

English Language Learners and the Local Control Funding Formula

Implementation Challenges and Successes
from Two District Cases

Eduardo Muñoz-Muñoz



February 2020

English Language Learners and the Local Control Funding Formula: Implementation Challenges and Successes from Two District Cases

Eduardo Muñoz-Muñoz, San José State University



Acknowledgements

This report was funded and produced by Pivot Learning, in collaboration with PACE. Thank you to the Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation, whose generous support has made this report possible. We wish to thank district leaders who participated in this project as well as experts who shared their expertise and perspectives, including Tina Cheuk, Vinci Daro, and Diana Gabriela Mercado-Garcia. We also thank Rebecca Eiseman for providing research support throughout this project. This report, like all PACE publications, has been thoroughly reviewed for factual accuracy and research integrity, and we thank this publication's reviewers. The authors assume full responsibility for the accuracy of the report contents.

Executive Summary

When then-Governor Jerry Brown signed the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) into law in 2013, California's leaders were hopeful that this legislation would set high expectations for flexibility, transparency, and equity within school districts. A key component of the legislation was to allow districts more flexibility to make spending decisions as they saw fit to serve their students. This report investigates how two districts—Los Banos Unified School District in the Central Valley and Chino Valley Unified School District in the Inland Empire—have been able to use the flexibility of the LCFF to serve students who are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). Examined data include the districts' Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs), local ELL policies, and interview data on how local actors have undertaken their budgeting charge with regards to ELLs.

We find that in Los Banos Unified School District, the LCFF has allowed for the creation of dialogue and advocacy spaces that did not exist before. In Chino Valley Unified School District, the plasticity of governance structures has allowed for the development of internal coherence. Therefore, while their work is still in flux, both districts showcase instances in which ELLs are benefitting from locally devised mechanisms and structures aimed at improving their education. Looking ahead, we note the following:

- LCAP stakeholder engagement is critical for delivering the promise of the LCFF.
- Re-envisioning the LCAP instrument is necessary for meaningful stakeholder engagement.
- LCAPs promote equity initiatives but can take a pace slower than that of educational reformers.
- Equity and meaningful stakeholder engagement call for explicit connections between LCAP funds and ELLs.
- Advocates on the ground are key. In both districts, the appointment of leaders in charge of ELL services has had a direct impact on the quantity and quality of services provided to ELLs and their families through LCFF funds.

The Local Control Funding Formula: Raising Equity Expectations

Over the past 6 years, California has been setting a remarkable example nationally with its bold-approach, equity-oriented Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) budgeting system. Signed into law in 2013 by then-Governor Jerry Brown, the new law set high expectations for flexibility, transparency, and equity by bringing decision-making processes to those who may know best by being closest to the students who need the most. In following his application of the principle of “subsidiarity,” as many decision-making tasks as possible should be carried out at the lowest level in the organization: school districts or schools. Brown and former State Board President Michael Kirst remained loyal to this idea until the end of their terms and it has to this day the support of the Newsom administration and local educational leaders in general.

The previous categorical system established separate sources of funds intended for specific purposes and populations, and a strict centralizing accountability that fostered a stifling climate of compliance. No Child Left Behind’s push for accountability exacerbated the pressure with an array of punitive consequences for districts and schools should they fail to meet performance goals. The ability of this older funding system to respond to the ecology of local actors, their politics, and their needs was compromised by a climate of bureaucratic checklists and lines that could not be crossed. In reference to the institutionalization of the categorical approach, the centralized ethos, and its lasting legacy in the present, López (2019) eloquently writes that “undoing 40 years of prescriptive centralized school finance and decades long eras of high stakes accountability has arguably inhibited the imagination or risk taking among some educational actors” (p. 153). Accordingly, critical components such as community engagement have been left to the idiosyncratic interpretations that local leaders could make of democratic engagement and educational equity. In the case of English Language Learner (ELL) representation, the “advisory” nature of the District English Learner Advisory Committees (DELACs)¹ was de facto emphasized.

The LCFF has been ambitious in its decentralizing move, turning the page on categorical funding and pushing its vision to provide additional resources to specific underserved populations (low-income students, foster youth, and ELLs). The specific LCFF-funded actions are collected in every district’s Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), developed in three-year cycles, updated yearly, and overseen by the County Offices of Education. Community engagement is mandated and the DELAC’s input must be collected. The LCFF’s invitation to create contextually appropriate educational solutions and its determined commitment to support specific populations through a weighted

¹ DELACs are required when a district has 51 or more ELLs; under California Education Code they are to review and comment on Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs). For more information see www.cde.ca.gov/ta/cr/delac.asp.

formula makes us wonder how local decision makers are answering this call for budget equity and creativity and overcoming the inertia of rigid funding.

To be sure, funding levels remain insufficient and hinder the efforts of educators, and there is work to be done in maximizing the impact of LCFF dollars on the educational opportunities of their intended populations. Acknowledging this widely discussed issue, we address the lasting heritage of categorical budgeting practices and mindsets by posing this question: How are local stakeholders perceiving and engaging in the process of developing solutions to distinct ELL issues with more flexibility in allocation of resources? In this qualitative project, we focus specifically on ELLs, one of the three subpopulations supported by additional funds, given the multilevel barriers this group often faces (e.g., lack of instructional supports for students and obstacles to local political representation among parents) and the well documented history of resource inequities faced by ELLs (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010).

ELLs in California and the Current Policy Landscape

Based on California Department of Education data, approximately 19 percent of the students enrolled in California (close to 1.2 million students) are designated ELLs (California Department of Education, n.d.-e). More than two thirds of these students are in the elementary grades; a little over 80 percent have Spanish as their primary language. While the number of ELLs surpassed 1.5 million in the 2000s, ELL enrollment has slightly declined over the last 9 years to its current levels.² However, this should not depict a diminished portrait of California’s multilingualism, its cultural and linguistic assets, and the educational challenges posed, since at least 41 percent of the students (more than 2.5 million students) in California have been designated ELLs or have fluencies in languages other than English (i.e., Fluent English Proficient [FEP] students).

Besides the LCFF, two additional recent policy milestones have come to define California’s pathway to supporting ELLs and its official position towards multilingualism. First, in November 2016 California voters passed—with 73.52 percent support—Proposition 58, which repealed the most substantial and controversial aspects of 1998’s Proposition 227, the first in a national series of English-only policies (California Department of Education, n.d.-a). In sociological terms, it is plausible to argue that Prop 58 captured a dominant opinion among Californians that multilingualism is a sought-after benefit for children’s development. In practical terms, it lifted the obstacles to the growth of popular

² Select ‘state’ for level and ‘English Learners’ for subject on the California Department of Education website (<https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>). Select ‘Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status (ELAS)’ and ‘Grade’ in different years for comparison. Time series graph available for years 2015 and earlier.

dual immersion programs. Second, in 2018 the Board of Education unanimously approved the California ELL Roadmap as the policy that not only encapsulates the multilingual momentum from Prop 58 but also defines the pedagogical approaches necessary for supporting ELLs across the state (California Department of Education, n.d.-d). In observing the ELL Roadmap's fourth principle—alignment within and across systems—districts would align their LCAP actions with the sound pedagogical and organizational principles embedded in this ELL policy landscape. As part of the ELL Roadmap's implementation, the California Department of Education has developed a matrix with a correspondence between ELL principles and state priority areas: the Crosswalk to LCAP (California Department of Education, n.d.-c).

What We Know So Far: The New Budgeting Framework and Its Impact on ELLs

The values and concepts undergirding the LCFF are inspiring for stakeholders across the board. However, in practice there is a tension between its accomplishments focusing attention on underserved populations and critiques with regards to how its distinguishing features are enacted across the state. For example, shortcomings on critical priorities—such as meaningful stakeholder input gathering, efficient communication with communities, and linkage between funds and the populations they are intended to serve—have been documented in policy briefs and other publications (Olsen et al., 2016).

A 2018 report issued in partnership between the Center for Equity for English Learners at Loyola Marymount University and Californians Together, entitled “Masking the Focus on English Learners: The Consequences of California’s Accountability System Dashboard Results on Year 4 Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)” took a critical stance towards the ELL accountability system, the use of the ELL category in dashboard performance reports, and the influences these may have on how local communities developed their LCAPs. Important commonalities can be drawn between this publication and the 2018 technical report “State Policies to Advance English Learners’ Experiences and Outcomes in California Schools,” authored by Ilana Umansky as part of the Getting Down to Facts II compendium (2018). This report highlighted the chasm between ELL diversity and needs and the actual policy framework, which leads to issues with equitable access and lack of rigorous instruction fitting those needs.

Researchers Vasquez Heilig, Romero, and Hopkins (2017) have been particularly vocal in supporting the spirit of the LCFF as a counterbalance to the centralization and accountability excesses of the No Child Left Behind era. However, based on their analysis of a sample of LCAPs, they also offer a critical warning about the potential missed

opportunity in truly advancing the interests of ELLs by engaging the community, as intended in the bottom-up, democratizing thrust of the law.

More recently a 2019 special issue of the *Peabody Journal of Education* has echoed some of the concerns in the field, such as the impact of the LCFF on educational outcomes for ELLs (e.g., Contreras & Fujimoto, 2019, on college readiness for ELLs). Zarate and Gándara (2019) warn about the conflation/confounding of targeted populations and the need for a finer-grained tracing of funds; they even consider the “riskier” proposal of duplicating student counts (thus potentially reducing category ambiguity and allowing districts to connect funds and target students). In contrast to the inspiring article by Carruba-Rogel et al. (2019) on Latinx parents rising to occupy their legitimate role in providing input for funding determinations, Porras (2019) offers a more sobering account of barriers for Latina mothers that illustrates a consistent theme of inequitable representation and community engagement.

The Study: Approach and Methodology

The present report uses data from research undertaken to address how stakeholders (from superintendents to parents) are experiencing the flexibility, accountability, and equity of the LCFF when supporting ELLs, and whether/how they perceive the current budget framework as stimulating creative solutions for ELL needs. As such, our research aims to shed light on some experiences that complement what is already known through articles and policy reports published in recent years (e.g., by the *Getting Down to Facts II* project). The elaboration of the two case studies presented here captures a plurality of voices and fine-grained details about the specific contexts of the participants and their successes, struggles, and expectations.

The report focuses on two school districts: a large suburban district, Chino Valley Unified School District, and a moderately large district in a rural setting, Los Banos Unified School District. These districts’ profiles mirror those of many other districts in California. Los Banos’s ELL population is substantial but in Chino Valley is much more limited. Having more than 55 percent of its population within the LCFF’s target student categories, only Los Banos received supplemental LCFF funds, which adds a distinctive factor to the study. Adding to the significance of these districts in a study on LCFF implementation, medium- and large-sized districts’ top leaderships have been generally more supportive of the LCFF concept and process (Marsh & Koppich, 2018), which could hypothetically make these districts more fertile ground in which to find instances of budget creativity. On the other hand, larger size may also increase bureaucracy and the operational efficiency of organizations. This study has acknowledged this tension in considering the Chino Valley and Los Banos USDs.

Table 1. Demographics of Chino Valley USD and Los Banos USD

	Chino Valley USD	Los Banos USD
Total Enrollment³	28,063	11,075
ELLs⁴ (percentage)	11	29
Low Socioeconomic Status⁵ (percentage)	47	78
Redesignated Fluent English Proficient⁶ (percentage)	21	12
ELLs Who Met or Exceeded ELA Standards⁷ (percentage)	21	10
ELLs Who Met or Exceeded Math Standards⁸ (percentage)	25	8
Unduplicated Populations⁹ (percentage)	49	79
Students Who Received the Seal of Biliteracy¹⁰	155	N/A

Data collection and analysis included review of each district’s LCAPs, their ELL Master Plans, and other documents pertaining to the engagement of ELL families or the strategic vision of the administration, when available. The documents were compiled and analyzed prior to conducting interviews and focus groups with personnel identified by the district as decision makers in the LCAP process. Additionally, focus groups and interviews were conducted with parents and leaderships on each district’s DELAC. A thematic analysis across the data sources was conducted to triangulate and validate the trends and findings in each setting. Ultimately, stakeholder validation was sought from the participants, who had the opportunity to provide feedback about the report prior to publication.

³ Select ‘district’ for level and ‘enrollment’ for subject on the California Department of Education website (<https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>). Select year 2018–19 and district name.

⁴ Select ‘district’ for level and ‘English Learners’ for subject on the California Department of Education website (<https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>). Select year 2018–19 and district name.

⁵ Select ‘district’ and then type the district name into the search on the California Department of Education website (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sdprofile/details.aspx>). Report shows 2018–19 data.

⁶ Select ‘county’ and ‘district,’ then ‘go’ on the Ed-Data website (<https://www.ed-data.org/district>). Use 2017–18 data (most recent year).

⁷ Select ‘county’ and ‘district,’ then ‘go’ on the Ed-Data website (<https://www.ed-data.org/district>). Expand ‘performance’ section. Select ‘CAASPP ELA/Literacy Results for English Learners.’ Use 2017–18 data (most recent year).

⁸ Select ‘county’ and ‘district,’ then ‘go’ on the Ed-Data website (<https://www.ed-data.org/district>). Expand ‘performance’ section. Select ‘CAASPP Mathematics Results for English Learners.’ Use 2017–18 data (most recent year).

⁹ Select ‘county’ and ‘district,’ then ‘go’ on the Ed-Data website (<https://www.ed-data.org/district>). Use 2017–18 data (most recent year).

¹⁰ View 2017–18 List of Districts and Schools Participating under ‘Participating Schools and Districts’ tab on the California Department of Education website (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbiliteracy.asp>).

Case Study 1: Chino Valley Unified School District, Building Coherence and Maximizing Community Engagement

Chino Valley USD: A Snapshot

As of 2018–19 Chino Valley USD, in San Bernardino County, served approximately 28,000 students in Chino, Chino Hills, and a portion of Ontario, east of Los Angeles. Latinx is the biggest ethnic group, with almost 16,000 students, followed by Asian and White with approximately 4,500 students each. 43 percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunch; 11 percent (or 3,140) are designated ELLs. The district's Unduplicated Pupil Percentage is 49.40.¹¹

Chino Valley USD comprises 35 traditional public schools, of which 5 are high schools. Nineteen schools are identified as Title I (Chino Valley Unified School District, n.d.); seventeen are California Distinguished Schools (California Department of Education, n.d.-b), with two receiving the accolade in 2019. The most recent survey boasts 88 percent of parents stating that schools provide high quality learning for all students and 82 percent of parents feeling informed about school activities and events. With regards to language acquisition levels, 34.7 percent of ELLs' English falls under the moderately developed category and 39.9 percent rank as well developed, leaving the remaining 25.4 percent in the two bottom tiers, somewhat developed and beginning stage (California School Dashboard, n.d.). However, while 58 percent of the general population met or exceeded the standard in English Language Arts (ELA) in the 2017–18 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAAASP), only 21 percent of the ELL subgroup reached that mark. The gap narrows in mathematics, with 46 percent meeting or exceeding the standard among the general population, versus 25 percent among ELLs.¹²

Norm Enfield, Ed.D., has served as the superintendent of the district since 2018 after acting as deputy superintendent for 4 years and an even longer trajectory in different administrative positions in the district. As he started his tenure, he expressed public support for the LCAP, messaging its benefits for all students, and embraced a collaborative leadership style. Services for ELLs in Chino Valley USD are part of an overarching department, the Access and Equity Department, which also addresses the needs of low-income and foster youth.

¹¹ Each student who falls into one or more of the following categories is counted as an unduplicated student: ELL students, students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and foster youth. For the formula to obtain the percentage used for the LCFF, see the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/lcffffaq.asp#CALPADS>).

¹² Select 'county' and 'district,' then 'go' on the Ed-Data website (<https://www.ed-data.org/district>). Use 2017–18 data (most recent year).

Chino Valley USD: What the 2018 LCAP Says

An overall graduation rate increase from 93.4 to 95.5 percent is presented in the LCAP as a significant instance of progress, together with an increase of 25 and 45.5 points in the ELA and mathematics academic indicators respectively. With regards to greatest needs, the document states that no overall performance indicator is either orange or red in the California Dashboard but identifies the multitiered subsystems of support at all levels as a permanent focus area. Concerning ELLs, there is a mention of the graduation rate increase and improvement with regards to the suspension indicator in the California Dashboard, from yellow to green. ELLs are not explicitly identified in the performance gaps.

The 260 pages of Chino Valley's LCAP provide a comprehensive variety of services for unduplicated populations that addresses both the needs for academic performance and the conditions of learning. Thus the LCAP comprises actions concerning the implementation of new ELA and English Language Development (ELD) curricula; professional development for all K–12 teachers who serve ELLs—and specifically integrated ELD professional development for content area teachers at the secondary level; support provided by coaches and intervention specialists; and emphasis on college and career preparation services such as AVID, as well as supports for youth who are at risk due to behavioral issues. Further, the conditions for learning are supported by means of the HOPE Community Center; bilingual clerks where non-English speaking populations exceed 14 percent of enrollment; community–school coordinators; and health supports such as nurses in schools. Of particular relevance is the funding of the position of Equity and Access Coordinator, in charge of coordinating the professional development and services for ELLs within the district structure. In sum, Chino Valley lists 59 actions that address ELL needs, though only 4 are exclusively targeted to support ELLs. Of specific relevance are the provision of professional development in elementary and secondary schools (covered by Titles I and III); the 30–45 minutes of Designated English Language Development instruction (part of mandated instruction in the regular daily schedule, \$0 cost); and the position of Access and Equity Coordinator.

Chino Valley has an extensive plan for stakeholder engagement. Besides survey engagement gathering more than 17,000 comments and input from 2,300 individual stakeholders, the district hosted in the academic year 2018–19 seven DELAC and LCAP committee meetings; six meetings with students; and LCAP meetings taking place in 31 of the 35 sites in the district. Further, additional meetings were held with district staff as well as the classified and certificated unions.

Chino Valley USD: What Stakeholders Say

Chino Valley has learned from and capitalized on the experiences of 6 years of LCAP. Administrators are thus coming to realize the connection between site plans and the LCAP in ways that are guiding their actions to be evidence based and coordinated, not haphazard. Coherence, therefore, is a critical attribute of the Chino Valley LCAP process. According to Associate Superintendent Grace Park, Ed.D.: “The LCAP is now a district function, not a function isolated to one specific office,” which has led to increased levels of interdepartmental collaboration. Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Julian Rodriguez agreed, stating that “it has become difficult to stay isolated. Every action is analyzed as to who in which department is working on what, to build collaboration.” Accordingly, department directors meet at least twice a month to discuss LCAP components. Stressing intentionality, Park emphasized that “in our district, the LCAP is the strategic plan of the district, there is not a separate plan, and it is aligned from the Board all the way down.”

Coherence was also a common theme in interviews with school principals and other administrators. In the words of one of the main LCAP leads in the district, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, Innovation, and Support Lea Fellows, “site administrators are continuing to acquire LCAP knowledge” as the LCAP rollout continues to be more systematic and the guiding principles of the LCFF get deeper roots in the district. Fellows attributed this organizational progress to the collaborative culture in the district and the significant effort to communicate with stakeholders, administrators, unions, and parents alike. A former ELL and multifaceted educator, she drew on her own experience working with families to say that the efforts are now also guided towards members of the extended family: “30 or 40 years on we are now finally engaging not just the parents of ELLs but also relatives who want to be involved in the student’s education.” Efforts are taken to train site leaders in the engagement of families in the process, and the DELAC and English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings are listed actions in the LCAP to signal that these are an expectation. Several DELAC parents confirmed these impressions and reasserted the importance of parental engagement. Phil Lu, a parent with 3 years of LCAP involvement, explained that “the effects of LCAP can be felt in each school because each school is different and has different needs.”

With regards to the issue of tracking funds and impacting intended populations, it is acknowledged that services often affect multiple populations, as reflected by the fact that most of the district’s supplemental- or concentration-funded actions identify low-income students, ELLs, and foster youth as impacted. However, the administrators interviewed confirmed that there is data monitoring and that identifiable intervention specialists and coaches support ELLs.

While the district leadership works to ensure that specific actions are aligned with relevant and current data, participants in our research leveled a common critique at the LCAP template as cumbersome. The document is perceived as disjointed and not streamlined into actions and specific outcomes. LCAPs do not fulfill, to any extent, the expectation of transparency or readability for any parent. Enacting its own creativity in response to stakeholder input, the district has developed an LCAP “mini version,” which is regularly used in community events. Parents of ELLs can engage in more than a hundred workshops through one of the LCAP-funded actions: the award winning HOPE Community Center, which tries to break barriers and build bridges across linguistic and cultural differences in perceptions of schooling. Parents who participated in the focus group for this research ranked parent participation along with program and process understanding as a top priority moving forward. “Not enough parents are aware of the importance and implications of LCAP,” lamented Lu, who has personally built a network of fellow parents spanning three schools in the district and encourages them to participate.

The general sense among administrators and parents is that current funding levels are insufficient. As mentioned earlier, Chino Valley does not receive concentration funds, which limits the leverage available to impact a district of this size and demographics. Were more resources available, participants communicated that what would make the most significant difference would be to engage teachers in additional professional development and design of materials to support ELLs so that connections can be made among curricula, depth of knowledge, and students’ engagement and linguistic competence. This, participants believed, would foster teachers’ pedagogical expertise versus merely content knowledge of their subject matter. Ultimately, says Fellows, “teacher development and changes in the classroom drive district excellence.”

Looking into the future, Chino Valley leaders want to live up to the expectations set by the ELL Roadmap and, as such, they have implemented the Seal of Biliteracy. The district is planning on opening a Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program in 2 years, with a campaign to garner broader community interest planned for the upcoming year. Underscoring comments and input reflected in the LCAP, the parents in the focus group united in advocating for multilingualism and dual immersion, stressing how beneficial this would be for their students’ future opportunities.

Case Study 2: Los Banos Unified School District, Transforming Culture and Advancing Equity

Los Banos USD: A Snapshot

Los Banos Unified School District is located in Merced County at the heart of California's Central Valley. Its twelve schools serve an increasing student population that reached 11,075 in 2018–19. The Unduplicated Pupil Percentage is 79 percent, with 8,300 students qualifying as free/reduced lunch and 3,200 designated as ELLs. Accordingly, with regards to funding, the district received \$11 million in concentration funds in the year 2018–19.

The heavily skewed ethnic makeup of the district is noteworthy. The majority of the enrollment is identified as Latinx: 9,166 students (83 percent),¹³ most of whom are native Spanish speakers. On the 2017–18 CAASPP, only 10 percent and 8 percent of ELLs met or exceeded expectations in ELA and mathematics, respectively, compared to 38 percent and 23 percent among the general population.¹⁴

With a background in special education spanning over 30 years, Dr. Mark Marshall has served as Los Banos superintendent since 2017. An advocate for a holistic/wraparound approach to students, Marshall has been successful in developing a partnership with the community and with the passage of Measure X, which will allow for the construction of a new elementary school.

Los Banos USD: What the LCAP Says

Los Banos's LCAP showcases its graduation rate (96 percent in 2016–17) as evidence of progress, along with growth in reading indicators in lower elementary. In general, suspensions and expulsions appear as the most significant concern; the district is looking for root causes and addressing issues with restorative justice and positive behavioral interventions. A similar interest in building a supportive environment is displayed in the actions aimed at finding reasons for staff turnover. Academically, the disparity between the overall graduation rate and the rate of students with disabilities (81.3 percent) appears as the greatest need.

¹³ Select 'district' for level and 'enrollment' for subject on the California Department of Education website (<https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>). Select year 2018–19.

¹⁴ Select 'county' and 'district,' then 'go' on the Ed-Data website (<https://www.ed-data.org/district>). Expand 'performance' section. Use 2017–18 data (most recent year).

The document soon highlights the needs of ELLs, with the district vowing to provide additional professional development and assessment to track progress in this area. The Los Banos LCAP identifies quantifiable progress targets with regards to ELLs. For example, acknowledging the lack of mandated designated ELD instruction, the LCAP has determined a yearly increase of 10 percent in classrooms implementing designated ELD, to reach 70 percent over 3 years. The group of students reaching levels of English proficiency required for reclassification is expected to reach 39 percent by 2019–20. Similarly, goals are set with regards to the participation of parents in surveys (which experienced a 59 percent increase in the year 2017–18), specifically with regards to the involvement of ELL parents in the DELAC. Such efforts seem to be paying off with an increase of 16 percent attendance rate in the year 2018–19.

Among the actions contained in the 130-page document, ELLs are directly impacted by nine, five of which target them specifically. ELLs are to benefit from the implementation of a specific curriculum; the collaboration of teachers in the design of units; professional development for teachers; and the use of Rosetta Stone software. Additionally, the implementation of the state mandated English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) is listed as an action with \$0 cost. As in the case of Chino Valley, the actions include the position of a coordinator in charge of professional development and supporting ELL services across the district. In conjunction with the other unduplicated groups, ELLs also benefit from truancy prevention support, the Challenge Day program, academic tutoring, and parental education.

Los Banos USD: What Stakeholders Say

The district has undergone a series of transformations over recent years, with a new superintendent and the LCAP-funded position of ELL Coordinator (now held by Nancy Velador), which have led not only to compliance in ELL services but also to a renewed sense of community. In a rural district such as Los Banos, the people in these two positions are very familiar with what happens on the ground, enabling them to be resourceful and establish clear, direct connections between the LCAP and school impact. When they arrived, scores for ELLs were low and there were challenges in aligning supports with evidence of academic performance. The district leadership's commitment to advancing towards equity for ELLs is reflected in the gradual milestones for ELL progress set forth in the LCAP.

As a former ELL and longtime educator with much experience in challenging educational settings in Southern California, Velador is an ardent advocate for asset-oriented pedagogies and the appreciation of multilingualism, which align with the spirit of the ELL Roadmap. However, such changes—culture and mindset shifts—require time and the development of trusting professional relationships. Velador wears many hats, from

providing a considerable amount of professional development (in Common Core, writing, technology, etc.) to coordinating parent engagement committees. Making a cornerstone of her mission to provide professional development to all district stakeholders, from administrators to paraprofessionals and parents, serves several goals. She feels that, in doing so, she is supporting not only an increase in instructional rigor but also a cross-cultural understanding among the professional educators and the Latinx population in the district. Both the LCAP and the ELL Master Plan, which has undergone revisions, are part of a coordinated process to advance the cause for equity in the district by setting goals and transforming the professional culture around ELLs. For Los Banos, the LCAP is allowing for public and open goal setting as well as much needed progress towards equity in which every percentage point counts.

The LCAP in Los Banos USD is leading to perceived increases in equity and accountability. Chief Academic Officer, a new position starting in the year 2019–20, will increase instructional and ELL-data-driven awareness among the leadership and allow for a needed articulation between the top district leadership and the day-to-day operations of Velador and school educators. The ELL Coordinator will then be able to focus on amplifying successes, such as bringing more awareness of the ELL Roadmap to classroom teachers and building upon the soaring ELL parent engagement in the DELAC: from single digit parent attendance, Velador’s leadership and relationship-building approach have raised the numbers to a current average of 55 parents; she hopes to reach the 75 mark in the upcoming year.

Examining the Experience, Looking Forward

The budget and implementation creativity we sought in this research acquired multiple complementary meanings over the course of the study: in Chino Valley, the plasticity of structures permitted by the LCFF has allowed for the development of internal coherence; in Los Banos, it has allowed for the creation of dialogue and advocacy spaces that did not exist before. While their work is still in flux, both districts showcase instances in which ELLs are benefitting from locally devised mechanisms and structures to improve the education that they provide.

There Is Hope for LCAP Stakeholder Engagement

The intrinsic value of creativity and innovation should be judged against the backdrop of its ecological context. For example, while researchers and advocates have long been arguing for parental involvement in school decision-making, it is now in the context of the LCAP that Chino Valley has embraced a comprehensive strategy of stakeholder communication and embarked on a campaign that has multiplied potential

participation venues. Specifically, the district has proactively taken LCAP input gathering events to almost all of their school sites and has devoted resources to ensuring that site administrators' understanding of the LCAP process—and engagement with it—is coherent with the district's efforts. Supported by the favorable policy push of the LCFF, Los Banos has seen its level of DELAC engagement substantially increase, allowing the district to set even more ambitious levels of participation for the near future. The confidence that ELL families are placing in the process can certainly be reinforced and expanded when districts communicate the implications of and actions taken after stakeholder input, as in the case of Chino Valley and Los Banos.

Re-envisioning and Contextualizing the LCAP Instrument to Deliver Its Promise

While there is an ongoing process in Sacramento to review the LCAP template, it remains jargon filled, making the document difficult to engage with for parents and community members. In this respect, Chino Valley has followed suit with initiatives such as the user-oriented experiences collected in the LCFF Test Kitchen (Knudson, 2019) in developing its own accessible, user-friendly LCAP companion. Beyond compliance with the mandated LCAP parent overview, adopted by the State Board of Education in 2019, districts have much to gain from developing documents that align with the communicative practices of their communities—including, but not limited to, the translation of documents to their ELLs' primary languages.

The LCAP as an Equity Trigger

The changes inspired by the spirit of creativity require careful consideration of the cultural transformations of organizations and communities, which often take a pace slower than that of educational reformers' drive. Thus, while the seemingly necessary process of adopting a specific curriculum may be a given for some districts, it may take careful relationship building and intentional training for others. Transcending the narrow focus of forceful compliance, Los Banos has embarked on the process of providing more equitable supports for its large ELL population in line with ELL Roadmap policy: adopting and implementing curriculum; increasing instructional orientation among the leadership; and growing DELAC attendance are but a few examples of a coordinated and intentional cultural change. Such progressive movement is triggered by the LCAP process and supported by the accountability targets set in its narrative. When asked about what they could do if they were given access to more resources, participants from both Chino Valley and Los Banos were unequivocal in highlighting specific professional development for educators of ELLs. Pending an increase in funding, the LCFF process brings them closer to realizing this growth vision, which is well aligned with the ELL Roadmap framework, with research, and with the expectations of ELL advocates.

Connecting LCAP Funds and ELLs

As has been discussed elsewhere (Lavadenz et al., 2019), ELL supports remain elusive and it is difficult to track services to specific populations judging on the basis of an LCAP document alone. From the point of view of the general public, the documents gain transparency and credibility when particular actions are tied to measurable outcomes that specifically address targeted populations. With the existing approach to tracking funds and a data dashboard that offers aggregated former and actual ELL data, ascertaining that ELL performance is being considered becomes a complicated matter, depending considerably on trust in district leaders. Caught in the tug-of-war between more or less oversight and echoing the lament of some ELL advocates, an administrator stated that the LCFF “lacked teeth” and regretted that “not enough funds are getting to the classroom.” The aforementioned State Board of Education adoption of a revised LCAP template for the LCAP cycle starting in 2020–21 creates the opportunity to include language that ties together more clearly the three corners of this equity triangle: funds, needs, and community input.

The Importance of Advocates on the Ground

In both districts, the appointment of leaders in charge of ELL matters has had a direct impact on the quantity and quality of services provided to ELLs and their families. This is particularly relevant in the case of Los Banos, where the position exerts a pivotal role in the coordination and direct provision of services (e.g., parent leadership coordination, educator training, etc.). Often, these positions also serve a significant symbolic and testimonial value in the structure of organizations when the officers in charge can bring to the LCAP table specific ELL-related concerns and needs. As discussed by the literature and the stakeholders in Chino Valley and Los Banos, the effective intervention and support of local committed educators is crucial for bridging the gap between bureaucratic and centralizing inertia and the democratic and equitable spirit of the LCFF.

References

- California Department of Education. (n.d.-a). *CA education for a global economy initiative*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/caedge.asp>
- California Department of Education. (n.d.-b). *California Distinguished Schools awardees*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/sr/cs/distschools.asp>
- California Department of Education. (n.d.-c). *Crosswalk to LCAP*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rm/roadmaptolcap.asp>
- California Department of Education. (n.d.-d). *English learner roadmap*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rm>
- California Department of Education. (n.d.-e). *Facts about English learners in California—CalEdFacts*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/cefelfacts.asp>
- California School Dashboard. (n.d.). *Chino Valley Unified*. <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/36676780000000/2018/academic-performance#english-learner-progress>
- Carruba-Rogel, Z., Durán, R. P., & Solis, B. (2019). Latinx parents' literacy practices and *concientización* in petitioning their local school board regarding funding priorities. *Peabody Journal of Education, 94*(2), 240–254.
- Contreras, F., & Fujimoto, M. O. (2019). College readiness for English Language Learners (ELLs) in California: Assessing equity for ELLs under the Local Control Funding Formula. *Peabody Journal of Education, 94*(2), 209–225.
- Chino Valley Unified School District. (n.d.). *Access and equity*. <https://www.chino.k12.ca.us/domain/728>
- Gándara, P. C., & Hopkins, M. (Eds.). (2010). *Forbidden language: English learners and restrictive language policies*. Teachers College Press.
- Knudson, J. (2019). *User-centered design as a pathway to effective policy: Lessons from the LCFF test kitchen*. California Collaborative on District Reform. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED596432.pdf>
- Lavadenz, M., Armas, E. G., Murillo, M. A., & Jáuregui Hodge, S. (2019). Equity for English learners: Evidence from four years of California's Local Control Funding Formula. *Peabody Journal of Education, 94*(2), 176–192.
- López, P. D. (2019). The sociopolitical context of LCFF: Resource allocation and minoritized communities in Silicon Valley. *Peabody Journal of Education, 94*(2), 142–156.
- Marsh, J. A., & Koppich, J. E. (2018). Superintendents speak: Implementing the Local Control Funding Formula. LCFFRC/PACE, Stanford University. https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/LCFF_Superintendents_Survey.pdf
- Olsen, L., Armas, E., & Lavadenz, M. (2016). *A review of year 2 LCAPs: A weak response to English learners*. Californians Together, The Center for Equity for English Learners, and Loyola Marymount University. <https://calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Policy-Insights-2017-Spiegel-Coleman-1.pdf>
- Porras, D. A. (2019). Latina mothers of emergent bilinguals as policymakers? Barriers and opportunities toward critical participation in LCAP. *Peabody Journal of Education, 94*(2), 226–239.
- Umansky, I. (2018). *State policies to advance English learners' experiences and outcomes in California's schools*. Getting down to facts II, PACE Center, Stanford University. https://gettingdowntofacts.com/sites/default/files/2018-09/GDTFII_Report_Umansky.pdf
- Vasquez Heilig, J., Romero, L. S., & Hopkins, M. (2017). Coign of vantage and action: Considering California's local accountability and school finance plans for English learners. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 25*(15), 1–24.
- Zarate, M. E., & Gándara, P. (2019). Can the LCFF improve teaching and learning for EL students? A review of the emerging research in California and directions for future implementation. *Peabody Journal of Education, 94*(2), 157–175.

Author Biography

Dr. Eduardo R. Muñoz-Muñoz is an Assistant Professor and the Bilingual Program Coordinator at the Lurie College of Education at San José State University, California. In his research, teaching, and practice, he engages with issues of linguistic access and educational opportunities from a policy ethnography stance. He regularly supports and advises districts and dual immersion programs on design and implementational issues pertaining to multilingualism.

Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)

Improving education policy and practice and advancing equity through evidence

PACE is an independent, non-partisan research center led by faculty directors at Stanford University, the University of Southern California, the University of California Davis, the University of California Los Angeles, and the University of California Berkeley. Founded in 1983, PACE bridges the gap between research, policy, and practice, working with scholars from California's leading universities and with state and local decision makers to achieve improvement in performance and more equitable outcomes at all levels of California's education system, from early childhood to postsecondary education and training. We do this through:

- 1 bringing evidence to bear on the most critical issues facing our state;
- 2 making research evidence accessible; and
- 3 leveraging partnership and collaboration to drive system improvement.



Stanford Graduate School of Education
520 Galvez Mall, CERAS 401
Stanford, CA 94305-3001
Phone: (650) 724-2832
Fax: (650) 723-9931

edpolicyinca.org