%); and 10% reported that they used mathematics materials designed for EL students. Only 8% of teachers reported that their EL

In California, a number of instructional services and settings exist for English learners

Possible Instructional Services for English Learners

The state has defined several different approaches that schools use for reporting how they deliver instructional services to English learners.

English Language Development (ELD): ELD is English language instruction appropriate for the student's identified level of language proficiency. It is designed to promote second language acquisition of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

ELD and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE): SDAIE is an approach used to teach academic courses to EL students in English. It is expected to be designed for nonnative speakers of English and should focus on increasing the comprehensibility of the academic courses normally provided to fluent English proficient (FEP) and English-only students in the district.

ELD and SDAIE with Primary Language Support (L1): In addition to ELD and SDAIE, students receive Primary Language Support (L1 support) in at least two academic subject areas. L1 is instructional support through the student's primary language. It may be used to clarify meaning and aid student comprehension of academic content area concepts taught mainly through English. It may also include oral language development in the student's primary language.

ELD and Academic Subjects Through the Primary Language (L1): EL students receiving ELD plus instruction in at least two academic subjects through their primary language. The curriculum should be equivalent to that provided to FEP and English-only students. These students may also be receiving SDAIE.

Possible Classes for EL Students

Based in part on the provisions of Proposition 227 (1998), the state of California has defined the instructional settings that can be used for English learners:

Structured English Immersion (also referred to as Sheltered English Immersion): EL students who have not yet met local district criteria for having achieved a "good working knowledge" of (or "reasonable fluency" in) English receive nearly all classroom instruction in English but with a curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language.

Alternative Course of Study: EL students are taught English and other subjects through bilingual education techniques or other generally recognized methodologies permitted by California law through parental or state-granted waiver exceptions.

English Language Mainstream Classroom—Students Meeting Criteria: English learners who have met local district criteria for having achieved a "good working knowledge" of English are provided with additional and appropriate services.

English Language Mainstream Classroom—Parental Request: State regulations permit a parent or guardian of an English learner to request—at any time during the school year—that a child placed in Structured English Immersion be transferred to an English Language Mainstream Classroom.

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students received math instruction and materials in their native language.

Regarding English language arts curriculum, California expects elementary schools to choose one of two state-adopted textbooks, each of which has an ELD component intended to guide instruction. The largest portion of schools in the sample (67%) used Houghton Mifflin's *A Legacy of Literacy* as their main curriculum program. Another 27% used *Open Court* by McGraw-Hill.

CELDT data appears to play a role in schools' evaluation of EL student progress

Along with taking the state's standardized subject-matter tests, English learners take the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to demonstrate their progress toward English proficiency. This survey asked principals and teachers about the ways they use that CELDT data. (See the box on page 11.)

All students whose home language is not English when they enter a California school take the Initial CELDT. Schools use the results to identify English learners versus initially fluent English proficient (IFEP) students. After that initial test, EL students take the Annual CELDT each year until they have mastered English and met additional locally defined academic achievement criteria. At that point, they are redesignated as fluent English proficient (RFEP).

Principals who responded to the survey were markedly uniform in reporting about the CELDT assessment data they receive and how they use it:

- Virtually all (98%) responded that they received the data individually for all students, and most (77%) also received a summary across grade levels.
- Almost all (95%) said they used it to evaluate the progress of students and communicate with parents, and nearly as many used it to identify struggling students (87%) and develop strategies for moving them toward English language proficiency (78%).
- Fewer principals—but still a substantial majority (71%)—said they used CELDT data to examine schoolwide instructional practices.
- Only about a quarter of principals said they used CELDT data to compare grades within their school (26%) or identify teachers who needed instructional improvement (23%).

The extent to which CELDT results influenced principals' schoolwide instructional priorities evoked a more mixed response: with 49% saying that was the case to a great extent, and another 44% saying that was the case to a moderate extent.

The researchers also asked principals how their district used CELDT assessment data. The most common district uses of CELDT data were to examine trends in a school's performance (71%) and evaluate curriculum

programs (65%). Their responses varied more in regard to their districts' use of CELDT scores to set schoolwide goals for student achievement (57%) and compare their school to similar schools (54%).

The survey also asked teachers what types of assessments, other than CELDT, they used for EL students. The responses showed that practices are quite mixed. The assessments named most often were:

- SABE (Spanish Assessment of Basic Education), which was selected by 33% of teachers;
- School-level ELD diagnostic assessment (29%); and
- Program-specific ELD diagnostic assessment (19%).

The less frequent responses included school-level academic assessment using techniques designed for EL students (12%), school-level academic assessments in students' primary language (8%), and other assessments (7%). Also of note was the substantial portion of teachers (27%) who did not respond to this question, thus indicating that they did not use any diagnostic test for their EL students other than CELDT.

The quality of support for EL instruction available to teachers appears to vary widely
High quality professional development and other support have long been considered essential for teachers, particularly for those who are working with students facing challenges. From the survey responses it appears that teachers differ widely in the quality of their experiences.

The survey asked teachers how frequently they met with other teachers to engage in various activities related to EL instruction. Most teachers met at least a few times a year to discuss the academic needs (84%) and determine the best instructional approaches (79%) for their EL students. A much smaller percentage (42%) consulted with an EL specialist, and about 40% never consulted with such a specialist.

The researchers also asked teachers if four types of instructional assistance had any influence on their teaching practices for

The State Board of Education plays a key role in curriculum choice in elementary schools

The State Board of Education (SBE) adopts textbooks for grades 1–8. The SBE currently approves curriculum program materials on a staggered schedule: every six years for reading/language arts/English language development; math; science, and history/social studies.

For each subject area, the SBE determines and announces the specific criteria it will use to evaluate curriculum program materials submitted for consideration by publishers. One criterion in recent years has been the extent and manner in which the proposed curriculum texts and supporting materials align with California's grade-by-grade academic content standards. Curriculum program materials from different publishers may also differ in the extent to which specific content areas are covered, the number and type of classroom diagnostic tests they provide, the manner in which they address the needs of English learners, the amount and kind of direction and training they provide for teachers, and more.

After determining which curriculum packages it will adopt for a specific subject area, the SBE provides school districts with a menu of approved or state-adopted texts and instructional materials in that subject for each grade level. Guided by this list, local school boards and district superintendents then use their own criteria to determine which of the approved materials best meets their needs.

The state expects districts to choose from the list of state-adopted materials and provides specific (categorical) funds for that purpose. Districts can receive a waiver from the state if they can make a case that nonadopted materials might better serve the academic needs of their students. District choices on subject-area curriculum programs are important, complex, and generally take into consideration many local factors.

In 2005, the SBE began considering how to refine the textbook and other instructional materials requirements for reading, language arts, and English language development. The proposed refinements were made to address lessons state leaders felt they had learned since the prior adoption about the best way to teach English learners. The criteria for new textbooks and materials make substantial changes from the previous approach and will be available in 2008.

However, debates continue about the best way to help English learners achieve fluency and reach proficiency in the state's academic content standards.

English learners, and their responses were once again quite mixed. Nearly half the teachers surveyed indicated that they had not received assistance from EL coaches, opportunities to observe other teachers, or feedback on their teaching of EL students. Somewhat more of the teachers (63%) indicated that they had been influenced by successful strategies from other teachers who were doing well with English learners.

The survey also asked teachers to characterize the support their district provided in professional development focusing on English learners. The responses suggest wide

variations in the quality of this support: 20% responded that it was excellent, 33% good, 36% fair, and 11% poor.

Further, the researchers asked principals to select their top three priorities for their own additional professional development from a list of 12 choices. Almost half (49%) chose "training and instructional strategies for EL students." For all principals in the sample, this professional development priority ranked second.

The survey asked the teachers the same question and offered 11 different choices. In response, 31% of those in the sample

chose "ELD curriculum program" (which ranked fifth among all teachers) and 35% chose "instructional strategies for English learners" (which ranked fourth among all teachers).

Both teachers with and without CLAD/BCLAD certification chose "the language arts curriculum program" as their top professional development priority with "instructional strategies for multiple learning styles" as their second top priority. The "math curriculum program" and "instructional strategies for English learners" were their third and fourth priorities for professional development. A higher percentage (45%) of teachers with CLAD/BCLAD credentials chose ELD curriculum program and instructional strategies for English learners as one of their top professional development priorities than did teachers without the CLAD/BCLAD credentials (30%).

Statistical Analysis:
Four Broad Effective-school Practices Correlated with Higher EL-API Scores

The researchers found that four broad effective-school practices, discussed below, had the most significant positive correlation with higher EL-API scores for elementary schools with high proportions of low-income and Spanish-speaking EL students. To tease out the relationships between these four practices and higher EL-API scores, the researchers used multiple regression analyses and adjusted statistically for differences in student demographics, including the concentration of EL students in the school and the stability of the school's EL population. (See the box on page 3.)

These same four practices were also found to be effective for schools with low-income students in a 2005 study by the same researchers—*Similar Students, Different Results.* (See the box on this page.)

Using Assessment Data To Improve Student Achievement and Instruction

The study found that an emphasis on student assessment data by principals and

the district was positively correlated with higher EL-API scores.

Principals who reported frequently and personally using assessment data to address the academic needs of students in their schools led, on average, higher-performing schools. These principals more often reported that they and the district use assessment data from multiple sources to evaluate teachers' practices and to identify teachers who need improvement. (Multiple sources include data such as STAR, questions at the end of a chapter in a textbook, assessments developed by the districts, or tests created by commercial educational organizations.)

The principals looked at test data independently and also reviewed it with individual teachers. These principals used the data to examine schoolwide instructional issues, identify struggling students, set goals for individual students, develop strategies to help students reach goals, and review the progress of those students. They also used the data to help parents understand their child's progress.

These same principals reported a clear understanding of their district's expectations for improving student achievement, which may help motivate and support them. The

principals reported that their districts expect that all schools in the district will improve on student achievement and evaluate principals accordingly. The principals also said that the district provided support for school-level planning related to improving achievement.

The EL-API tended to be higher in the sample elementary schools in which STAR data (CSTs and the CAT/6) influence schoolwide attention to improving student achievement. Teachers at these schools received test data in a number of different ways: a summary of all students in a particular grade; broken down by specific skills or subject matter for all students; and broken down by subgroups of students, such as English learners, in a teacher's classroom.

Principals in lower EL-API schools reported strong reliance on CELDT data

Principals who reported that CELDT results had a strong influence on their schoolwide instructional priorities were more likely, on average, to be associated with lower school EL-API scores and lower scores on specific achievement tests (a lower mean [average] scale score for both math and English language arts by EL students on the

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The Similar Students, Different Results Original Study

The findings in this report on EL student achievement are from an extended analysis of the large data file created in 2005 by EdSource and its collaborative research partners from Stanford University, University of California-Berkeley, and AIR. They are based on a large scale survey of California elementary schools. The *Initial Findings* from this survey—*Similar Students, Different Results*—were released in October 2005 and were drawn from multiple regression analyses to examine relationships between school practices and policies and the school-wide Academic Performance Index (API). The API gives each school a number that summarizes the performance of its students (grades 2–11) on California's standardized tests. A school's API score is used to rank it among schools of the same type (elementary, middle, high, or small) and among the 100 schools of the same type that are most similar in terms of students served, teacher qualifications, and other factors.

The subset of schools was drawn from the 25th–35th percentile bandwidth of California's School Characteristics Index (see the box on page 4). That includes 550 elementary schools that are similar in terms of school challenge related to student demographics and other factors. The elementary schools in this band varied by 279 points on their schoolwide API score.

The research team randomly selected 257 elementary schools and obtained completed comprehensive surveys from all 257 principals and 80% or more of the K–5 classroom teachers in the overwhelming majority of these schools. The 257 schools in the original study sample varied by 252 points on their schoolwide API.

CSTs and a lower percentage of English learners scoring proficient on the English CST). (See the discussion on page 13.)

Ensuring the Availability of Instructional Resources

EL-API performance was higher in schools in which principals reported that a higher proportion of their teaching staff had the following qualities:

- A demonstrated ability to raise student achievement;
- Strong knowledge of the subjects that they teach;
- Good fit with the school culture;
- Training in curriculum programs (how to use specific instructional materials);
- Ability to systematically apply (map) the standards to their actual teaching;
- Willingness to support other teachers' learning and improvement;
- Ability to use data from student tests;
- Familiarity with the school community;
- Excitement about teaching, and
- Familiarity with state standards that describe what is supposed to be taught.

In addition, schools in which more teachers reported having regular or standard California teaching certificates had, on average, higher EL-API scores. And schools were also slightly more likely to have higher scores if they had more experienced teachers (taught for more than five years) and principals.

Adequate classroom materials and facilities upkeep also appear to be key

Teachers and principals in these schools were also more likely to report that the district and principal provided adequate classroom materials, including up-to-date versions of English and math textbooks for every student. These principals also reported that their districts helped ensure that the school could provide supplementary instruction for struggling students. A few principals included in their survey response the kinds of supplemental services their school offered. They gave examples such as after-school tutorials, Saturday school to preview lessons for the week, and tutorials for individual students.

Principals were also more likely to report that their district supported maintenance of the school buildings and grounds and that they had a strong understanding of what their district expected from them in terms of facilities upkeep and management.

Implementing a Coherent, Standards-based Curriculum and Instructional Program

Teachers in schools with higher EL-API scores were more likely to report that there was consistency in what was taught and how it was taught at the same grade and across different grade levels. Examples of practices teachers reported using to accomplish this coherence included examining the scope or sequence of curriculum topics and reviewing a grade-level pacing calendar.

A pacing calendar describes what teachers at a certain grade level are expected to be teaching to their students at a particular point in time. For example, in the second week of school, one pacing calendar has all third-grade teachers reading aloud from the same book, *Roadside America.* Such an approach ensures uniformity across classrooms at each grade level in a school or district.

Those teachers who reported that their school had identified essential standards and that their classroom instruction is guided by state academic standards were also more likely to be in higher-performing schools. They reported that the school's curriculum materials in math and English language arts were aligned with the state's standards and that they frequently mapped state curriculum standards onto their classroom lesson plans.

Often textbook publishers produce standards maps that teachers can use. A standards map shows, for example, how a chapter in a fourth-grade social studies textbook on the history of California will meet not only social studies academic content standards, but also reading and writing standards. A chapter on the first pioneers covers the social studies standard that says fourth graders should be able to "identify the early land and sea routes to, and European settlements in, California with a focus on the exploration of the North Pacific…noting especially the importance of mountains, deserts, ocean currents, and wind patterns." The standards map suggests that students write an information report about the first pioneers, thus meeting writing standards as well.

Principals who report a strong district role were also more likely to be from higher-performing elementary schools. These principals said that their district had a coherent grade-by-grade curriculum that it used for all schools and that the district expected its principals to ensure that curriculum was implemented. They said that the district had clear expectations for student performance aligned with the district's adopted curriculum and that the district evaluated them on how well instruction aligned with the curriculum.

Several questions specific to the EL instructional program also showed some relationship to EL-API scores

Principals in schools with higher EL-API scores were slightly more likely to report that their school had implemented a new program for EL students in the past four years. And teachers at higher-performing schools also more often reported that their district addresses the instructional needs of English learners at their school.

Teachers in these schools were also more likely to report that pull-out programs—in which resource teachers provide explicit ELD instruction to English learners—are used at their school rather than ELD being taught by the classroom teacher. The use of resource teachers was also positively correlated with specific achievement measures (a higher weighted mean scale score by English learners and a higher percentage of EL students scoring proficient on the English language arts portion of the CST).

Similarly, schools in which teachers were more likely to report that the school's EL students were taught math using ESL or immersion techniques (SDAIE) had a higher achievement

figure 4 | **This table shows the predicted variation in API scores* for each effective-school practice in order of importance**

Effective-school Practice (Domain)	Predicted Variation in EL-API	Predicted Variation in Schoolwide API†
Using Assessment Data	20.4 points	16.7 points
Availability of Resources	17.9	16.9
Coherent Standards-based Instruction	17.3	17.6
Prioritizing Student Achievement	14.7	16.3
High Expectations for Student Behavior	10.3	12.3
Involving and Supporting Parents	10.1	9.9
Teacher Collaboration	9.4	11.0
Number of Schools in the Sample	**237 (High EL)**	**257 (Original Sample)**

*Based on standard deviations.

†Based on findings published in *Similar Students, Different Results,* 2005.

Note: This table is based on a series of regression models. The numbers in this table, which are API points, show the standard deviations of predicted API distributions. A complete explanation of the statistical analysis is available at **www.edsource.org/pub_abs_el07.cfm**. (Click on technical appendices.)

DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (CDE)   EDSOURCE 9/07

measure in math (schoolwide weighted mean scale score for math on the CST).

Prioritizing Student Achievement by Using Measurable and Monitored Objectives

Teachers and principals in schools with higher EL-API scores were more likely to report that the principal communicated a clear vision that was focused on student learning and had high expectations for students. These principals made their expectations for meeting academic goals clear to teachers. Teachers and principals said that teachers also shared responsibility for and were committed to improving student achievement.

Beyond these "values," both teachers and principals reported that their school had well-defined plans for instructional improvement and that they made meeting the state's API goals and the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) "adequate yearly progress (AYP)" goals a priority. Both teachers and principals reported that their schools set measurable goals for exceeding the mandated API student subgroup growth targets for improved achievement. (Subgroups of students are based on ethnicity, poverty, disabilities, and status as English learners. Schools must meet specific API and AYP

goals—called "growth targets" under the API system—for the school as a whole and for any numerically significant subgroups.)

Principals at higher-performing schools also reported on average that their school's statewide rank and Similar Schools Ranking on the API influenced schoolwide instructional priorities and that they were clear about their district's expectations for meeting API and AYP growth and subgroup targets.

Other practices are important, but they have a weaker direct relationship to the EL-API

The study considered three other sets of policies and practices that might distinguish higher-performing from lower-performing elementary schools. These three other areas of practice made a contribution to schools' EL-API scores, but they were not nearly as significant as the four noted above. They include:

- The school establishes and enforces policies for student behavior.
- The school actively engages with and supports parents.
- The district and school encourage teacher collaboration and build educator capacity.

Figure 4 above shows the relative magnitudes of the seven effective-schools practices

(or domains) in predicting achievement. Thus, if a school uses assessment data in the ways described above, it is likely to score about 20 points higher on the EL-API and almost 17 points higher on the schoolwide API than a school that does not do so. *However, it is important to emphasize that the numbers cannot be added together.* Because practices in different domains are interrelated, the net effect of a school using all the effective practices listed in the table would be considerably less than the sum of the separate predicted domain effects.

Further Statistical Analysis: Instructional Practices and Test Results for English Learners Only

The surveys of teachers and principals asked several questions related to specific practices and policies for the instruction of EL students that were not analyzed as part of the original *Similar Students, Different Results* study. The researchers analyzed the responses against both CSTs/EL-API (reported above) and English proficiency as measured by CELDT/AMAOs (annual measurable achievement objectives).

For the most part, the specific practices surveyed did not show a relationship to either type of outcome measure, but there were some exceptions. In addition, the researchers noted that some practices that they expected would correlate with school performance did not.

Specific survey responses that relate to EL practices correlated with AMAOs, which measure changes in English proficiency

In California, the CELDT establishes and measures EL students' level of English proficiency. The CELDT evaluates listening and speaking in kindergarten and first grade and listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills for grades 2–12. Students receive an overall proficiency level score and proficiency scores for each of the skill areas.

The state assesses districts based on how well their EL students are moving toward proficiency. They are expected to meet two annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) for their English learners based on CELDT results.

AMAO I measures the percent of students making progress in learning English, and AMAO 2 measures the percent attaining English proficiency. (See the box on the right.) The state also provides school-level AMAO scores.

AMAO results confirm the four main findings of the study

In general, the same four broad, interrelated findings—using assessment data to improve student achievement and instruction; prioritizing student achievement by using measurable and monitored objectives; implementing a coherent, standards-based curriculum, and ensuring availability of instructional resources—that proved to be associated with high performance on the EL-API and other CST measures showed a similar relationship to AMAO I and AMAO 2.

Schools with higher AMAOs were more likely to have used primary language assistance to teach math and to have implemented a new EL program

In addition, the study found that two survey responses specifically related to English learners were positively associated with higher EL-API scores and higher AMAOs:

- Strong schoolwide teacher responses indicating that EL students were taught mathematics with primary language assistance from an instructional aide as well as from the teacher.
- School principals responding that a new EL program had been implemented at the school within the past four years.

Lower AMAO scores were correlated with classroom teachers providing explicit ELD themselves and relying on CELDT as their only ELD assessment

A school was more likely to have lower AMAOs if a large number of its teachers said that they were responsible for explicit ELD instruction either on their own or with other teachers in a team-teaching approach based on the ELD level of the students.

In addition, schools had lower AMAOs if a large number of their teachers reported

The state uses AMAOs (annual measurable achievement objectives) to measure progress in learning English

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Title III provides supplemental funding for programs designed to help English learners and immigrant students attain English proficiency and meet the state's academic content standards. In order to receive Title III funds, states must agree to establish English proficiency standards and measure the annual progress of local education agencies that accept Title III funds (school districts, independently funded charter schools, and county office schools).

In response to these federal rules, California has established English language development progress and proficiency goals called annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs). Based on the CELDT (California English Language Development Test), these measures represent the only clear benchmarks available in California for this purpose. The state voluntarily provides school-level AMAO data that were used for this analysis.

AMAO 1 calculates the percentage of English learners making annual progress on the CELDT

There are three ways for EL students to meet the annual growth target on CELDT depending on what level they were the previous year. CELDT has five levels: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. Students who started at the beginning, early intermediate, and intermediate levels are expected to gain one proficiency level. Those originally at the early advanced or advanced level overall, but with some skills below the intermediate level, are expected to achieve the English proficient level on CELDT. This is defined as early advanced or advanced overall, with all skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) intermediate or above. Those at the English proficient level are expected to maintain that level.

AMAO 2 calculates the percentage of EL students attaining English proficiency on the CELDT

AMAO 2 defines the cohort of EL students who can reasonably be expected to reach the English proficient level on CELDT at the time of the annual assessment. Both an EL student's level the prior year and the length of time they have been enrolled in school are considered.

that they received CELDT assessment data and that they used no other type of ELD assessment for their English learners.

Researchers found it noteworthy that two instructional practices were not correlated with higher scores

Responses to two of the questions regarding EL instructional practices were of particular note to researchers because they did not correlate with school performance:

- The number of daily instructional minutes reported by teachers that the school devotes to explicit ELD.
- The presence in a school of more teachers with CLAD/BCLAD certification.

The number of instructional minutes did not correlate with performance

The State Board of Education (SBE) has recently instructed textbook publishers to include more instructional minutes for English-language-arts-related ELD based on the generally accepted belief that more time will result in better student outcomes. However, this study found no correlation between more minutes and higher EL-API/CST scores or AMAO scores.

More teachers holding CLAD/BCLAD certificates was not related to schools' performance on the EL-API

In California, teachers who obtain a CLAD or BCLAD certificate are trained in ELD and SDAIE. And in this study, schools with teachers who relied on SDAIE to teach math were more likely to have higher EL-API scores. So the researchers found it noteworthy that the presence in a school of more teachers with CLAD/BCLAD certification did not have a relationship to schools' EL-API scores.

Discussion of Findings:
Policies Taking Hold, Importance of Leadership, and More Questions

The analyses in this study suggest that the district-to-school-to-classroom practices and policies taking hold in many California elementary schools correlate with higher EL-API scores in schools serving large proportions of low-income and Spanish-speaking EL students, the researchers say. The findings also highlight the importance of school and district leadership. In addition, the study points to areas for further research in EL instructional practices.

Four key findings from the original Similar Students study are also important for teaching EL students

Notably, the four broad, interrelated practices that differentiated higher-performing from lower-performing schools in the original *Similar Students, Different Results* study also proved to be significant when looking through the lens of the EL-API.

Use of assessment data is important

A school staff's use of assessments and data to inform efforts to improve student achievement makes an important contribution to EL-API scores. In higher-performing schools, teachers and principals reported consistently that principals personally and directly used a variety of student assessment data to work with teachers to improve instruction and individual student achievement; that principals were evaluated by the district based upon improving student achievement at the school, and that student and school results on the CSTs influenced schoolwide instructional priorities. In effect, it appears that EL students benefit when school staffs focus their instructional practice, frequently measure their progress with EL students in multiple ways, and hold themselves accountable for that progress.

Resources matter

As with all other students, resources matter for English learners, the researchers say. The resources that emerged strongly in the findings included: adequate and appropriate textbooks for every student, well-maintained facilities, and the principal's perception that the school's teaching staff has strong teaching skills, academic content knowledge, enthusiasm about teaching, and the ability to raise student achievement.

Coherent, aligned instruction is key

Also strongly correlated with a school's EL-API score was its curriculum and instruction being coherent and aligned with state standards. Teachers in schools with higher EL-API scores were more likely to respond that the focus of their work was on teaching the state's academic content standards in English language arts and math and tightly aligning the entire school's curriculum around that objective.

Student achievement is a priority for principals and teachers

Regarding "prioritizing student achievement," both teachers and principals in higher-performing schools responded more positively that setting measurable student achievement targets—including for student subgroups on the API and AYP—was a high priority.

Four broad, interrelated practices are key with respect to test scores

Taken together, the findings indicate that higher EL academic achievement in California is correlated with schools in which teachers and principals work together to create a focused, achievement-oriented climate, hold each other accountable for the work, are supported by district leadership that ensures resources and expects accountability, and deliberately attend to the school's English learner students as an important part of the effort.

A school's outreach to parents, encouragement of teacher collaboration, and enforcement of positive student behaviors (such as attendance and tolerance) have long been recognized as important contributors to the student and professional culture at a school and to community engagement. The researchers say their analyses indicate that while important to community and making a contribution to student achievement, these are not the most critical features that differentiate higher- from lower-performing schools with respect to scores on the EL-API and CSTs in math and English language arts.

District and school leadership is important in driving change

Although not analyzed as a separate domain in this study, the importance of the school district and the principal in leading and managing school improvement comes through clearly in the responses by teachers and principals about these roles and responsibilities.

Principal leadership is being redefined to focus on effective management of the school improvement process

In general, EL-API scores were higher in schools with principals who indicated that they acted as managers of school improvement—driving the reform process, cultivating the school vision, and extensively using student assessment data to focus on school improvement. This included evaluation of teacher practice and assistance to struggling students. They also were more likely to implement instructional programs to address the needs of EL students.

District leadership, accountability, and support appear to influence EL student achievement as well

Principals in schools with higher EL-API scores also responded strongly and affirmatively to statements that their districts set clear expectations that schools meet API and AYP growth targets, including for subgroups. These principals also said that their districts provided schools with achievement data and evaluated principal performance and teacher practices based on that data. Districts also ensured that math and language arts curricula were aligned with state standards; that instruction was focused on achievement; that schools had adequate facilities and textbooks as well as resources for struggling students, and that they addressed the instructional needs of English learners at their schools.

How English learner instruction is organized is also important

Researchers found it noteworthy that the number of minutes teachers reported devoting to explicit ELD instruction did not correlate with EL-API scores. However, the use of a pull-out program (e.g., with a resource teacher) to deliver ELD instruction correlated positively with the EL-API and with scores on specific achievement tests (the percent of English learners proficient in English language arts and the weighted mean scale score on the English language arts CST).

The study's researchers say that a possible explanation for these findings is that the quality of ELD instruction matters more than a given number of minutes. Quality ELD instruction includes careful consideration of the content, the delivery, the amount and type of scaffolding (support) provided, and constant monitoring of student progress to intervene when needed.

It is reasonable to speculate that when ELD is delivered by a highly qualified specialist in a pull-out program, the classroom teachers are better able to focus their energy on teaching the core academic curriculum.

Over the years, researchers and advocates for EL students have expressed legitimate concern about the use of pull-out programs because these often resulted in EL students being removed from class when core curriculum was being taught. The fact that schools in the sample using pull-out programs for ELD are among those with higher EL-API scores also indicates that the EL students are receiving strong standards-based academic instruction in the core curriculum.

EL students being taught mathematics using ESL or immersion techniques (SDAIE) also correlated with higher EL-API scores. This finding and the one related to the effectiveness of pull-out programs might both be indicative of schools that are attending to the instructional needs of their students in ways that give these students better access to the core academic curriculum. Because these findings are based on results that aggregate individual teacher responses across entire schools, they do not explain how instructional methods used by individual teachers in each classroom correlate to student test scores. Nor do they provide insights into how the practice of individual teachers relates to the dynamics in the school as a whole. These findings point to areas in which further research is likely to be fruitful.

AMAO results and the use of CELDT reinforce these findings

The results based on AMAOs reinforce the finding that having in place an explicit program of instruction for EL students is fundamentally important to their English language development needs. These results also indicate that enhancing EL students' access to and comprehension of core academic subjects, such as math, may benefit their academic language development in English.

This appears to be consistent with the findings related to principals' use of CELDT data (measuring English language proficiency). While a principal's report that CELDT results strongly influenced schoolwide instructional priorities was negatively correlated with schoolwide EL-API, the use of CST results (academic achievement) for the same purpose was positively correlated.

This noteworthy result may reflect the greater attention paid to CELDT data in schools serving students with lower average English proficiency, but it may also reflect an overemphasis on English proficiency as the primary key to EL students' success at the expense of their equally important engagement with and mastery of the core curriculum.

Further, CELDT tests are given in the fall when students' English skills and knowledge may have eroded over the summer. In addition, students new to a school are tested using the test form for the grade they are entering before having been taught that grade's material. And CELDT results often do not come back to the teacher until early February.

The researchers say that these timing issues with CELDT suggest that it is good practice to monitor students' progress in ELD during the year using other assessments (e.g., those that are part of the ELD curriculum

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Changes in the content and performance levels of CELDT result in a smaller percentage of students meeting the benchmark for fluency

In 2006, the state substantially altered the content of CELDT (California English Language Development Test) and set new cut scores for the test's five performance levels—beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced.

In March 2006, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved the new performance-level cut scores for CELDT based on the recommendation of Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell and a standard-setting committee made up of teachers, administrators, and other educational professionals from throughout California.

After these changes were made, a smaller percentage of students in 2006–07 tested "English proficient" than in previous years. "English proficient" is defined as early advanced or advanced overall, with all skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) intermediate or above. In 2006–07, only 29% of test takers scored English proficient, whereas in 2005–06, 44% of the students tested met that benchmark.

In addition to specified CELDT scores, students must meet multiple locally defined criteria—including English CST scores, teacher evaluations, and parent consultation—to be considered for reclassification to fluent English proficient (RFEP).

For more information, go to the following California Department of Education (CDE) website: **www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el**

programs) to better inform teaching practices in a timely way. However, they caution against an interpretation of causality, as it is unlikely that paying attention to CELDT scores, in and of itself, would lower API scores.

A survey by Patricia Gándara and colleagues of about 4,000 teachers who were working in regular classrooms with English learners reinforce this study's findings regarding the use of CELDT. In *Listening to Teachers of English Language Learners* (2005), Gándara reported that teachers said CELDT data did not provide them with "a great deal of useful information of a diagnostic nature, a problem compounded by a reporting timeline that does not allow teachers to plan effectively for instruction."

School and classroom organization deserve a closer look

While there may be multiple interpretations of these findings, they do suggest the importance of looking at how school and classroom organization influences student progress in English language development. It also seems clear that CELDT is limited as an assessment instrument that can guide teachers in their ELD instruction, as evidenced by the finding that teachers who did not use any other ELD assessment exhibited less progress with their EL students' English language development. This may be related to some extent to the timing of CELDT testing and data availability.

The response regarding CLAD/BCLAD was noteworthy

The researchers were interested in the fact that schools with more CLAD/BCLAD certified teachers did not have higher EL-API scores. They theorize that the CLAD/BCLAD survey question may have been problematic because it did not differentiate between the two credentials. It may also reflect weaknesses in the CLAD certification process.

The BCLAD certification process is more rigorous

The study asked how many teachers had either CLAD or BCLAD certificates. By lumping CLAD and BCLAD together, researchers were not able to tease out differences that might occur between teachers holding one certificate versus the other.

Such differences might exist because it is much more difficult to obtain a BCLAD certificate. As the name implies, teachers must be bilingual to qualify. In California, about 6,300 teachers held a bilingual teaching authorization in 2005–06 and provided primary language instruction to English learners. That compares to almost 133,000 who had a CLAD certificate or equivalent and provided ELD or SDAIE services to English learners, according to the California Department of Education's March 2006 Language Census. In order to qualify for a BCLAD, a teacher must:

- Demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the student's native language through a test in that language or alternative means (such as holding a credential with a major in that language), and

- Take two additional tests in English— one in methodology and one in the culture of students who speak that language. These tests are in addition to the test needed to qualify for a CLAD certificate. However, teachers who want to be CLAD or BCLAD-certified can substitute approved course work for the CLAD test. (In an effort to streamline language-related credentialing requirements, in fall 2007, the BCLAD will be combined with California Subject Examinations for Teachers [CSET]: Languages Other Than English examinations.)

In addition, the researchers suggest, teachers who become BCLAD-certified are likely to be interested in teaching English learners. While teachers actively pursue a BCLAD certificate, any teacher with just one English learner in the classroom must have a CLAD certificate or similar training. (See the box on page 15.) And districts can require teachers to earn a CLAD certificate even if they have no English learners in their classes.

CLAD programs vary and may not be sufficient preparation

The researchers also suspect that no relationship to schools' EL-API scores surfaced because the content and approach of CLAD certification programs is uneven. The training most teachers receive may not be sufficient to make a difference in student test scores, the researchers say.

Researchers further suggest that having a CLAD certification may not sufficiently prepare a teacher for teaching explicit ELD. This is consistent with another finding from the study in which a higher percentage of the teachers who reported having CLAD/BCLAD certificates also cited "instructional strategies for EL students" as one of their highest professional development priorities.

The state also appears to be responding to some concerns about the CLAD process. The three CLAD tests required for the certificate have been phased out in favor of the new CTEL (California Teacher of English Learners) test. According to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), the new CTEL test "reflects changes in policy, research, and theoretical practices for instruction of English learners." First introduced in fall 2005, the CTEL test was not offered when researchers were collecting teacher survey responses for this study.

Implications of Findings:
Policy and Practice Related to English Learners in California

In California's elementary schools, a large portion of students come to school needing to learn English. The majority of those students come from families that speak Spanish as their primary language and from homes in which parent education levels and literacy levels are often low. State data show that these students face considerable challenges to performing at high levels on the state's tests of academic achievement. The EL-API made it possible to not only examine schools' effectiveness in helping these students succeed, but to also extend the analysis previously done for the *Similar Students, Different Results* study to hone in on the

school practices that correlate positively with higher performance among EL students.

A school's API score reflects how well its students are performing on the annual CSTs. This one set of tests is limited and is not the only way for a school to measure how well students are mastering California's rigorous academic content standards nor the only valid measure of school effectiveness. But an elementary school's API score does provide the state and the public with a consistent and easy way to grasp information about the progress its students are making toward mastering the important math, reading, and writing skills that will enable them to succeed academically in later grades. For this reason and others related to accountability, a school's API and EL-API scores represent important measures of student learning.

Across California, schools serving similar types of student populations can vary widely in how well they score on the API. The 237 elementary schools *in the sample* that this research team studied (serving 127,335 K–5 students) were drawn from a fairly narrow band in terms of student demographics. Yet their 2005 EL-API scores varied by as much as 256 points. (*All elementary schools* in the 25th–35th percentile band on the SCI varied by 303 points.)

The range of API scores in the study's sample suggests that while the socioeconomic background of students is one predictor of academic achievement, it is not the sole predictor. What schools do—and what resources they have to do it with—can make a difference. Higher EL-API scores are found most often in the sample schools that are working to implement the four broad, interrelated practices identified in this study.

California's standards-based reforms appear to support EL student achievement

It is good news that when school practices and policies aligned with California's academic standards are intensely implemented—with regard to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and monitoring progress—they contribute to higher school performance for English learner students

Teachers can earn a CLAD certificate or equivalent in several ways

The CLAD program trains teachers to provide ELD instruction and SDAIE. In addition, teachers in these certificate programs are expected to learn about culture in general and its role in education. Unlike the BCLAD, the CLAD certificate does not require fluency in a second language.

Teachers with a California teaching credential who received their bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university can earn a CLAD certificate in a variety of ways through programs offered by districts, county offices of education, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), and colleges and universities.

Teachers can earn a CLAD certificate by choosing *one* of the following options:

- Take 12 semester units of upper-division college course work (or 24 units of lower-division course work) that covers language structure and use, assessment and methods of instruction for English learners, and culturally inclusive instruction.
- Pass the California Teachers of English Language (CTEL) test.
- Possess a supplementary authorization in English as a Second Language (not issued since June 1996) and complete three semester units of college course work in the theories and methods of SDAIE.

(Note that teachers who do not have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university must meet a second language requirement in another way. See **www.ctc.ca.gov** for other options.)

Some teachers are authorized to teach English learners without a CLAD certificate

Many California teachers completed courses and content in ELD and SDAIE as part of their regular credential program and are authorized to teach English learners provided their credentials bear a CLAD emphasis or English learner authorization. (If they want to become bilingual teachers, however, they would still need to be BCLAD-certified.)

Further, teachers who possess a Certificate of Completion of Staff Development can incorporate ELD methodology during instruction in their classrooms. But they cannot teach an ELD class in a departmentalized setting. To earn the certificate, the teacher must have taken 45 hours or equivalent of specific training by a school district or county office of education prior to Jan. 1, 2000 or by the CCTC after Jan. 1, 2000. In addition, they must have taken nine semester units of upper-division college course work that covers methodology of bilingual instruction, instruction for ELD and SDAIE, and culture and cultural diversity. (The opportunity to earn this certificate ends on Jan. 1, 2008.)

just as they do for all students. This assumes, of course, that adequate resources are also available at the school, including experienced and credentialed teachers who have appropriate skills, content knowledge, and enthusiasm. The implementation of these practices and the availability of these resources seem to occur most often when the school district and the principal actively support and oversee the hard work of implementing and evaluating school change.

One implication for state education policy is to stay the course with its reforms and to continue to ensure that curriculum

programs and state standards tests are well aligned with the state's academic standards. While this is an important foundation, the ways in which the specific needs of EL students can be met within the framework need further illumination. Thus, in many ways, the task has only begun.

Districts play a strong role in school improvement efforts

Another implication is that if districts play a strong role in initiating school change and facilitating its implementation, then state policymakers should consider giving more

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support to districts in this role. This might mean providing them with better assessment and other data on their students in easy-to-access formats. It might also mean supporting professional development for district administrators and board members on data analysis, implementation of curriculum at the school level, and best EL instructional practices from comparable districts with higher EL-API scores.

Third, state policymakers should also be aware that California has the highest pupil-to-school administrator ratio in the country. Finding out what additional support is needed for principals to do this challenging work is critical for administrative credential programs and professional development. The 237 principals answering the surveys ranked "using assessment data" as their number one professional development priority (54%), but "training and instructional strategies for EL students" was a close second (47%).

Teachers need more help improving EL instruction and more information about what works

A final implication relates to teacher preparation and professional development. The top priorities for professional development identified by elementary teachers were more training in the English language arts and math programs, in specific strategies for working with English learners, and in explicit English language development. This study's findings suggest that these could indeed yield significant benefits for EL students.

Knowing what additional services and resources make a difference for English learners is a complex question. While a substantial body of research exists about this, it provides few clear answers.

This study suggests some possibilities related to specific EL instructional practices, but they require further exploration to fully understand how and why they appear to be correlated with higher EL-API and CST scores. In addition, while there may be multiple interpretations of what these findings mean in regard to instructional approaches for English learners, they do suggest the clear importance of paying attention to school and classroom organization in influencing student progress in English language development.

To sum up, the analysis indicates that districts and schools should focus first and foremost on establishing a strong foundation of excellent, coherent schoolwide practices related to the core standards-based curriculum, on assessing and monitoring student academic achievement, and on providing the adequate resources schools need to do this work. These standards-based, effective-schools practices appear to benefit the academic achievement of low-income, Spanish-speaking EL students in California just as they do other students in the school. Further, thoughtful attention to delivering ELD instruction and evaluating its effectiveness—informed by evidence-based best practices—will continue to be important. ▦