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English Language Learner Success During the Era of Local Control Funding in California

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
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in

Educational Leadership

by

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Chair

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Dedication

Everyone has their own path.

Walk yours with integrity and wish all others peace on their journey.

When your paths merge rejoice for their presence in your life.

When the paths are separated, return to the wholeness of yourself, give thanks for the footprints left on your soul, and embrace the time to journey on your own.

~Unknown Author

I dedicate this dissertation to my family.

To my parents, Doug and Angie, for framing my path with inspiration.

To my sons, Charles and Anthony, for laying bricks of encouragement.

To my husband, Paul, for pouring the mortar to keep my path paved.

So that I could finish my doctoral journey.

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Vita

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Abstract of the Dissertation

English Language Learner Success During the Era of Local Control Funding in California

by

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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Since California's adoption of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) in 2013, K–12 school districts have been given more autonomy in setting funding priorities and enacting policies through actions and services for students. The state supplies unrestricted funding to K–12 districts in return for an accountability document, the LCAP, which sets goals for the

district in spending those funds. The LCFF supplies districts with additional funding based on its population of (a) English Language Learner (EL) students, (b) free/reduced lunch students, and (c) homeless or foster students. The funds are intended to provide equitable funding for these students, but since the districts are able to set their own priorities for spending those funds, the state does not compel the districts to spend them in a targeted fashion.

Education researchers have often studied the effect that funding models and education finance policy can have on student outcomes with little consensus on the effects of targeted funding. Under the LCFF, funding is more directly related to student outcomes because decisions about actions and services are set at the district level, and not at the state level. This provides an opportunity for districts to create and implement programs and services that directly reflect their particular challenges and the strengths of their communities. This study attempted to establish a correlation between district policy, as set in districts' LCAP documents, and EL student achievement in four districts by using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods analysis to show that districts with specific, active, and detailed policies for increasing EL student achievement are more likely to achieve that goal. The four districts were selected via a quantitative analysis of all California school districts, identifying the two that increased EL student achievement—in two state reported metrics, "Percentage Redesignated Fluent English Proficient" (RFEP) and "Percentage Making English Growth Target" (EGT)—the most after implementation of the LCFF and LCAP funding paradigm (years 2011–2013 versus 2013–2016), and the two with the greatest decrease in EL student achievement for the same years. A

qualitative analysis of the LCAP documents for these four districts show that the visibility of actions and services that support EL students in a targeted manner is correlated with an increase in EL student achievement. These results are further illuminated with interviews, conducted with district personnel from the two districts with the highest increased EL achievement in the LCFF era, which show greater involvement with families and the community in creating a more equitable environment in which their EL students succeed. These results are contextualized in the ongoing policy and education research discussions of new local accountability systems in California, equitable funding for EL students, and the effect of unrestricted funds on student outcomes.

Chapter One: Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, research on education funding and student achievement has been focused on top-down funding models at both the state and national levels. The funding reforms of the 1990s and 2000s tended toward this style of education financing and accountability, wherein local control of funding priorities were deemphasized in favor of high-stakes testing and compliance. Vasquez Heilig, Ward, Weisman, & Cole (2014) recount the groundbreaking, early 1990s Texas legislation SB 7, which contained major components of the top-down funding and accountability paradigm that would become dominant for the next two decades. This model was later adopted at the national level under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). One motivation that Vasquez Heilig et al. give for the adoption of this funding model was its intention to close the achievement gap that exists between White and affluent students and their Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged peers. The model, as implemented in Texas and later at the federal level, has done little to close the achievement gap (Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Dee, Jacob, & Schwartz, 2012).

Due, in part, to top-down accountability during the NCLB-era, a large number of studies have been written on the negative or neutral relationship between increased funding and student achievement. Many studies have focused specifically on funding for low-income, English Language Learners (EL), and homeless students (Van der Klaauw, 2008; Dee et al., 2012; Hendricks & Barkley, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013, Ramirez, Siegrist, Krumholz, & Rainey, 2011; Matsudaira, Hosek, & Walsh, 2012). Researchers in education funding policy generally find that

complex, targeted approaches to funding are often ineffective due to poor accountability and implementation measures, as well as a lack of interest in closing achievement gaps, and subsequently that increases in funding do not necessarily create greater student achievement. Researchers have, however, also documented the potential for increased spending to affect student achievement positively (Jones & Slate, 2010; Neymotin, 2010; Henry, Fortner, & Thompson, 2002). This disagreement may point to larger problems; namely, (a) conceptualization of the difference between quantity and quality of funds when they are allocated and spent; (b) lack of consistent variables in research on funding; (c) lack of theoretical models for effectively increasing student achievement through spending; and (d) lack of transparency and accountability in current funding systems (Van der Klaauw, 2008; Dee et al., 2012; Hendricks & Barkley, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013, Ramirez et al., 2011; Matsudaira et al., 2012).

In the 2010s, however, the trend towards top-down funding models has been reversed, and landmark legislation in California and at the federal level has begun to return the power of funding prioritization to the state and district levels. In California, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) have given districts the ability to respond to their own demographic and community challenges by prioritizing funding in a way that responds to the unique features of their community; at the federal level, the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) loosens requirements related to national testing standards and allows states more flexibility to create educational goals that respond to their particular populations (United States Department of Education, [USDOE], 2016). By giving more discretion

to state and local agencies, it may be possible to create better outcomes for students by responding to inequalities in the United States' K–12 education systems, inequalities based on income, housing status, and racial background.

Top-down funding models, at both the state and federal levels, have a tendency to sustain this inequality by treating school districts and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with higher populations of at-risk and disadvantaged students the same as their peers in more affluent, suburban districts (Orfield, 2009). Economic, racial, and cultural disadvantages still impede student achievement in this country. One of the main ways to close achievement gaps is to ensure a proper allocation of supplemental funding to disadvantaged students (Henry, Fortner, & Thompson, 2010). The extant literature on funding shows how complex this remedy can be. There is a body of empirical research that correlate increased or targeted funding to achievement, while a number of other studies do not. Studies on funding and student achievement often differ in their methodology and variables, and studies that focus on the quality of how supplemental funds are spent at the local level show complicated systems of accountability often sustaining achievement gaps instead of eliminating them (Ramirez, Siegrist, Krumholz, & Rainey 2011; Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013). While the link between student achievement and funding now rests on local agencies' priorities and actions, increasing funding for underprivileged and minority students alone does not guarantee an increase in student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

In California, concerns about inequitable distribution of funding led to the introduction of the LCFF and the LCAP, a new funding model that aims to eliminate

the common problems of top-down funding and accountability (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2014). The LCFF allots additional per-pupil funding to districts for: (a) students who are ELs, (b) those eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals, (c) foster youth, and (d) districts whose student population meet these criteria in excess of 55%. While per-pupil funding is boosted at the local level for districts with high numbers of students in these categories, the funds are prioritized and spent to support the state goals of the districts' LCAP, which may or may not include targeted spending on these groups. This model intends to allow districts to spend these funds based on their own local priorities, which are created as part of a community accountability process where the plans are created with input from community stakeholders and with additional support from county offices of education (CDE-LCFF, 2015).

Since its adoption in 2013, the LCFF has begun to return California's K–12 funding to 2007 levels, but the effectiveness of this funding model at increasing student achievement has remained untested. The data produced by the LCFF and LCAP system have only recently become available and research to assess these new policies appears to be limited. Where studies on educational inequality in the NCLB era tend to make generalizations between states or even nations, the requirements of California's funding system makes it possible to see inequality as a local challenge, from district to district, as policies are now set at the local level that directly correlate to student achievement (Vasquez Heilig, Romero, & Hopkins, 2017). This study is one of the first that analyzes the data generated by districts under the LCFF and LCAP system to assess the new system's ability to address educational inequality for EL students, and more specifically, analyzes the LCAP goals of four districts—the

two districts with the highest improvement in EL student success since the implementation of the LCFF, and two districts with the lowest improvement—to show that EL student achievement is correlated with the presence or absence of EL student services in a district's LCAP.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to establish a case study where additional funding and local autonomy led to increases in EL student performance under California's LCFF and LCAP funding structure. Analysis of the pre-LCAP academic years 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 and first three years of LCAP implementation, 2013–2014, 2014–2015, and 2015–2016, determined that EL student performance was heterogeneous at the district level under the new funding and accountability regime. Since the state-wide funding change situates policy decisions—how funds generated by EL students are allocated to district-level interventions that target EL students—at the county and district level, LCAPs can be used to show what services, if any, districts created to increase the achievement of their EL students. This study found correlations between increased EL student achievement in districts with interventions for EL students stated in their LCAP plans, and for declines in EL student achievement in districts with little to no interventions for EL students. This study demonstrates a link between EL-specific services and student outcomes in district level policymaking and accountability.

California's adoption of the LCFF and LCAP has given districts the ability to create and pursue services and interventions that will increase EL student achievement, but a broader conversation is emerging about how districts address

systemic challenges, the role of the state and county boards of education in supporting districts, and how to reverse the adverse effects of top-down accountability paradigms on EL students (Affeldt, 2015; Warren, 2016; Vasquez Heilig, et al., 2017). By establishing the correlation between how district policies are structured by their LCAP and the outcomes for their students, it can be shown that the first step to addressing the challenges of EL student performance is to include services that use the funding generated by these students to close the achievement gap between them and their English-Only peers.

Research Questions

This study examines the correlation between student success and the development and execution of LCAP goals and their associated funding. The study addressed the following specific questions.

1) How do school districts allocate state funding intended for the targeted population of English Language Learners?
    a) What districts in California, with substantial EL student populations, perform highest and lowest on state-required LCAP metrics?
        i) In these districts, what, if any, difference is there in the average "Percentage Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?
        ii) In these districts, what, if any, difference is there in the average "Percentage Making English Growth Target (EGT) Among the EL Population" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?

b) What actions and services, related to LCAP goals, have these districts provided that might be linked to target student populations' academic achievement?

c) How has the implementation of Local Control Funding Formula affected EL achievement in California?

Theoretical Frameworks

This is a study fundamentally situated as a study on equity for California's EL populations, many of whom are from racial and ethnic minorities as well as low-socioeconomic status families. The purpose of the LCFF is to distribute funds to districts based on the number of students that are underprivileged, minority, non-English speaking, or homeless students (CDE, 2016). While the spirit of the LCFF is to erase the existing funding gap between minority and less affluent students, and to increase equitable funding to close achievement gaps for these student populations, the onus to do so is on districts—with county and state assistance (Warren & Carrillo, 2015). Because of this structure, the process of establishing best practices for serving these students through targeted funding of services will seek to decrease disparities in the achievement of minority and low-socioeconomic status students. It will also lead to proposals for managing targeted funding to create more equitable educational systems at the local level.

Critical Race Theory. Scholars in critical race theory and education policy have established frameworks to acknowledge that education finance systems often reproduce racial inequality and lower outcomes for Black and Hispanic students. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contend that the traditional notions of equality in

America are concerned with providing equality in property law, not human rights. This idea often leads to notions of funding fairness—equal funding for every student, regardless of background or status—that are incompatible with attaining equal outcomes for students. The LCFF is designed, in part, to fix this disparity by allocating additional funds for at-risk, EL, and low-income students that can be used by the district to increase achievement for these groups. The reason for analyzing data, in this study, from districts that have successfully improved academic outcomes for their EL students is to identify practices that districts can use to erase racial and economic inequalities in student achievement throughout the state of California.

The Standard School Finance Equity Framework. Burne and Stiefel (1984) provide a framework for contextualizing equity in school finance. The "Standard School Finance Equity Framework" offers two specific ways to assess funding equity. First, the concept of "horizontal equity" is the finance structure of school districts that have similar student populations and challenges, and are thus funded similarly. The second concept is "vertical equity," which occurs when schools within a district have different circumstances and are funded differently to meet their different challenges. In this framework, equity is a concept that reflects a fundamental fairness in educational funding at levels that are based on need, where funding systems account for unique characteristics of individual school districts and schools, and acknowledges that each school site and student population will have a different funding need level. Burne and Stiefel provide four questions to framing funding equity: (a) "Equity for whom?" (b) "of what object?" (c) "determined by what principles" and (d) "assessed by what measures?" These questions serve as an

analytic lens for this research and can be interpreted as an integral part of the LCFF's structure, as well as a way of understanding finance equity between different communities or districts, their funding needs, and how to meet educational challenges by implementing services that increase student outcomes.

The Critical Community Strength Framework. This study combines the Standard School Finance Equity Framework with the "Critical Community Strength Framework" (Rodriguez & Rolle 2007, p. 123). This combination enables placing the traditional finance framework alongside the cultural and critical race theory analysis of educational policy and practices for minority student populations. Based on Rodrigues & Rolle, the use of Critical Community Strengths Framework employs the following five key components: 1) Raising awareness of institutional bias within the educational finance policy; 2) raising awareness of the manifestations of cultural deficit thinking as it pertains to low-income children and children of color; 3) positioning communities of color and low-income communities at the center of school finance policy analysis to consider how the policy impact might differ or shift; 4) framing cultural deficits by resisting the use of White middle-class communities as the universal norm and recognizing the power of diverse histories, perspectives, worldviews, and experiences; and 5) questioning the dialogue to surface potential sources of cultural wealth or assets in service of facilitating high academic achievement and success among low-income students and students of color. This framework is well suited to the LCAP process at the local level, since members of the community are included as stakeholders in establishing district services, goals, and

allocation of funds to particular interventions that directly reflect the community's strengths and challenges.

Methodology

This study examined the success of EL students under the Local Control Funding Formula in California by employing an explanatory sequential mixed-method design in two phases. First, in phase one, the determination of EL success on two state collected metrics in California, "Redesignated English Fluent Proficient" (RFEP) and "English Growth Target," (EGT) were used to perform a quantitative statistical analysis on EL student success. Then, in phase two, the study used two districts with the greatest improvement in both metrics and two districts with the least improvement—purposively selecting a total of four districts—to complete an intrinsic case study. The results were analyzed to ascertain the nature of the correlation between the existence of LCAP actions and services that target EL students and an increase in EL achievement in those districts.

Participants, Data Collection, and Procedures. In the study of English Language Learner success, the participants in phase one of the study were 158 public K–12 schools in California with at least 500 students classified as English Language Learners. The publicly available district data from the California Department of Education were used for phase one statistical analysis. The analysis was applied on two groups, EL students in (2011–2013) and (2013–2016), respectively, using RFEP and EGT values. The mean difference value was calculated for each individual district and used in phase two of the study. Phase two analyzed the four districts' LCAPs for actions and services specifically designed to support English Learners.

Follow-up interviews with the two highest achieving districts were completed to further triangulate best practices for increasing EL achievement.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it may be the first quantitative analysis of student outcomes under the LCAP and LCFF funding legislation. It establishes, for the first time, a correlation between the content of districts' LCAP, the services that are included in it by those districts, and the increased or decreased success of students in two high-achieving districts and two low-achieving districts. Additionally, this study analyzes the qualitative aspects of the LCAP and interrogates the connection between how the LCAP goals of particular districts are written and student achievement in two high-achieving and two low-achieving districts.

There is a nascent body of literature about local control and accountability in California since the adoption of the LCFF and LCAP that often points out to how little is known about the outcomes of the new funding structure and local-level policies under it (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2014; Warren, 2014; Affeldt, 2015; Warren, 2016; Vasquez Heilig, et al., 2017). This study addresses a number of issues that arise from this small, but growing body of literature.

Warren (2016) is partly concerned with the effectiveness of districts in utilizing the opportunity to assess their student performance, the lack of a "bottom line" for the plan review process, effective performance oversight, and the need for LCAPs to be embedded in a "continual improvement cycle." The current study offers a quantitative method for analyzing student outcomes—one that could be adapted for other performance parameters than EL performance—and the results of the

qualitative phase of this study lead to suggestions that will be valuable to districts in establishing continual improvement, and valuable to county offices of education that serve as part of the LCAP review and assistance process.

Since the LCFF generates funding specifically for student subsets, such as EL and free lunch qualifying students, this study poses the question of how best to use those funds for those student populations directly. As Vasquez Heilig et al. (2017) point out, in some LCAPs explored by the authors, districts had not supported programs for those students specifically, but rather, had been used to address general staffing and curricula concerns. This study addresses this issue by examining two districts' successful EL services and two unsuccessful districts to show that this "non-segragative" approach correlates to a decline in EL performance for the two low-performing districts that had no EL student services included in their LCAP goals.

Because of local accountability, the effects of policy decisions and individual districts' priorities have a more direct impact on student outcomes and achievement than in the NCLB era. Since each local agency faces different challenges, one-to-one comparisons between districts' LCAPs, the programs they funded, and their students' achievement sheds light on the effectiveness of the new funding paradigm in particular districts as well as at the state level (Warren, 2014). In addition, since the funding streams of the LCFF are more transparent and direct—by virtue of being unrestricted funds that are granted to districts and prioritized at the district level—the effectiveness of these funds and the services they provide is more clearly correlated to student outcomes than previous studies on K–12 funding (Henry et al., 2010; Jones & Slate, 2010; Neymotin, 2010).

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

The focus of this study is the effect of funding systems on student outcomes, specifically local-level accountability, wherein policy is set at the district level, and its effect on student success. Since the LCFF funding paradigm is new, there are, as of yet, relatively few publications that tackle the new system and the consequences of local control, even if the new system is often seen as a "[return] to community-based schooling approach" (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2017). This review of literature begins with a global scope, noting the effect that funding models have on student outcomes and achievement generally, inequity in finance models and the reproduction of achievement gaps in minority and low-socioeconomic status students, and finally, to studies that directly relate to targeted funding for EL students and recent studies on how to improve EL student outcomes under the LCFF and LCAP paradigm.

Much literature exists that interrogates problems in education finance and inequitable funding for students of different ethnic, racial, geographic, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds as a national problem in the United States. Due, in part, to required data collection mandates in NCLB, data on student achievement are usually framed as a national or state-level figure, and often only as performance on standardized tests. When comparing national data from high-stakes tests, such as the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), achievement is often put into context through comparisons with other countries, or state-by-state, leading to overgeneralizations and "apples-to-oranges" comparisons of student outcomes. Few studies focus on targeted funding at the local level, but when they do, it is often shown that complex funding streams generally lead to mismanagement of funds, and

a missed opportunity to close achievement gaps (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013).

Studies on national-level student achievement and racial inequality often show contradictory results regarding increased funding and its relationship with student achievement. The paradigm of top-down funding is often hidden in policy suggestions from the late 2000s, especially regarding achievement gaps and educational inequality in the United States. Darling-Hammond (2010), for instance, uses national and international comparisons to illustrate the unacceptable levels of inequity in the American school systems. These comparisons, the author contends, are often flawed for three reasons. First, comparisons between the achievement gap in, for example, Singapore and the United States do not account for the difference in size of population or the structure of the economy of the two countries. Second, comparisons between increased funding for education in the United States often does not track what the funds are spent on. International studies, like those of Finland's educational reforms, have suggested that increased funding must be targeted on teacher development and education to increase student achievement (Beese & Liang, 2010). Third, some countries, such as Australia, have experienced lower student achievement after increasing unrestricted funds, because the funds often go to administrative costs (Jensen, Reichl & Kemp, 2011). These problems of international comparison cast doubts on what best practices in funding and effective financial reform can accomplish.

This review of literature addresses these disparities in the analysis of funding and achievement gaps by establishing five distinct problems in questions of

inequitable funding in American K–12 districts: (a) as a national problem that intersects with race and geography in the United States; (b) as a problem in education policy literature that generates contradictions on the role of funding and student outcomes when comparisons are made at national and international levels; (c) as a problem that disproportionally affects low-income, EL, and homeless students; (d) as a problem of accountability at local levels and with inadequate data collection on how targeted funds are spent and managed, specifically for EL students; and (e) as a problem that can, in the future, be corrected by supplying adequate targeted funds and greater enforcement of accountability in the LCFF and LCAP funding systems.

Inequitable Funding and Educational Inequality

In the United States, inequitable funding for low-income, Black, and Hispanic students still occurs in the twenty-first century. Ladson-Billings (2011) revealed that the per-pupil spending in inner city Chicago public schools is $8,482, where the student population is 87% Black and Hispanic. By contrast, in Chicago's 90% White suburbs, $17,291 was spent on each student. Similarly, in New York the per-pupil spending was $11,726 for schools that are 72% Black and Hispanic, as compared to suburban schools that spend $22,311 per pupil for a student population made up of 91% White students.

Generally, students of color in the United States need additional funding to attain achievements that are equal to their White peers. Inequality is evident in the minimally adequate funding levels to reach adequate levels student success (Lee, 2012). Regarding performance of eighth graders on the NAEP mathematics assessment, the minimally adequate level of per-pupil educational expenses for White

students is $6,956, while it is $7,662 for Black students, and $7,483 for Hispanic students respectively. Similarly, this study suggests, students who live in poverty need $7,394 to close the achievement gap. While these studies point to inequitable funding as a current practice in American schools, as well as a practice that can be eliminated through better equity in funding models, a correlation between funding and student achievement must first be established.

Increased Funding and Student Success in General Populations

Research on funding and student achievement often shows that there is no consistent link between increased general funding and greater student achievement when high stakes testing is used as the measure of student success. Due to changes in funding practices by school districts in response to NCLB, $600 per pupil was added to districts, nationally, but there was no single funding stream that supplied the increase (Dee, Jacob, & Schwartz, 2012). The increase came through multiple funding streams but did not have substantial impacts on student achievement, as measured by class size, instructional time, and teacher compensation. Although one of the specific goals of NCLB was to improve educational opportunities for underrepresented learners, districts often distribute “across-the-board funding,” regardless of the amount of at-risk students that make up a district's student population (Dee et al., 2012, p. 265).

Since NCLB’s implementation, top-down funding models have been shown to be ineffective at improving district conditions, as well as at measuring student success, specifically because of heavy reliance on high-stakes testing to measure student success. Dee et al. (2012) disaggregated funding data for wealthy districts,

finding that NCLB's funding model leads to few improvements at the district level. Additionally, as part of NCLB, states were required to set goals regarding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a metric of student success measured by performance on the NAEP. Under NCLB, states were accountable to the federal government through this high-stakes testing model, although the definition of success was set by the states themselves. Lee (2012) explains that this practice allowed states to use lower cut-off scores and exclude low-achieving students from the testing and reporting. These practices, allowed under the NCLB law, undermined the states' claims of student improvements because students could not be compared at the national level. When analyzing the results of the NAEP directly, in which all students take the same assessment with the same performance indicators, Lee showed the increases in student achievement reported by the states did not exist. Although spending increased under NCLB—however modestly—at the national level, student success has remained flat.

This finding contradicts some studies that support the claim that increased education spending generally leads to greater student achievement. Increased spending, for instance, has been shown to increase student achievement in elementary schools throughout England (Holmlund, McNally, & Viarengo, 2010). There is, however, no specific factor that can be shown to cause the increase in achievement, which is a common problem in research on education funding and student achievement (Vegas & Coffin, 2012; Dee et al., 2012). Further, studies have also shown that increases in funding can correlate with falling student achievement (Jensen, Reichl, & Kemp, 2011). An increase in funding in Australian schools

actually correlated with a decline in student success, as measured by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The increase in funding was applied as an increase in teacher compensation, and the corresponding decline in student performance was deep enough to leave students a year behind their peers (Jensen, Reichl, & Kemp, 2011). These studies show that, at the national level, greater spending can create improved student outcomes in specific countries, but only under specific conditions. The same studies describe limitations in data collection and methods as possible reasons for these inconsistent conclusions. A correlation between increased funding and improved student achievement, at the national and international level, is not supported by the literature.

Other studies of national education funding models and student achievement from around the world illuminate two crucial variables in spending reform: (a) the amount of money that is being spent per-pupil nationally; and (b) the particular services provided by increased funding. When countries fund their education systems with at least $8,000 per pupil, better student outcomes are reported (Vegas & Coffin, 2012). Finland, for example, has the highest per-pupil spending in the world, as well as the greatest achievement and the lowest inequalities in educational outcomes for students (Beese & Liang, 2010). Beese & Liang showed that difference between the students in the lowest and highest performing groups was only 5.8% for Finland, whereas it was 23% for the United States. While increases in spending did matter in Finland, the way the funding was applied promoted student outcomes directly: increased professional development for teachers. Increased spending that improved quality of instruction brought the lowest performing students closer to their peers'

performance and increased student performance overall. Increased funding, when applied to instructional support efforts, does have an impact on student achievement, while strong teacher professional development programs may be the key to the use of increased funding to bolster student achievement, as Beese & Liang suggest in their study of Finland's funding increase. This result is not exclusive to Finland's education system; a similar study on Texas's educational expenditures showed that school districts that spent at least 65% on instruction showed an increase in student achievement, while districts spending less than 60% on these expenditures had the lowest passing rates on all five of the state assessments (Jones & Slate, 2010). Performance, in this case, was measured with the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, an end-of-course achievement test for all grade levels.

A key structural factor in the effectiveness of increased spending is whether the funds are restricted—meaning that they must be used for specific purposes—or unrestricted, general funds. Increases in unrestricted funding often go to administrative costs, as they did in Australia instead of instructional materials and teacher development, which are more effective in increasing student success (Jensen et al., 2011). In the United States, finance reform and increasing district-level funds in Illinois did not positively impact student achievement on standardized tests, when analyzed by O'Malley, Roseboro, & Hunt (2012). This study showed that although the state created a culture with greater emphasis on fiscal management, that change in culture represented little more than a stronger focus on bureaucratic responsibilities and compliance, resulting in no improvements in student success.

Increasing unrestricted funding and decreasing restricted funding often create strange, counterintuitive results. Dee et al. (2012) showed that school districts providing less compensation to teachers show an increase in overall student improvement. One justification given by the authors for this outcome is that teachers who are paid less often shift focus away from general curriculum toward one more specific on test materials. The push towards high-stakes testing, solely for satisfying NCLB accountability requirements, propelled districts and individual teachers away from learning outcomes that are not prescribed by NCLB. For example, when a budget reduction occurred in Indiana, the state reduced teaching and instructional assistant positions substantially, yet obtained an increase of five percent in student achievement on standardized tests (Boyland & Jarman, 2012). While students showed marked improvements, there was no other policy or funding change, such as a change in teaching strategies or curriculum standards that may have caused the increase in student achievement.

Although these correlations run counter to the theory that increased funding leads to better student outcomes, they highlight the necessity for a more detailed perspective of the effects of funding on the quality of instruction. Neymotin (2010) showed that in the state of Kansas from 1997–2006, an increase of funding also did not lead to greater student achievement. When assessing both student achievements on standardized tests as well as graduation and dropout rates, a new funding formula that increased school funding had no substantial effect. The study suggests that the funding model failed to create positive change because the state overlooked the unique challenges of differing student populations in each district: “the diversity of

student populations and the demographic makeup is also important for schools to consider in making their choices in how to create the best environment for students to succeed" (Neymotin, 2010, p. 107). When student achievement for minority and at-risk student groups is examined, extant research supports an increase in funding, specifically for these groups, not just general increases in across the board per-pupil spending.

Targeted Funding for At-Risk and Minority Students

The disadvantages that low-income, minority, EL, and homeless students face in education are intertwined with top-down funding models; these are models that do not respond to their heightened needs. Federal programs like NCLB have implemented seemingly equal standards, for both testing and funding, across an unequal country. Instructional delivery and teacher quality are crucial elements that determine the quality of educational opportunities for disadvantaged students, as discussed by Schmidt, Cogan, Houang, & McKnight (2011). In this discussion, the authors explain that these students' opportunity to learn (OTL)—the ability for underserved students to study the same content as their White and more affluent peers—is stifled by geographical, demographic, and financial differences in local school systems. Further, unequal OTL causes students in areas with lower socioeconomic status to perform half a grade level, or more, behind their peers. Factors like unequal OTL are directly related to a lack of targeted funding to create parity between disadvantaged student populations and their peers. These structural problems cannot, as Lee (2012) shows, be fixed with untargeted funding: "Simply allocating more funding and qualified teachers to ineffective schools would not

guarantee their academic success" (p. 73). The 2001 McKinney Vento Act (MCKV) established one such federal program that increases unrestricted funding to LEAs with high numbers of homeless students or who may have precarious living situations. It has been shown that funding through this channel does not significantly result in higher end of grade reading comprehension and mathematics scores for homeless sixth graders (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). While the federal government supplies these funds to address child homelessness and its effects on educational opportunities, it is unclear whether the grants do anything to support instructional quality for its intended students because of lack of transparency.

In addition to supplemental grants for homeless students, some states also supply targeted funding for all low-income students. When districts were supplied with additional funding for low-income students on a per-pupil basis in North Carolina, as shown by Henry, Fortner, & Thompson (2010), end of course exam scores increased. The gains made by students in districts that were supported by these funds were 3.7%, compared with a 1.2% increase in the rest of the state's districts that did not receive these grants. Henry et al. show that this positive correlation was seen in sixteen districts with high numbers of disadvantaged students in North Carolina, or roughly 14% of the state's schools. Additionally, these statistics point to the fact that concentrated grants for low-income students lead to what is a modest closing of the achievement gap; all students, in this data set, did better on the assessment, while low-income students made greater gains against the general population. Once again, not enough detail is supplied in the study to claim definitively that the increase in

spending is directly responsible for the increased achievement. There were no data collected on how the funds were spent once they were issued to the LEAs.

There is a great deal of ambiguity in studies related to the lack of transparency and oversight for concentration grants, a problem that is even more evident in studies on spending for EL students. When examining funding for EL student populations at the site level, Jimenez-Castellanos & Rodriguez (2009) showed that spending state and federal concentration grants on instructional quality—not on increasing personnel or administrative costs—can increase the performance of those students. The authors showed that when targeted funding is used to establish programs that are not directly related to increasing student achievement, particularly through remediation programs, schools tend to institutionalize lower expectations for their EL students, instead of investing in teacher development that directly leads to better outcomes. Studies on increased funding for underprivileged and EL students expose national deficiencies in two key areas: (a) transparency and accountability of funding and (b) the existence or quality of interventions and programs and their effects on student success. Both have been shown to be fundamental, structural problems that stand in the way of providing equitable educational opportunities to EL students.

Problems of Allocation and Accountability for EL Funding

In 2013, EL students' proficiency levels on the NAEP were 23–30% below their peer group of fluent students, and only 4% of EL eighth graders were proficient in math or reading (National Education Association, 2015). The graduation rate of these students is also 20% below the national graduation rate of 81.4%. The National Center for Education Statistics (2015) states that EL students graduate from high

school at the “lowest rate of all student subgroups.” This is most likely a confluence of many factors that have been shown to affect student success, such as parents’ education levels and economic disadvantage. Although the extant literature on the achievement levels of at-risk students supports increasing funding based on the number of at-risk students, the manner in which these funds are accounted for and spent continues to complicate the data that would help establish best practices for increasing student achievement with additional funding.

Additional funds for EL students at the district level, supplied by one federal program and one (pre-LCFF) California state program, were shown to be used to either supplant general funds or were not entirely spent during the year (Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013). Supplementing district required services with targeted funds is not allowed under federal guidelines, and subsequently, these carryover funds were not spent on the student groups during the year the funding was provided. Normally, funds would be allocated according to the pupil counts of students in need, and in this case, only half of the funds were eventually allocated to the school site. In this case study, the authors noted that this mismanagement and a lack of accountability resulted in a missed opportunity to increase student achievement, and although the students’ additional needs generated the funds, the funds were not used in accordance with the spirit, or the letter, of the policies that created the funding streams.

The lack of transparency in complex funding formulas has disproportionately large negative effects on EL populations, as discussed by Jimenez-Castellanos (2012). Administrators often focus on state-level compliance instead of creating or supporting

programs that improve student outcomes. In another example that he gives, even when funding for EL students increased, it correlated with a negative impact on school-wide achievement. This study also shows that there is a continuing problem with supplemental dollars that are allocated for use in successive years: this type of funding is often allocated based on demographics of years past, and funding generated by at-risk students does not often reach the district level until those particular students are no longer in the education system. For this reason, the practice of carryover funding at both the state and federal levels (which is legal, but only in small percentage amounts) is questionable since it does not increase the achievement of the students that generated the need for the funds.

Interviews of school-site personnel show a lack of understanding with regards to the intent of funding programs that support disadvantaged students (Weston, 2011). Funding models need to be simplified to increase accountability and oversight of these funds in order to ensure that they benefit the intended populations. Education professionals often lack understanding of how to spend concentration funds; this is an area that could be remedied through professional development and leadership at the site level (Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013). In California, under the LCFF and LCAP paradigm, it is crucial that district personnel understand that the transparency and autonomy in district-level funding decisions do not change the intent of these funds: increasing student achievement for the students who generate supplemental funds.

Title III funding—which originates from the United States Department of Education—is intended to provide supplemental funding for EL students to meet

rigorous state standards in all academic areas. Jimenez-Castellanos and Okhremtchouk (2013) showed that due to a lack of understanding at the district level, regarding what the supplemental funds were intended for, funds were often used for administrators' salaries and consulting services, neither of which is allowable under federal guidelines. This study suggests that placing more accountability and funding prioritization at the site level, instead of the district level, might promote an increase in student achievement for EL students as long as it is paired with greater efforts to instruct school personnel on how the funds are to be used. Other studies have suggested that more local control and accountability, and not prioritization of funds at the state or federal level, create a more effective system for helping underprivileged students (O'Malley et al., 2012). It is likely, however, that these studies point to a more general problem of mismanagement: if funds are being mismanaged at one particular level in the education system, it may point to a problem of understanding funding streams and the intentions with which the funds are generated at that level, which may be an indication for proper training and oversight at such level to make funds more effective.

Other problems with targeted funding occur because the formulas used to calculate local need for supplemental funding. Analysis of supplemental funding programs in Colorado for EL students indicates that schools are funded at a level that is 20–25% below the level required to bring the EL population to full English language proficiency (Ramirez, Siegrist, Krumholz, & Rainey, 2011). It was shown in this study that programs intended to specifically support EL students were underfunded by 75% in Colorado. Additionally, the amount of per-pupil spending

diminished as the number of EL students increased in one school district, while funding was spent in a non-targeted manner, which provided no additional support or services for EL students. Increasing EL enrollments, while resulting in additional funding, also led to a net decrease in the funding available for the entire student population depending on how the district allocated the funds. According to Ramirez et al., the practice of weighted funding was based on a specific formula that intended to provide additional support to particular student populations. More generally, in some state funding formulas money is provided for an arbitrary number of years that a student is assumed to need the funding, but discrepancies in achievement resume after years of additional funding have ended. Ramirez et al. found that while students were still in the Colorado education system, the state's funding formula ended the supplemental increase before the students had reached educational benchmarks and required competencies.

Low-income students also receive supplemental federal dollars, called Title I funding, that are similar to Title III funding for ELs. Studies show that providing additional funding for low-income students does not play a significant role in increasing student achievement among this subgroup, but that the funding is inappropriately managed in ways similar to Title III funding (Matsudaira, Hosek, & Walsh, 2012). Nationally, this funding is often used for general school services and a projected 20% of these funds go to general school expenditures instead of exclusively supporting low-income students. This is caused by states' mismanagement of the funds, which often decrease the funding for Title I schools instead of viewing the funds as supplemental, despite the funds' intended goal (Van der Klaauw, 2008).

When funds are not spent on administrative costs or to supplant general funds, the achievement gap for EL students can decrease by direct spending on interventions. Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2011) provide an example, which highlights the efforts of a community school with a student population that is more than 60% low-income and has over 70% EL students. The school's focus on systematic procedures that decrease absences and greatly increase student engagement was an effort led by the administration, teachers, and staff. The entire school was committed to changing instructional practices by promoting high levels of student discourse in all subject areas. School staff members were involved in attendance follow-ups with families, and would make a home visit for every student that was absent.

Overall, education policy literature suggests that increased targeted funding can lead to better student outcomes for EL students, but also that mismanagement and structural flaws in funding calculations make it difficult to ensure that resources are spent in the way they are intended. When money is distributed to districts and sites, the specific strategies for spending the funds are often not uniformly established, making the effectiveness of the funds difficult to study. This is complicated further in practice, since administrators often do not know how money is bound to the intention of programs that increase targeted funding for particular student populations (Matsudaira et al., 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013). This research suggests that it is possible that the desired outcomes for these funds could be achieved by increasing the knowledge of the administrators of both districts and schools, and increasing accountability for the proper allocation and use of these funds to benefit at-risk student groups. These are precisely the goals of the LCFF and LCAP.

Local Control and Accountability as an Answer to Funding Inequality

The movement toward top-down funding models at the state level has created the inability for LEAs to set their own expenditure priorities and respond to the needs of their particular student populations. Vasquez Heilig and Darling-Hammond (2008) examined the genesis of top-down funding and high-stakes testing in the early1990s in Texas, concluding that "[it] has become apparent that after 20 years in Texas and 10 years across the United States, the Texas-style sanctions and rewards-based education evaluation system did not produce an education miracle in Texas nor result in all students across the nation being proficient by NCLB's target year of 2014" (p. 873). Texas' funding history is often portrayed as a decades-long legal and legislative battle, with funding policies that are both politically unpopular and ineffective (Cortez, 1998; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2014). While federal and state funding still tends to follow the Texas model, there is reason to believe that the alternative—local control—can be a key element in improving student achievement at the state level. For instance, Conlin & Thompson (2014) showed that Michigan, which has a top-down style state funding system, and Ohio, which uses a more locally based funding system, show differences in student achievement that suggest that local prioritization of funding in Ohio, at the district level, correlate to increased test scores. Despite having roughly equivalent amounts of per-pupil spending in the two states, student performance on the NAEP was greater in Ohio, regardless of the year or grade examined. The difference in achievement between the two states, this study suggests, is strongly correlated to the local

prioritization of funding, creating greater student outcomes with the same amount of funding.

Local Control in California

In California the progression toward local control happened over roughly half a decade. Policy experts who were interested in California's education funding system examined the complex finance system and recommended that funding should be streamlined and simplified to increase transparency and oversight (Weston, 2011). In February 2009, the state of California began unrestricting the majority of its state funds to districts, while federal funds remained restricted for targeted programs. Over the next five years, California increasingly placed accountability and discretion at the local level, resulting in the creation of the LCFF and LCAP funding systems. In the 2012–2013 state budget, California introduced the weighted pupil funding (WPF) formula. This calculation, which would become essential to the LCFF, took into account the number of a district's students who are low-income, EL, and homeless students. Policy experts applauded Governor Jerry Brown's willingness, which "clearly addresses one particular element of need, the additional resources needed to raise the academic performance of disadvantaged students" (Rose, Sonstelie, & Weston, 2012, p. 13).

In 2013, California adopted the LCFF and LCAP, creating a permanent legislative policy based on "subsidiarity" (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2014). The law contains eight state-level priorities that must be accounted for in each district's LCAP goals, with the state supplying unrestricted per-pupil funding that can be used to meet those goals. The goals that each district sets for the state priorities have to be

measurable, even if there is a qualitative element to the goal. The LCFF model takes into account how many disadvantaged students are in a district and boosts per-pupil funding at different grade levels, which allows districts to address the needs of their particular student populations and eliminate achievement gaps inside of districts.

Because of the monumental shift from top-down to bottom-up funding and accountability in California, much is still needed to understand what is best for student outcomes. Affeldt (2015) notes that while California's leap into a new funding paradigm has the potential to create new, innovative ways to serve student populations, the state still needs to address some problems in its role as the generator of funds and overall arbiter of accountability for the public. While discretion is given to districts to meet their individual needs and challenges with funding, California's school funding is not at adequate levels to meet student needs statewide. Also, the state is still responsible for "developing, supporting and retaining fully prepared and effective teachers for all of its students" which is a key element of student success and achievement (Affeldt, 2015 p.14).

The homogeneity in district challenges and goals also leads to a multiplicity of student achievement outcomes throughout the state. "For some districts, the demands of the process are indeed challenging" (Warren, 2016, p. 19). The LCAP process itself, Warren reminds us, is itself a new challenge for district and county level administrators, and points to three core problems with the LCFF: (a) the LCAP process does not induce districts to do much more than simply comply with the state standards, (b) the LCFF does not create any processes that lead to continuous improvement year over year at the district level, and (c) there is a lack of support for

county offices in their role of reviewing district LCAPs and creating a "countywide continual improvement cycle" (p. 20). Simply put, there are not enough resources at the county level to conduct the type of analysis or necessary interventions, despite the extensive data collected at the site and district levels for the purposes of accountability.

Vasquez Heilig et al. (2016) point out that the lack of standardization of LCAP development, between districts throughout the state, led many districts to continue with the high-stakes testing paradigm associated with top-down accountability, simply because it was part of the previously existing accountability regime, and did not take advantage of the opportunity to implement innovative or more locally-defined forms of accountability. Further, the authors' exploration of specific LCAPs showed that some districts did not have any mention of services for EL students in their district, instead opting to fund programs for all students, or advanced programs that are unlikely to contain many of the EL students that generated additional funding for the district.

The LCFF and LCAP have the capacity to allow California and its school districts to address each of the problems outlined in this review of literature. The state now gives supplemental funds to districts based on how many of their students are classified as economically disadvantaged, EL and foster youth, creating a more equitable funding system that responds to different demographic needs at the local level (Neymotin, 2010; Lee, 2012). The increase of local control expanded the requirements for community and internal oversight, as well as increased transparency in the funding formula. The new funding paradigm, and its data-driven accountability

processes, has great potential for new studies that take into account how money is spent at the district level, and requires that policy experts establish new best practices in district-level funding (Jimenez-Castellanos & Rodriguez, 2009; Lee, 2012; Jones & Slate, 2010; Weston, 2011; Ramirez et al., 2011; Jimenez-Castellanos, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013). Since each district is responsible for setting its own goals for increased funding, districts are now able to target funding for increasing student achievement, and hopefully, aim towards closing achievement gaps instead of spending on administrative costs (Beese & Liang, 2010; Henry et al., 2010; Jones & Slate, 2010; Neymotin, 2010; Jensen et al., 2011; Lee, 2012; O'Malley et al., 2012; Vegas & Coffin, 2012). By studying the effects of the LCAP and LCFF, education policy researchers can establish better practices regarding student outcomes and funding, and do so with more detailed data than has been possible under less transparent, top-down funding models (Henry et al., 2010; Holmlund et al., 2010; Schmidt et al, 2011; Boyland & Jarman, 2012).

Theoretical Frameworks: Critical Race Theory, Standard School Finance Equity Framework and Critical Community Strength Framework

The implementation of the LCAP and LCFF has the possibility to disrupt inequitable funding at the state level, but questions of the execution and implementation of the system for achieving better student outcomes through equitable funding have, as of yet, only been proposed. Hill & Ugo (2015) point out that the equitable funding generated by Latino students at the district level, if they are EL students, does not necessarily mean that the funding is adequately spent on increasing their success. The concern, now, is that there is a high degree of funding equity from

the state to the districts, but for districts to fund their schools equitably, LCAPs will need to target schools explicitly that generated the need for those funds in the first place.

The Standard School Finance Equity Framework was presented by Berne and Stiefel as a way of assessing the different facets of equity and equality for school district funding (Rodriguez & Rolle, 2013). The three variables of this framework are: (a) equal opportunity, (b) horizontal equity, and (c) vertical equity (Berne & Stiefel, 1994). The first variable, equal opportunity, is the idea that each district has the same funding and accountability practices as one another, and that such practices are made equal by the state (Rodriguez & Rolle, 2013). Horizontal equity is the measure of "equal treatment of equals," meaning equal funding for districts that are, in other respects—such as demographics, local property tax income, and the like—equal (Berne & Stiefel, 1994). The last of these variables, vertical equity, is the "appropriately unequal treatment of unequals," and for the purposes of this study, the recognition that different districts are unequal in various ways, such as student needs and demographics, and require additional resources to provide adequate education to their students (Berne & Stiefel, 1994).

Elements of each of these variables are included, systematically, in the LCFF funding scheme, and can be addressed as a feature that is built into the formula. Equal opportunity, in the context of the LCFF, is achieved through the process awarding funds based on the student population, and since the expected funding opportunities for each district are based on the amount of targeted students in their district, all districts are treated equally in this respect. Similarly, under the LCFF horizontal

equity and vertical equity are achieved by allocating funding directly to student populations at the district level—although it is possible that this equity does not reach the school level (Hill & Ugo, 2015). Despite the fact that the state seems to have created a funding model that is highly equitable at the state level and that districts with similar demographics receive similar funding, it is up to individual district to use this newly found equitable funding to achieve increased student achievement and create targeted actions and services to deliver on that equity for their EL students. This framework will be used in the quantitative analysis of this study to show that two pairs of districts—one containing two districts that are successful at increasing English language proficiency, and two districts that were unsuccessful—do have equitable funding from the state level, but is not correlated to increased student outcomes.

The Critical Community Strength Framework is based on recognizing that demographically dissimilar districts and schools are unlikely to need the same kind of resources to have students succeed at the same level. Rodriguez & Rolle (2013) propose that equally funding districts across a state may be an example of "cultural deficit thinking." This is the idea that underserved, low socioeconomic, at-risk, and EL heavy student populations are equally funded, but their schools fail at a higher rate because of a lack of cultural support from the community. It is important to combat this type of thinking since, at the center of this ideology, lurks a form of white supremacy that is structurally embedded in school funding. In this framework it is important to be critical of the implications that "Communities of Color" are deficient in properly valuing their educational opportunities that are given to them by white

legislators and boards of education (Yosso, 2005). The Critical Community Strength Framework (and Critical Race Theory more generally) re-frames the cultural differences in Communities of Color as strengths, which must be built upon by the local educational structure to increase student outcomes and close achievement gaps between white and minority students.

The Critical Community Strength Framework appears to be well suited for contextualizing the LCAP process, since each district is accountable to the local community in constructing its goals for targeted funding. The framework will serve as guide in the discussion section of this study since LCAP goals and their effects on EL student populations should be characterized as the domain of community stakeholders. Districts with high populations of EL students and greater levels of achievement in English proficiency are likely more adept at identifying their community's strengths and turning them into successful programs and interventions for their district.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Often in education funding research, studies are constrained by the quality and amount of data available that correlate funding to student outcomes. In the NCLB era, the introduction of data-based accountability approaches increased the amount of data that sites and districts generated on student achievement. Under LCFF and LCAP the amount of data that are generated on student success are further increased, but accompanying this increase in data is an increase in the heterogeneity and complexity of district policies and funding priorities. Since districts receive unrestricted, untargeted funds that are generated by EL and free/reduced lunch students, levels of funding are simplified, but each district is able to set LCAP goals for district improvement and determine the actions and services to meet those goals. The level at which policies are set under this funding paradigm is, by virtue of being more localized, more closely correlated to student outcomes.

The LCFF constitutes a statewide policy that is empirical and transparent, but the policy outlined in each district's LCAP is qualitative and heterogeneous. Because of this, particular outcomes for funding are best studied with mixed-methods research. This study uses an explanatory mixed-methods sequential routine to account first for the quantitative data that are generated and it then triangulates such data with qualitative analysis of LCAP documents themselves, as well as the explanations and summaries—obtained through interviews with the district administrators that drafted and implemented LCAPs—of how these actions and services directly impacted EL student achievement.

Research Questions

This study analyzed English Language Learner progress on California's state required metrics of Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) and English Language Learners Meeting their Growth Target (EGT), for a group prior to the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (school years 2011–2013) and after implementation of LCFF (school years 2013–2016). In the second phase of the study—qualitative type—, the researcher provided insight into the actions and services stipulated by school districts in their Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP) that contributed to the student success.

The specific research questions were the following:

1) How do school districts allocate state funding intended for the targeted population of English Language Learners?
    a) What districts in California, with substantial EL student populations, perform highest and lowest on state-required LCAP metrics?
        i) In these districts, what, if any, difference is there in the average "Percentage Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?
        ii) In these districts, what, if any, difference is there in the average "Percentage Making English Growth Target (EGT) Among the EL Population" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?

b) What actions and services, related to LCAP goals, have these districts provided that might be linked to target student populations' academic achievement?

c) How has the implementation of Local Control Funding Formula affected EL achievement in California?

Explanatory Sequential Research Design

To answer these research questions, the researcher used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design in two phases (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The two phases of the study consisted, respectively, of the collection and presentation of the quantitative numeric data, followed by a qualitative case study. This design was used because it begins by conducting a quantitative analysis and follows this phase with a second qualitative phase. The qualitative phase provides an opportunity to establish a correlation between qualitative analysis and results from the quantitative analysis (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann & Hanson 2003). The researcher used this design because it allowed the use of quantitative results about specific group characteristics to be determined and utilized to inform the participants for the qualitative follow-up phase (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Morgan & Kruger 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Key characteristics of qualitative research include the following: a natural setting, multiple data sources, inductive analysis, theoretical lens, and emergent design (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This study uses the qualitative methods of case study and active-passive language analysis. In a case study, a researcher will identify a particular case as important and offer a rationale for how it is important. The case can be looked at as a specific case, an intrinsic case study or examination of a single

issue, problem or concern, constituting an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). Irrespective of the specific intent of the case study, the researcher needs to be able to understand, contextualize, and describe the case without introducing hidden biases. A researcher with a thorough understanding of the case and its analysis will be able to assert explanations based on how the case presents itself empirically (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

The two phases of this research study consisted, respectively, in the collection and presentation of the quantitative numeric data and in the development of a qualitative case study that correlated LCAP actions and services for ELL students with the quantitative analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This study analyzed extant data—bounded by time—that measure the success of English Language Learner students in California between 2011 and 2016. The data are collected by school districts to track the progress of EL students. These data are generated as part of the LCFF and LCAP funding structure and the state-mandated collection of student success indicators, which began in 2013. The extant quantitative data informed the selection of participant districts for the second phase, a case study, wherein possible causes for and correlations between increases in student success and program funding allocations were considered. Figure 1 displays the explanatory sequential design used for this study.

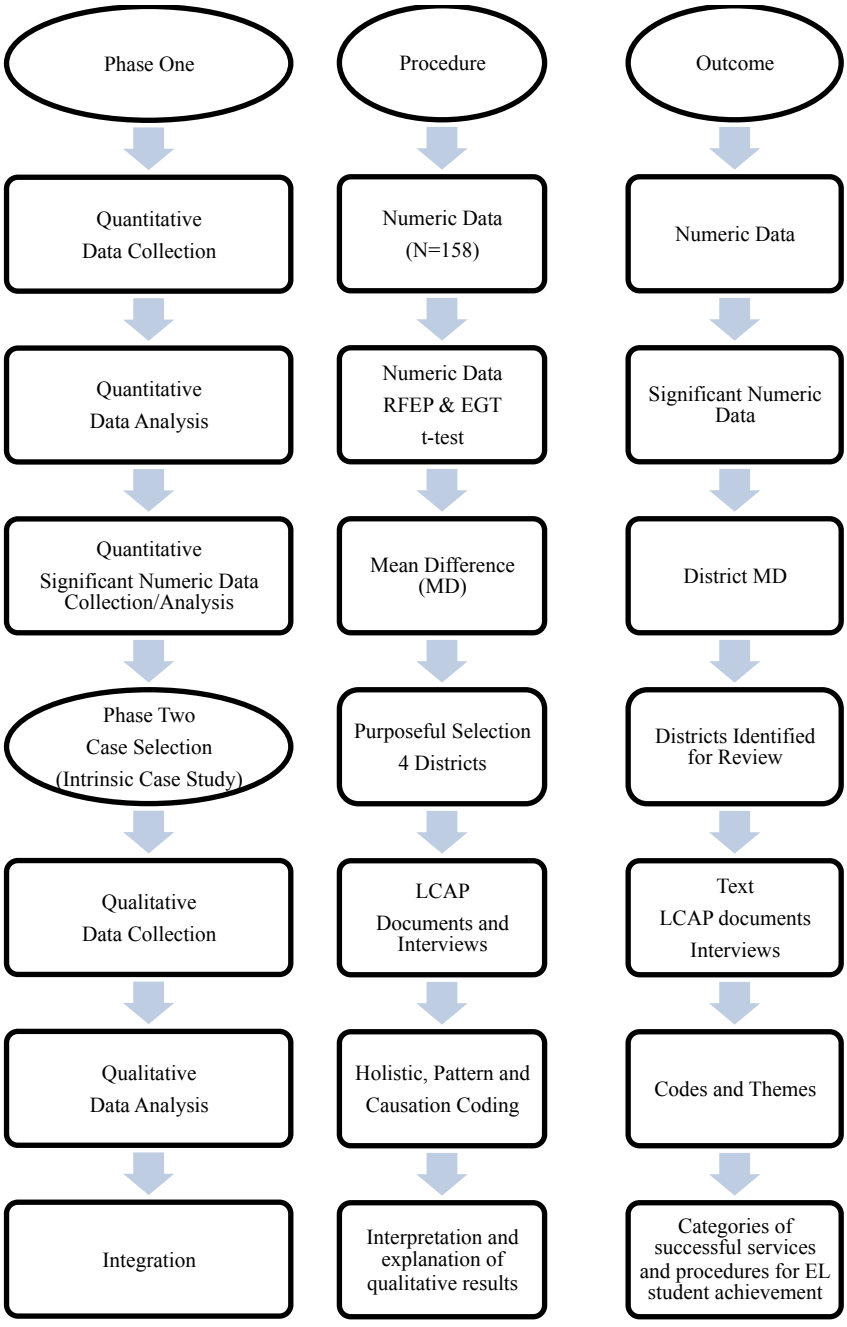

Figure 1. Explanatory Sequential Design Flow Chart

Participants

The target population initially selected to participate in the research study were all school districts in California that served students in kindergarten through 12th grade. The total number of districts (N=334) was then evaluated for the total population of EL students in each district. A district was eliminated from the study if its EL population was less than 500. This selection method ensures that the information obtained from the quantitative analysis can significantly contribute to learning about the issues associated with EL student academic outcomes generally in the follow-up qualitative phase (Patton, 2002). The total number of districts remaining in the study was (N=168). Of the remaining districts, not all had reported data to the California Department of Education (CDE) through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) regarding their Redesignated English Fluent Proficiency (RFEP) and English Language Learner Making their Growth Target (EGT) for school years 2010–2016. Districts that did not report data for the metrics for any of the years being analyzed in the study were eliminated to ensure accuracy of the data set. The total number of remaining California school districts participating in the study was (N=158). From this broad set of participants, four specific districts were examined in the case study analysis, as determined by the results of the first phase of quantitative analysis on EL student performance. These four districts are two with improved, and two with declining, English Language Learner achievement on the two state metrics—Redesignated English Fluent Proficiency (RFEP) and English Language Learner Making their Growth Target (EGT)—for school years 2010–2016. The selected districts are,

because of the structure of the LCFF, similar in student population and demographics; this study does not consider other geographic and demographic features beyond those used to calculate the amount of funding per district. In the qualitative phase of the study, key administrative personnel from two districts—selected by the participating districts—that were responsible for drafting and implementation of the LCAP plans were interviewed about actions and services provided to EL students by their district. These personnel were interviewed to provide additional insight to the nature of the relationship between the services provided to students (established in the districts' LCAP documents) and the increase in EL student success.

Procedures: Phase One

In phase one, the quantitative analysis of data was performed on publicly available, extent data collected by the California Department of Education (CDE), which are accessible via the Department's website (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/dr/eddata.asp). The CDE requires that all school districts report a number of metrics that measure student achievement. These statewide data were collected by the California Department of Education (CDE) through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) and aggregate data files provided by the CDE–Data Reporting Office website (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesenr.asp) to identify school districts based on the following criteria: (a) type of district (K–12), (b) total student population, (c) English Language Learner population, (d) free/reduced lunch population. This data file was downloaded as a spreadsheet that contained every school district in the state of California. The researcher prepared the data set to include only California K–12

public schools with at least 500 English Language Learners and contained data values for each of the aforementioned criteria. Next, RFEP and EGT data were downloaded from the government state site (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/dr/eddata.asp) to a second spreadsheet and using an Excel expansion plugin, Ablebits; the researcher then merged the RFEP and EGT data with the main spreadsheet to connect the two English Language Learner metrics with their appropriate parent district for subsequent analysis. The archived database was uploaded into SPSS statistics software for analysis.

The subsequent analysis was performed as a two-tailed, two-sample *t*-test and a Mann-Whitney U test to determine statistically significant student improvements in the two California state required English Learner metrics: Redesignated Fluent English Proficiency Rate (RFEP) and English Language Learner Growth Target (EGT). The median data for RFEP and EGT variables were then used to perform the calculation of the mean value difference for school districts with improved mean scores between two groups, 2010–2012 and 2013–2016 school years, respectively. Using the mean value difference calculation (MD), the two districts with the largest mean difference above and below the mean value of the two groups, 2010–2012 and 2013–2016, were identified to participate in phase two of the study.

Procedures: Phase Two

Phase two of the study, an instrumental case study, was performed on the four districts identified in phase one to participate in phase two of the research study. First, the LCAP document for the years 2013–2016 from each district displaying increased, or decreased, mean difference (MD) scores in EL student achievement were coded to

determine actions and services the district employed to support the improvement in student outcomes for EL students. Holistic coding of the LCAP document, specifically regarding the actions taken by the district and the services provided directly to EL students, were identified. The actions and services provided to all students in the district LCAP were not reviewed, as the assumption can be made that EL students would be included in such services. Holistic coding provided the researcher with an initial, broad categorization of the processes that districts asserted to be provided to EL students and their parents (Saldana, 2015). This coding generated a specific list of district actions and direct student services correlated to the quantitative data in phase one. Next, a second cycle of coding, pattern coding, was employed to group the "summarized codes" identifying emerging "meta codes" (Miles, Huberman & Sandana, 2014, p. 86).

During the cyclical coding of the LCAP documents, the researcher analyzed the varied occurrences of verbs used in the document to refer to services provided to EL students by the districts. This analysis consisted of the creation of a checklist divided into two categories—active and passive verb language—for identifying the characteristics and functions of verbs in the documents (Gay, 1996; Hyland & Milton, 2000). A tally was made of active and passive verb language used in the LCAPs in expositing the actions and services provided to each district's EL students. The verbs were then totaled and expressed as a percentage of active and passive verbs contained in the four reviewed LCAPs.

Finally, key administration personnel—who were directly responsible for the drafting and implementation of their district's LCAP plan—from the two districts that

showed increased mean difference scores were questioned in a structured interview for this study. The superintendents of both districts with improved EL student outcomes were contacted by phone and given an overview of this study. Both provided the name, email, and phone number of a district administrator who could speak to the district's LCAP process and participate in an interview for this study.

The interviewees received an email notification and phone call request to participate in the study in April 2017. Once the interviewee agreed to participate, a consent letter was sent via email. After the researcher received the consent letter, a phone conference was completed on a date and time requested of the interviewee. The protocol for the interviews may be found in Appendix A; each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes. The question posed in the interviews was the following: "Why do you believe your English Language Learners are successful in your district?" The interview memos were pseudonym-coded to ensure confidentiality and Causation Coding was applied, which correlates the attributes of specific services established in the LCAP documents with the increase in ELL student success (Franzosi, 2010; Maxwell, 2012; Saldana, 2015).

Data Collection

Data for phase one of the quantitative study were collected from the CDE website data files (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/dr/eddata.asp) for 158 K–12 districts with at least a student population of 500 English Language Learners, in the years 2011 to 2016, as well as the following data: (a) type of district, (b) total student population, (c) English Language Learner population, (d) free/reduced lunch population, (e) unduplicated student population. In addition, the following state

mandated LCAP metric data were collected: (a) English Learner reclassification and (b) English Language Learners reaching their growth target. These data were downloaded from California's statewide, extant data files, which can be found at a state government site (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/dr/eddata.asp).

In the second phase of data collection, the publicly available LCAP documents for each of the four districts analyzed in the second phase were obtained from the California Department of Education ED Data website (http://www.ed-data.org/). The documents were reviewed using Holistic and Pattern Coding procedures, focusing on district actions and student services provided to the targeted English Language Learner subgroup (Saldana, 2015). Since all district LCAPs used the same state mandated LCAP template, different forms of communication of services provided to EL students did not impact the comparison.

The last phase of data collection was performed by conducting interviews with key administrative district personnel. This allowed for the triangulation of aggregate codes found in the LCAPs, structured interviews, and verb identification patterns in these data, illuminating successful actions and services provided by districts for EL students with increases in student achievement (Dey, 1993; Franzosi, 2010; Maxwell, 2012; Miles et al., 2014; Morrison, 2009; Munton et al., 1999; Vogt et al., 2014). Data collection took place over three months from March 2017 to June 2017. All data obtained from interviews were collected with full permission of the participants and in full compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. The researcher kept all electronic files on a password-protected laptop.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis: Phase One. To answer research questions 1a, $1a_1$ and $1a_2$, a statistical analysis was conducted. First, it was established that student cohorts that were evaluated during the two academic school years 2011–2013 and those students who were evaluated during the three academic school years 2013–2016 are similar with respect to the student enrollment total, percentage of students on free/reduced lunch, and percentage of students who were English Language Learners. The fact that these cohorts were similar in these categories ensured that the cohorts generated similar amounts of additional funding for their districts through the LCFF's unduplicated pupil count. Then, the statistical analysis applied to answer question $1a_1$ and $1a_2$ was a two-tailed, two-sample *t*-test after checking for accuracy of assumptions to determine significance in RFEP and EGT between the two groups. The researcher leveraged the mean calculation created in this initial analysis and calculated the mean difference for all districts (N=158) to determine an individual district mean value for RFEP and EGT for each district between 2011 and 2016. This mean difference was used to determine the two highest performing and the two lowest performing districts on the measures of RFEP and EGT.

Qualitative Analysis: Phase Two. The second phase of this study consisted of a cyclical review of both publicly available LCAP documents and structured interviews. A case study was constructed with these documents, interviews, and the mean difference calculation. In combining these data, patterns and themes arose that point to the correlation between the content of LCAP documents, actions and services, local policy priorities, and EL student achievement. This practice of

triangulation allows for essential and persuasive conclusions to be drawn about the case (Yin, 2003). To answer, in a more particular manner, research questions 1, 1b, and 1c, phase two of data analysis utilized the mean difference calculated in phase one to determine which four districts from the total (N=158) were to participate in a qualitative follow-up case study. The districts identified have been pseudonym-coded as District A, District B, District C, and District D for confidentiality purposes. Holistic coding of the LCAP documents found summary codes of actions and services provided by the districts, and subsequently, pattern coding was used to generate themes that appear in the data.

As the cyclical coding of the LCAP documents occurred, a tally was made of active and passive verb language for each LCAP. The verbs were then totaled and the researcher created a percentage of active and passive verbs contained in the four reviewed LCAPs.

The researcher also completed interviews of two administrators, from Districts A and B, generating on-the-record transcripts for use in the study, as well as memos jotted by the researcher immediately following each phone interview. The interview data from the two manuscripts and memos were then causation-coded to uncover reasons and explanations for the districts' EL student success. This analysis established a causal relationship between the actions taken by districts to increase EL student success in their districts (Saldana, 2015). Table 1 summarizes the data collection and analysis used for each research question.

Table 1. Summary of Methods

Research Question	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Q1: How do school districts allocate state funding intended for the targeted population of English Language Learners?	• LCAP document • Actions and Services • Interviews	• Holistic Coding • Pattern Coding • Causation Coding
Q1a: What districts in California, with substantial EL student populations, perform highest and lowest on state-required LCAP metrics?	• RFEP • EGT	• Two tailed t-test • Mean Difference (MD)
$Q1a_1$: In these districts, what, if any, difference is there in the average "Percentage Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?	• RFEP	• Two tailed t-test • Mean Difference (MD)
$Q1a_2$: In these districts, what, if any, difference is there in the average "Percentage Making English Growth Target (EGT) Among the EL Population" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?	• EGT	• Two tailed t-test • Mean Difference (MD)
Q1b: What actions and services, related to LCAP goals, have these districts provided that might be linked to target student populations' academic achievement?	• LCAP document • Actions and Services	• Holistic Coding • Pattern Coding • Causation Coding
Q1c: How has the implementation of Local Control Funding Formula affected EL achievement in California?	• RFEP • EGT • Interviews	• Holistic Coding • Pattern Coding • Causation Coding • Two tailed t-test • Mean Difference (MD)

Limitations

This study focused only on public school districts servicing Kindergarten to 12th grade students with at least 500 English Language Learners. While most districts in California have submitted data to the state, the state noted that over 421 districts in the state did not report the required data to them by the deadline for incorporation into the extant data set. The scope and depth of this study was determined by using a mixed-methods approach for four districts in the second phase of analysis. The results generated in phase one of the study for individual districts, collected and presented in Appendix B of this study, but more in-depth study of all California districts will be left to future research on the topic of student outcomes and local control of funding.

Education literature suggests that student success can be measured in many ways, but in this study, EL student success is only defined by the two state-mandated measures for EL that are tracked in the data (Crawford, 2004). While conversations about the efficacy of the metrics may be necessary following an assessment of the current funding and accountability structure, this study will focus entirely on the observation of successful and unsuccessful districts as a way to initiate a conversation about disparities in districts' ability to meet their students' educational needs. In addition to the state-mandated measures, districts are allowed to include other measures of student success in their LCAP they deem important to their district, such as, district English and math assessments or school climate surveys, but these measures are not standardized or necessarily even used by districts.

Validity

The researcher employed multiple procedures for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research study to ensure validity of the data, results, and interpretation. The quantitative data source was drawn from a reliable state-collected data set that is used and reviewed publicly by multiple organizations. The design of the study centers around a cohort of participants that had valid scores in the state data set to ensure accurate statistical analysis. The large sample size, along with verification of assumptions for the quantitative analysis, confirmed the results for phase one of the research to be statistically valid. While other state metrics regarding ELs are available, such as, drop out rates, district math and English assessments, attendance rates, the rapid changes occurring in education funding systems in California during the time period studied did not have valid data sets available for those metrics, and it is for this reason that the current study examines RFEP and EGT, which were regularly reported and published for the years studied. The qualitative phase of the study employed the standardized technique known as triangulation. Triangulation, in the study, is evidenced by the use of data drawn from LCAP documents, interviews, and mean difference statistics on student achievement to ensure validity of qualitative results (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the findings of an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, in two phases (Creswell, Plano & Clark, 2011). The two phases of the study consisted, respectively, of the collection and presentation of the quantitative numeric data, and a qualitative keyword case study analysis that correlated LCAP actions and services for EL students with quantitative data (Creswell, 2007). The research questions that guided the study were:

1) How do school districts allocate state funding intended for the targeted population of English Language Learners?
    a) What districts in California, with substantial EL student populations, perform highest and lowest on state-required LCAP metrics?
        i) In these districts, what, if any, difference is there in the average "Percentage Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?
        ii) In these districts, what, if any, difference is there in the average "Percentage Making English Growth Target (EGT) Among the EL Population" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?
    b) What actions and services, related to LCAP goals, have these districts provided that might be linked to target student populations' academic achievement?

c) How has the implementation of Local Control Funding Formula affected EL achievement in California? As part of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, two phases of data collection were executed and followed by analysis of these data. The findings from the analysis are presented in the remainder of this chapter.

Phase One Findings

Descriptive Statistics. After cleaning the data, as described in chapter three of this dissertation, the archived database contained measures of English Language Learner performance scores for five specific student cohorts in the academic school years 2011–2012, 2012–2013, 2013–2014, 2014–2015, and 2015–2016. The useful data is from 158 school districts serving K–12 students in the state of California.

Preliminary Analyses. This study compares two independent samples of student cohorts, those students who were evaluated during the two academic school years 2011–2013, versus those students who were evaluated during the three academic school years 2013–2016. Prior to conducting the principal analyses, the data set was checked for consistency in the variables that determine supplemental funding under the LCFF—enrollment totals, percentage of students on free/reduced lunch, percentage of EL students, and unduplicated students from these categories—in the school years 2011–2013 versus 2013–2016. After validating this consistency, all districts were compared for the temporal groupings, using a two-tailed two-sample *t*-test. Assumptions for the *t*-test were evaluated and considered to be satisfied. There was not a statistically significant difference between the two temporal groupings with respect to the average Enrollment Total ($p = 0.98$), percentage of students on

free/reduced lunch ($p = 0.23$), or the percentage of students who were English Language Learners ($p = 0.70$). It was concluded the two groups were similar with respect to enrollment total, percentage of students on free/reduced lunch, and percentage of students who were English language learners.

Primary Analyses. In order to answer research question $1a_1$, a two-tailed two-sample *t*-test would be appropriate if the assumptions for the *t*-test were satisfied. The first assumption that must be satisfied for the two-sample *t*-test is that there are no extreme outliers in the dependent variable, which is RFEP in each temporal group (2011–2013 versus 2013–2016). This assumption was evaluated for the character of the outlier values, and the outlier values (shown in Figure 2, a box plot of RFEP Score for each temporal group, 2011–2013 versus 2013–2016) are within the range of possible outcomes, despite being outliers, and do not affect the effectiveness of the two-sample *t*-test. Thus, elimination of these outliers is not necessary.

The second assumption is that the dependent variable has a normal distribution for both groups. This assumption was evaluated by inspection of histograms of RFEP, separately, for each group. These histograms, figures 3 and 4 below, show some indications that the RFEP scores were not normally distributed and were, instead, right skewed. This is consistent with the outliers found in the box plots. Non-normal distributions can adversely affect the performance of the two-sample *t*-test.

The third assumption of the two-sample *t*-test, homogeneity of variance, is that the variance of the dependent variable is the same for both groups. This

assumption was evaluated using the Levene's test. The results showed the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated ($p = 0.72$).

The two-sample *t*-test has been shown to be robust against violations of the assumptions when the sample size is large (e.g. n > 30). The sample size for this study meets that threshold and the two-sample *t*-test is a viable method for answering research question $1a_1$. The average, and 95% confidence interval, for the average RFEP score for both temporal groups is shown in Figure 5 as an error bar chart. The figure illustrates that the 2013–2016 group had a smaller average RFEP score than the 2011–2013 group; however, the results of the *t*-test showed the difference was not statistically significant. The average (and standard deviation) RFEP score was 12.50 (6.83) versus 11.79 (6.86) for the 2011–2013 and 2013–2016 groups respectively, $t(788) = 1.41$; $p = 0.16$. Based on the results of the two-sample *t*-test, it was concluded that there is no significant difference in the average "Percentage Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016.

Because of possible violations against the second assumption of the *t*-test, arising from the right skewed results in the distributions of RFEP scores, the non-parametric equivalent of the two-sample *t*-test, the Mann-Whitney U test, was also performed. The Mann-Whitney U test does not assume normal distributions and can validate statistical significance despite outliers. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed there was a statistically significant difference in the distribution of RFEP scores between the two school years. The median RFEP score was 11.96 versus 10.97

for the 2011–2013 and 2013–2016 school years respectively, $U = 68364$; $z = -2.08$; $p = 0.038$.

The two tests produce two different results regarding the statistical significance of the difference in the two temporal groupings of student data. From a practical standpoint, the difference between the two temporal groupings was small. According to documented power analysis, a small, medium and large effect sizes for a two-sample *t*-test are $d = 0.2$; $d = 0.5$, and $d = 0.8$ respectively (Cohen, 1988). Based upon a sample size of 790, 316 in the 2011–2013 group and 474 in the 2013–2016 group and a pooled standard deviation of 6.85, the effect size for this analysis was $d = (12.49 – 11.79)/6.85 = 0.10$, which is a very small effect size.

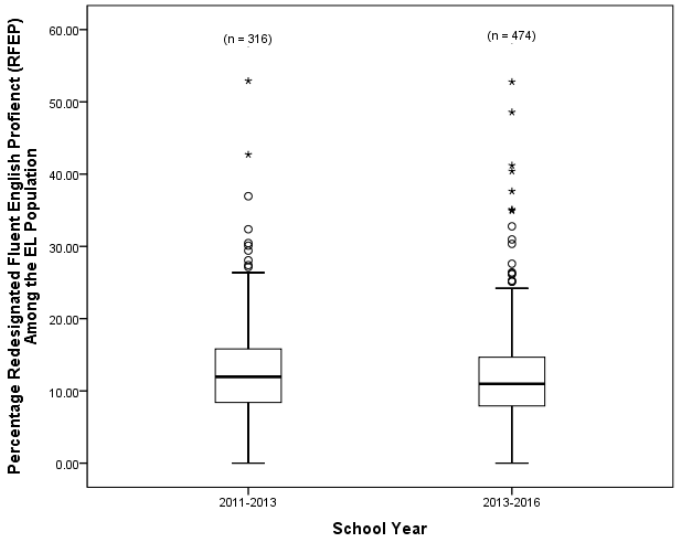

Figure 2. Box Plot of the RFEP Score Separately for each School Year Group.

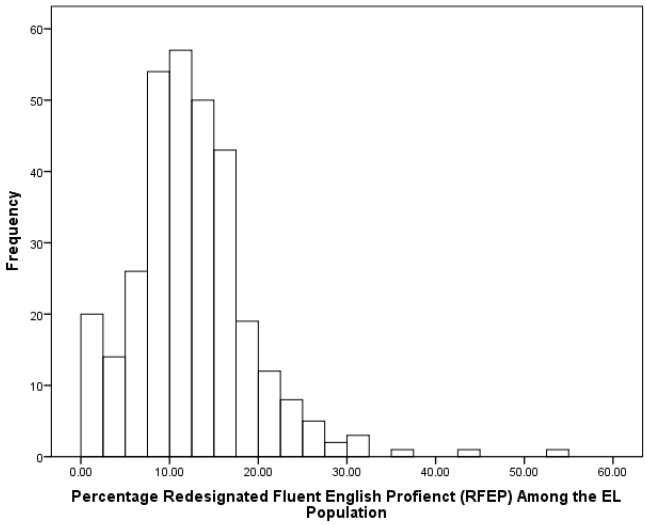

Figure 3. Histogram of the RFEP Scores for the School Years 2011 – 2013 (n = 316).

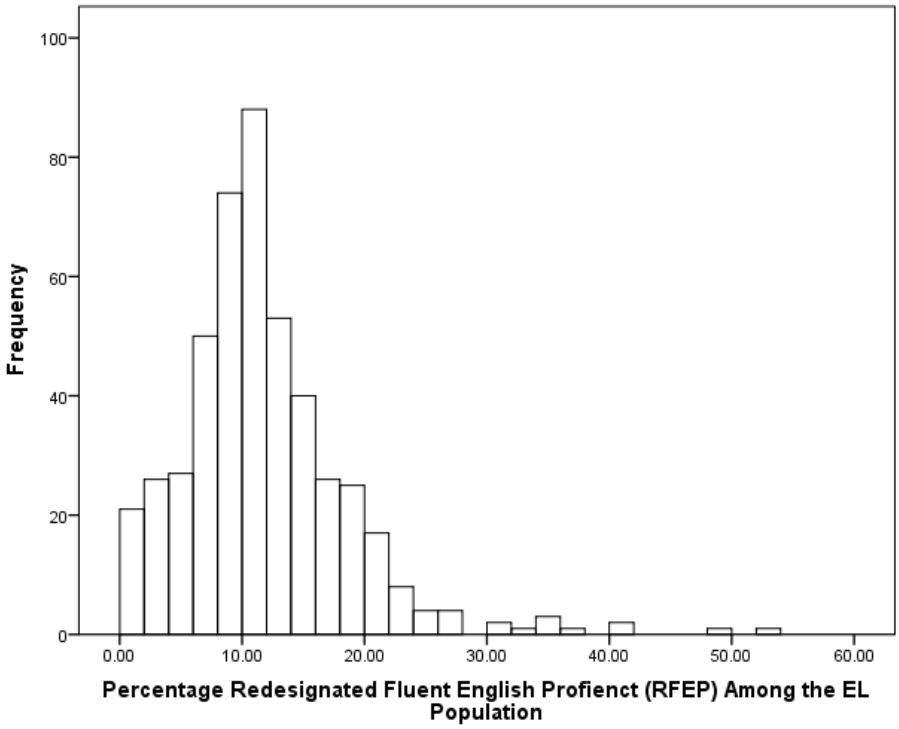

Figure 4. Histogram of the RFEP Scores for the School Years 2013 – 2016 (n = 474).

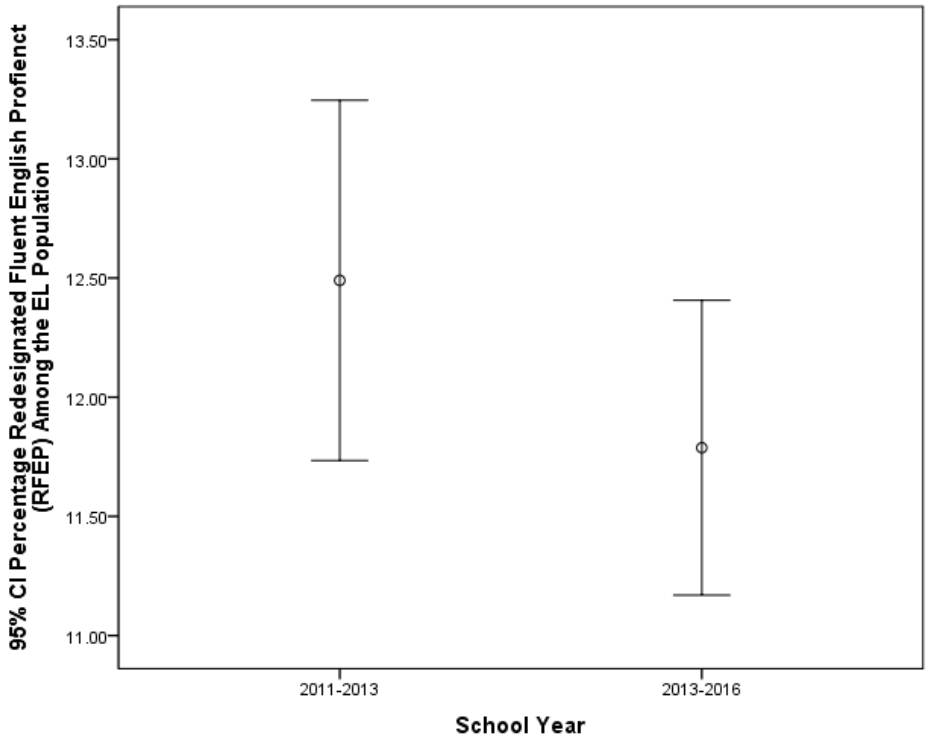

Figure 5.Error Bar Chart of the RFEP Scores Separately for each School Year.

In order to answer research question $1a_2$, a two-tailed two-sample *t*-test was again considered appropriate if the assumptions for the *t*-test were satisfied. The first assumption that must be satisfied for the two-sample *t*-test is that there are no extreme outliers in the dependent variable, EGT for either group (2011–2013 versus 2013–2016). There is, as with the RFEP score data, some evidence of outliers, especially in the 2013–2016 school year group, which could adversely affect the performance of the two-sample *t*-test. The outlying values were considered to be within range and, therefore, valid values. Thus, elimination of the extreme outliers was not considered to be appropriate for this analysis. Figure 6 shows these data as a box plot.

The second assumption is that the dependent variable has a normal distribution for both groups. This assumption was evaluated by inspection of

histograms of EGT, separately, for each temporal group. Figures 7 and 8 show very little evidence of non-normal distributions of the EGT scores for either school year group. The normality assumption was considered to be satisfied.

The third assumption, homogeneity of variance, is that the variance of the dependent variable is the same for both groups. This assumption was evaluated using the Levene's test. The results showed the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated ($p = 0.28$).

Figure 9 is an error bar chart, which shows the average and 95% confidence interval for the average EGT score, separately, for the two temporal groups. The figure illustrates that the 2013–2016 group had a smaller average EGT score than the 2011–2013 group. The results of the *t*-test showed the difference was statistically significant. The average (and standard deviation) EGT score was 53.32 (7.98) versus 47.85 (7.92) for the 2011–2013 and 2013–2016 groups respectively, and $t(628) = 8.65$; $p < 0.001$. Based upon the results of the two-sample *t*-test, it was concluded that there is strong evidence to suggest a smaller percentage of ELL students experienced growth during the 2013–2016 school years compared to 2011–2013.

In order to validate the use of the two-sample *t*-test for these data, the Mann-Whitney U test was also performed, since outliers and non-normal distributions do not affect the Mann-Whitney U test. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test also showed there was a statistically significant difference in the distribution of EGT scores between the two school years. The median EGT score was 52.68 versus 47.64 for the 2011–2013 and 2013–2016 school years respectively, and $U = 31018$; $z = -8.14$; $p < 0.001$.

Therefore, the results of the two-sample *t*-test and the Mann-Whitney U test were in agreement. There is statistically significant evidence to suggest the mean and median EGT score was smaller for the 2013–2016 school years compared to the 2011–2013 school years. Based on a sample size total of 630, 315 in the 2011–2013 group and 315 in the 2013–2016 group and a pooled standard deviation of 7.96, the effect size for this analysis was $d = (53.32 - 47.85)/7.96 = 0.69$, which is a medium to large effect size.

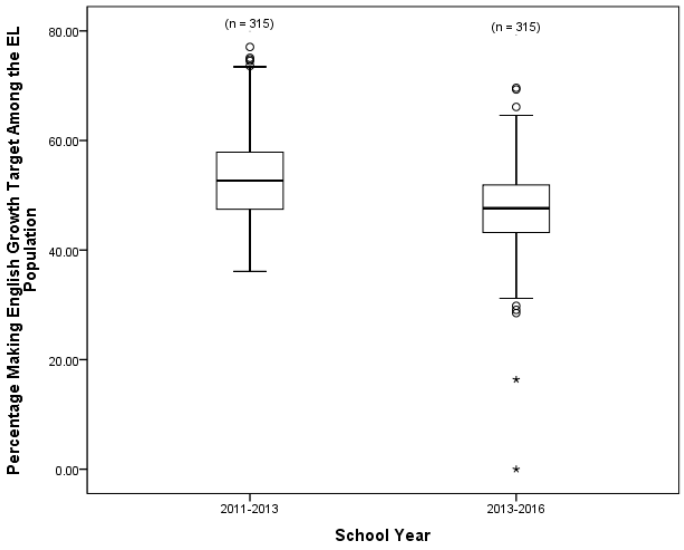

Figure 6. Box Plot of the EGT Score Separately for each School Year Group.

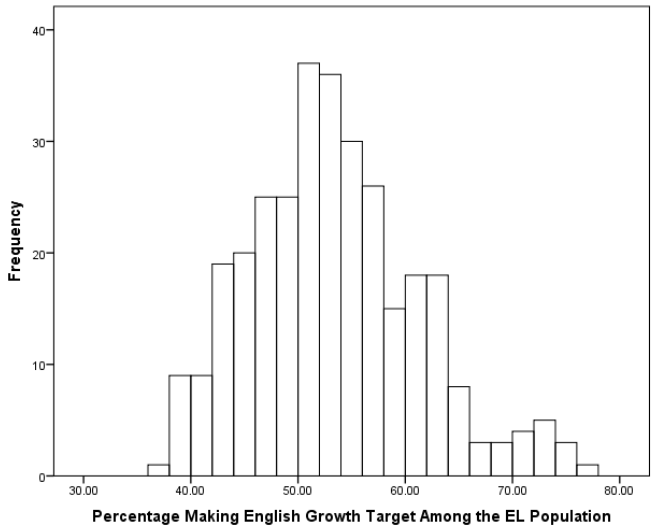

Figure 7. Histogram of the EGT Scores for the School Years 2011 – 2013 (n = 315).

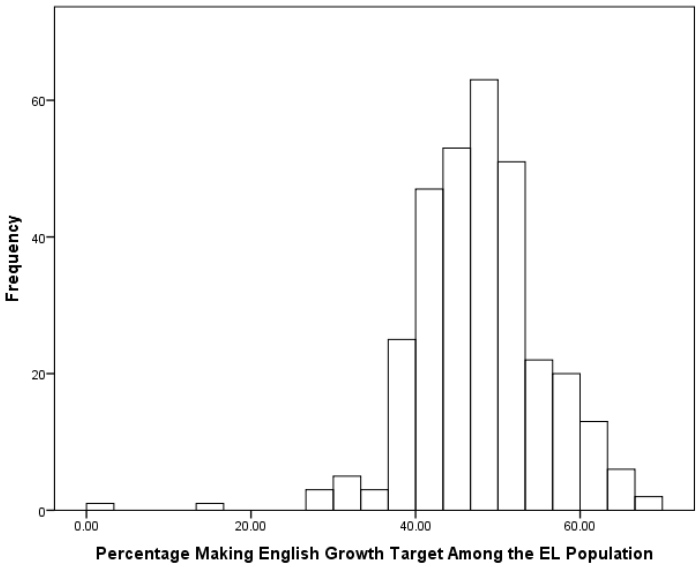

Figure 8. Histogram of the EGT Scores for the School Years 2013 – 2016 (n = 315).

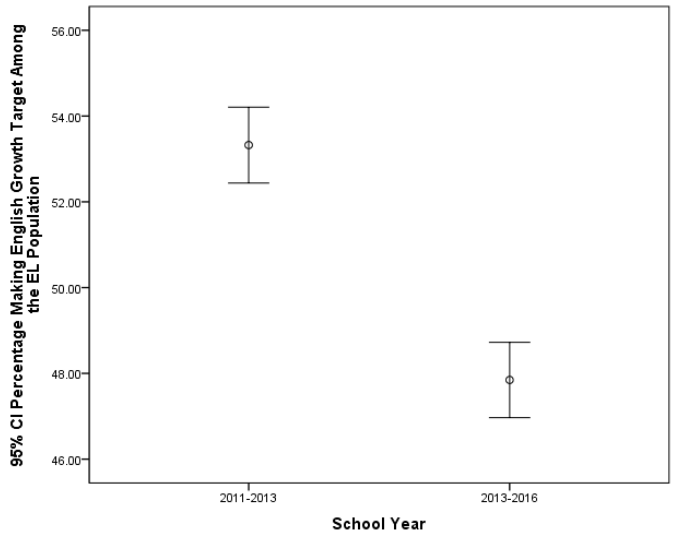

Figure 9. Error Bar Chart of the EGT Scores Separately for each School Year.

Mean Difference Calculation (MD). As part of the selection process for participants in phase two of this study, the phase one analysis provided mean values to calculate the mean difference (MD) for the group of students' pre- and post-LCFF implementation for each district. The results of the MD calculation identified the two districts with the highest and the two districts with the lowest performance on the RFEP and EGT for the two groups (2011–2013) and (2013–2016). Based on this calculation, District A, B, C, and D were selected for the follow-up qualitative phase of this study. Table 2 and 3 show the difference calculation for both metrics.

Table 2. Increased Mean Difference (MD) on RFEP and EGT Metric.

District	RFEP	EGT
A	16.06	7.21
B	13.28	11.99

Table 3. Decreased Mean Difference (MD) on RFEP and EGT Metric.

District	RFEP	EGT
C	15.18	13.74
D	19.65	7.99

Summary of Findings: Quantitative

The quantitative findings show that among districts studied in California, EL students performed better on both RFEP and EGT measures in the first temporal grouping (school years 2011–2013) versus the second grouping (school years 2013–2016), with the two groups being divided by the implementation of LCFF and LCAP in California. The MD calculation for all districts in California were then narrowed to the four districts studied in the qualitative analysis of the study. The four districts are referred to here as District A, B, C, and D. Districts A and B had mean difference scores that increased, while districts C and D had mean difference scores that decreased after the implementation of LCFF and the development of Local Control Accountability Plans.

Phase Two Findings

Qualitative Analysis. "We were determined to find ways to personalize the school experience for our English Language Learners and their families…communicating with parents at our stakeholder engagement meetings for our LCAP" (District A Administrator, interview, May 26, 2017). This determination, by a school administrator in one of the districts with improved EL achievement, reflects the attitudes of the Critical Community Strengths Framework. One of the key tenants of LCAP creation, and compliance with the LCFF funding expectations, is that districts undertake a stakeholder engagement process (CDE, 2016). This engagement process should inform a district's LCAP actions and services provided to its EL students. The Critical Community Strengths Framework focuses on raising awareness of institutional bias within higher levels of education policymaking and on

assuring that communities of color and low-income communities are at the center of school finance policy analysis (Guthrie & Rothstein, 1999). Since the LCAP is the document that contains both the actions and services provided to EL students and how state funding will provide those services, the new process of creating the LCAP requires opportunity for families and community stakeholders to provide input (CDE, 2016). The educational services needed for an EL student to attain the same academic achievement as their English fluent peers has long been debated and researched in the educational literature. This qualitative phase of the study examines multiple data sources, namely LCAP documents, interview manuscripts, and interview memos, to identify actions and services provided by four districts in California correlates them to success of those districts' EL population.

First, the analysis of LCAP documents from four districts in California was coded for actions provided to EL students and their families. At the outset, holistic coding was performed to determine qualitative categories that are present in each LCAP document. Then, pattern coding was applied, which generated five grouping themes: (a) Curriculum and Instruction, (b) Parent Support, (c) Professional Development, (d) Supplemental Instruction, and (e) District Policy Change. These themes were then triangulated with interview data and the quantitative data from the first phase of this study to provide further evidence of the success of services provided to EL students. The following interview data and analysis are presented by theme and are accompanied by data derived from the LCAP documents on EL improvement in Districts A and B, declining EL achievement in Districts C and D,

interviews with LCAP administrators from District A and B, and contextualized with the mean difference calculation (MD).

LCAP documents provide administrators, staff, parents, stakeholders, state and federal agencies with information about services and financial information about a district. The LCAP contains services for all students but also must specifically name the services provided to their unduplicated student population—students receiving supplemental and concentration funding, such as EL students (CDE, 2016). Upon initial review, the researcher noticed LCAP documents displayed services and actions provided to students primarily from two viewpoints. First, the researcher could clearly discern those services being provided by the district to support EL achievement but the services did not necessarily provide a direct service to the actual EL students themselves. The holistic codes created for analyzing the documents clearly delineated this difference and were notated as either a direct student service to the EL student or a district-level service of support for EL students.

District A and B: EL Improvement in MD. The evaluation of EL improving (District A and B) LCAPs, revealed multiple holistic codes. Codes pertaining to District Provided Services included purchasing supplemental curriculum, class size reduction, professional development, and contracting with consultants. Codes for Direct EL Student Support included: academic counseling, parent information nights, after school tutoring, extended school year, instructional practices, and parent resources. As stated in the LCAP document, District A included 24 such services and District B included 19 services specific to EL students. Below are excerpts from the

LCAPs of the services these two districts provided, as well as direct student services provided to EL students.

District A

Contract services with Cal-SOAP
Eliminate combination classes for … EL
Purchase curriculum from West Ed
Provide instruction in keyboarding…specifically for EL
Provide integrated instruction in art and music…targeted for EL
Provide professional development to improve English Learner achievement results
Provide bus transportation for English Language Learners

District B

Provide professional development on strategies for working with EL
Provide instructional aides for low performing students…EL
Provide quality ELD integrated and designated instruction
Provide instruction for parents in the use of technology
Create a community liaison…EL

This study included a cyclical review of the LCAP documents for District A and B and applied holistic and pattern coding that generated the final themes as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Pattern Coded Themes Derived from Holistic Codes for District A and B.

Pattern Code Themes	Holistic Codes District A	Holistic Codes District B
Curriculum and Instruction	• Specific Instruction (Not Core) • Purchase Supplemental Curriculum	• Purchase Software • Improved ELD Instruction • Instructional Practices (math and ELA) • Curriculum Writing
Parent Support	• Academic Counseling • Parent Information Nights • Parent Resources (No Internet) • Parent Involvement Approaches • Parent Liaison	• Communication with Parents • Access to Internet • Parent Instruction-Technology • Purchase Consultants • Parent & Community Liaison
Professional Development	• Curriculum Implementation • Hire and Train Teachers • Professional Development	• Professional Development • Improved ELD Instruction • Curriculum Writing
Supplemental Instruction	• Purchase Consultant • Purchase Programs • After School Tutoring • Extended School Year	• Instructional Aide • Extra Curricular Activities
District Policy Change	• Hire and Train Teachers • Professional Development Time • Class Size Reduction • Combo Classes • Bus Transportation	• Class Size Reduction • Hire and Train Teachers • Transportation

District C and D: EL Decline in MD. In their LCAP documents, District C contained 3 and District D contained 7 services specific to EL students, in which the researcher found only a few instances of EL support. Below are excerpts from the LCAPs these two districts provided to EL students.

District C

> Offer extended school day for English Learner students
> Offer…English Language Learner Summer School

District D

> Continue to develop a plan…EL students'…stakeholder engagement
> Continue to promote…parent participation…DELAC
> Continue counseling services

In evaluating District C and D's LCAPs, the same cyclical process of holistic coding and pattern coding was performed. While the cyclical coding yielded similar holistic and pattern codes, they were fewer in number and each district, and Districts C and D did not have any thematic overlap with themes that were included in District A and B's LCAP. The themes, found in the LCAPs of Districts C and D, are given in table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Pattern Coded Themes Derived from Holistic Codes for District C and D.

Pattern Coded Themes	Holistic Code District C	Holistic Code District D
Curriculum and Instruction		• Curriculum for ELD Instruction • Academic Counseling • Social Emotional Curriculum
Parent Support		• Stakeholder Engagement • Parent Committee
Professional Development		• Professional Development
Supplemental Instruction	• After School Tutoring • Extended School Year • Extended School Day	
District Policy Change		• Needs Assessment

Integration of LCAP and Interview Analysis

In this study, themes that emerged from the analysis of the LCAP data were integrated with the interviews of administrators in District A and B. After a thorough

review of the LCAP documents and the interviews, the five key categories were repeatedly mentioned: (a) curriculum and instruction, (b) parent support, (c) professional development, (d) supplemental instruction, and (e) district policy change.

Curriculum Instruction and Professional Development

The categories of curriculum and instruction were difficult to differentiate from professional development activities because they were closely linked, according to the interviewees. When initial themes from LCAP documents emerged, it was clear that curriculum and instruction referred specifically to the purchase of curricula for EL instruction and methods for implementing these curricula. These actions and services were constituted of both first time curriculum purchases and continuing the implementation of already purchased curriculum. The districts had additional actions for professional development on both implementation of newly purchased curriculum and additional training on instructional strategies for ELs. Teacher development, in this analysis, constitutes a separate action or service from the purchase and implementation of curriculum, although the two overlap in the LCAP documents.

LCAP document (District B) states that leadership personnel will "Provide Professional Development for strategies for working with EL students district-wide to improve achievement in ELA and math" under the category of curriculum and instruction, which specifically provides a service to EL students. This example suggests that training was provided, which instructed teachers on strategies specific to EL students to achieve in two core content areas**.** Regarding this service, Administrator B reported the following:

> We provided professional development for all our English teachers on the ELD standards to encourage the development of activities for students that focused on reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards in all English classrooms not just designated ELD classrooms.

One LCAP document (District B) states:

> Provide integrated art and music curriculum using District standards specially targeted for English Learners and Redesignated English Learners.

Similarly, the Administrator A stated:

> Our EL students are improving because we focused on curriculum development that is not English language heavy.
>
> Our professional development focus is on strategies across all our schools.
>
> These strategy trainings are expected to be evident in every classroom.

LCAP document (District A) states:

> Continue to develop a plan to provide Spanish bilingual support staff at school sites with high concentration of Spanish speaking students, English Learners, and/or Reclassified Fluent English Proficient to increase the level of stakeholder satisfaction with services provided across the district.

These examples suggest that an LCAP document with numerous and varied actions and service needs to be specific not only on curriculum purchases, but also on the implementation of professional development to increase instructional strategies. When these actions and services were provided, EL student success increased. When actions and services relating to curriculum or professional development were not clearly defined, understandable, or directly related to the EL learner, the achievement of EL students may have been dampened.

Parent Support

The category of parent support appeared more often in the LCAP documents for District A and B than District C and D. When parent support actions and services in the LCAP were documented and verified through interviews, the ways in which the district engaged and supported the parents were found to be similar, including highly active interventions in Districts A and B. However, District C had no parent support action steps and District D created only one action step specific to engaging parents. The action step that is included in District D's plan for parent support is required under statewide LCAP regulations, and needs to be completed with parents on yearly basis. The results of this review show the importance, for student success, of the parent support category in an LCAP document.

Services to provide parent support were established in the LCAP document for only three out of the four LCAP documents reviewed. One LCAP document (District A) states:

> Diversify invitation approaches for parent involvement in exiting opportunities: parent committees, workshops, service learning placements, exhibition judges' roles, and chaperones…
>
> Create a pro-active, supportive protocol for communicating directly with parents.
>
> Provide parent training on how to be an effective volunteer.

Administrator A explained how the district implemented these actions:

> We found ways to personalize our connection to parents through a variety of ways. We reached out through the regular ways at our DELAC and ELAC meetings, but really went above and beyond to try something new. Our superintendent did personal invites to key EL parents. We had teachers make phone calls for key meetings with parents, and we did mailings as opposed to just emails. Oh, and our robo-calls were in Spanish for our EL families which we had not done before.

The LCAP document for District B states:

> Provide instruction to parents on the use of technology.
>
> Create partnerships with parents.
>
> Create a community liaison.
>
> Provide transportation to parents and their families to school events to improve connectedness.

Administrator B explained the actions briefly:

> We also really worked hard to reach our parents of our EL students.
>
> We reached out at our sites but now have a community liaison.

For the category of parent support, the LCAP document for District D only states:

> Continue to promote parental participation in District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC) (ELAC).

Since District A and B had improving EL achievement, these examples suggest that an LCAP document with actions and services specific to parent support may assist with EL achievement at the district level. In addition, the examples show evidence that simply providing an action step regarding parents beyond the state's minimum standard correlates to greater achievement of EL students.

Supplemental Instruction

The supplemental instruction category was discovered in three out of the four LCAP documents, District A, B and C. For this category, written LCAP statements are followed by excerpts from the interviews that further explain how actions and services were implemented and performed. From these data, services for supplemental instruction to support EL students were categorized in the LCAP document. One LCAP document (District A) states:

> Institute after-school tutorial programs at every site, three days a week targeting English Learners.
>
> Support summer school for English Learners.

Regarding these services, Administrator A stated:

> We had tutoring before but not at all sites and not as often. But more importantly was that we targeted our EL students specifically to

> attend. We had teachers reach out to families and sell the tutoring program.

District B's LCAP document stated:

> Provide sufficient elective and extracurricular activities for students to increase student engagement.

Similarly to Administrator A, Administrator B explained that the services provided in this area were improvements on their existing services:

> We are also offering more ... and extracurricular activities than we did before...[well] we had them before…wait, we added transportation so the kids could actually stay after school and participate.

One LCAP document (District C) states:

> Offer Extended school day for English Learner students.
>
> Offer an English Learner Summer School.

Three districts, —A, B, and C—had a similar amount of actions and services in the supplemental instruction category available for ELs. Clearly the intent of these districts was to provide additional instruction to students, but the voice of the language in the action steps is action-oriented in District A's and B's LCAP, as opposed to how they appear in Districts C and D, where the language centers on "offering" additional programs for students without an expected outcome. In the interviews with Administrators A and B, they explained that they were actively pursuing students to attend these programs, as well as offering additional or improved programs, compared to their years prior to LCAP development.

District Policy Change

The category of district policy change was generated in the cyclical review of LCAP documents and remained a consistent theme in the interviews. Districts A and B had several actions and services that formed the basis for policy changes at the district level. District C did not have any actions and services for this category, while District D's LCAP contained only one. It became evident that Districts A and B made several changes for EL students at the district level to respond to their needs at the school site. These excerpts show LCAP and interview content regarding district policy changes, specifically for actions and services provided for EL student populations.

District A's LCAP reads:

> Hire and retain highly qualified teachers. Highly qualified teachers will provide specific services to students and families of English learners. For example teachers, will provide instructional resources available to families that they can access from home.
>
> Provide bus transportation for English Learners…in order to improve student attendance and more time in class learning.

Administrator A explained:

> This action step is not just a blanket statement we put in our LCAP for our HR department. We want teachers to be highly qualified once we hire them, which in this case means understanding and learning how to work with EL families and understanding the needs of the EL student community. We then hope this knowledge helps the teachers deal with the needs of their students right now in their classroom.
>
> We offer bus transportation for free to all EL families regardless of boundary requirements or income status. We even expanded that to include after school activities but also school events like Back to School Night. Parents and students can ride the bus.

District B's LCAP document states:

> Retain class size reduction for elementary schools.
>
> Recruit, hire, and retain highly qualified teachers to continue to provide excellent teaching.
>
> Provide transportation to parents and families

Similarly, Administrator B stated:

> We added transportation so the kids could actually stay after school and participate.
> We no longer have a financial incentive for class size reduction but in our engagement about the LCAP, our staff felt it was important…so we kept it in the elementary schools.

District D's LCAP includes one district policy change, as follows:

> Develop and implement a comprehensive needs assessment system to address the needs of Long Term English Learners (LTELS).

The LCAP documents and interviews provided evidence that some districts were making changes to district policies in order to provide additional support for their EL student population. Districts with improving achievement for EL students, District A and B, contained more instances of these changes than District C and D in their LCAP documents. In addition, the interviews with administrators described the ways these changes were affecting the EL student population for their district. These accumulated data highlight the need for districts to consider how district policies may affect EL achievement, collect and interpret data generated by the LCAP and LCFF process, create solutions that can be added to subsequent LCAPs, and use this process to effectively close the achievement gap between the EL students and the general student population as a part of a regime of continuous improvement.

Verb Analysis. As the cyclical coding occurred, the researcher noticed the patterns in verb use in the description of actions and services by districts in LCAP

documents. The LCAP documents of two, District A and B, used language that indicates school personnel are actively doing the work described. The verbs used in District A and B were action oriented in nature, as opposed to the passively suggestive in contextual meaning as seen in District C's and D's LCAPs. Districts A and B both used active verbs in 100% of their action and service statements, as opposed to District C and D which used 0% and 38% respectively. The results of the verb analysis of all four Districts' LCAP are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Verb Analysis of EL Actions and Services in LCAP documents for Districts A, B, C and D.

Verb Language	District A	District B	District C	District D
Active Language (# of times used)	Provide (10) Support (1) Eliminate (1) Purchase (1) Contract (1) Receive (1) Retain (1) Implement (1) Institute (1) Diversify (1) Create (1)	Provide (11) Improve (3) Retain (3) Recruit (1) Purchase (1) Increase (1) Contract (1) Create (4) Implement (1)	Not Used	Promote (1) Develop (3) Implement (1)
Passive Language (# of times used)	Not used	Not used	Offer (3)	Continue (3)
% of Active Language Use	100%	100%	0%	38%

This difference in language correlates to better outcomes for EL students, and, as corroborated by the interviews in this study, refers to ongoing efforts (in Districts A and B) to introduce new actions and services for EL students or improve existing services. In contrast, Districts C and D often relied on passive language that indicates

no change, innovation, or improvement in the services and actions that target their EL students, and correlates with a decline in EL student achievement.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Overview of the Problem

Since the mid-1990s, research on education funding and student achievement has been focused on top-down funding models at both the state and national levels. The funding reforms of the 1990s and 2000s tended toward this style of education financing and accountability, wherein local control of funding priorities were deemphasized in favor of high-stakes testing and compliance. In 1993, the State of Texas passed SB 7, which introduced the main components of a top-down funding and accountability system (Vasquez Heilig, Ward, Weisman, & Cole, 2014). This model was later adopted at the national level under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Particular motivation behind this funding model was to close the achievement gap that exists between White and affluent students and their Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged peers (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2014). The model, as implemented in Texas and later at the federal level, has done little to close the achievement gap (Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Dee, Jacob, & Schwartz, 2012).

The body of research available on top-down, high-stakes testing and accountability has failed to deliver on the promise of improving education for all students, especially those at-risk student groups (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2017). In addition, copious amounts of literature specific to increased school funding are varied on outcomes for EL student achievement (Van der Klaauw, 2008; Dee et al., 2012; Hendricks & Barkley, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013, Ramirez, Siegrist, Krumholz, & Rainey, 2011; Matsudaira, Hosek, & Walsh, 2012). All of this

literature uses complex research models to study non-transparent funding streams making concrete successful models of practice difficult to pinpoint.

Because of the monumental shift from top-down to bottom-up funding and accountability in California, much is still needed to understand what is best for student outcomes. Affeldt (2015) notes that while California's leap into a new funding paradigm has the potential to create new and innovative ways to serve student populations, the state still needs to address some problems in its role as the generator of funds and overall arbiter of accountability for the public.

This study is one of the first that utilizes a mixed method to analyze student outcomes under the LCAP and LCFF funding paradigm. It first focuses on establishing a statistical correlation on two state measures, RFEP and EGT, to determine district success with EL student populations. Additionally, this study analyzes, qualitatively, aspects of the LCAP and interrogates the connection between how the LCAP goals, actions, and services of particular districts are written and the correlation with EL student achievement in two high-achieving and two low-achieving districts. Specifically the following questions were addressed in the study:

1) How do school districts allocate state funding intended for the targeted population of English Language Learners?
    a) What districts in California, with English Language Learner student populations perform significantly better on state-required LCAP metrics?
        i) What, if any difference is there in the average "Percentage Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016? What, if any difference is

there in the average "Percentage Making English Growth Target (EGT) Among the EL Population" between the school years 2011–2013 versus the school years 2013–2016?

b) What actions and services, related to LCAP goals, have districts provided that might be linked to target student populations' academic achievement?

c) How has the implementation of Local Control Funding Formula affected English Language Learner's achievement in California?

This chapter summarizes the findings from the research, connecting them to the literature contained in chapter two to elucidate the study's results. In addition, implications for practice, policy, and social justice are described along with suggestions for future research to advance practical applications.

Summary of Findings

Phase One. The researcher used an explanatory mixed-methods design to answer the research questions in the first phase of the study. Using statistical methods, the study suggests that EL students attending K–12 school districts in California did not improve on two state wide collected metrics, RFEP and EGT, when compared to the two years prior to the 2013's legislative implementation of LCFF funding model. Research question $1a_1$ and $1a_2$ were addressed with a two-tailed, two sample t-test on group data collected by the state of California for these two measures —RFEP and EGT. The analysis showed that the EL student group achievement in 2011–2013 was better on the two metrics prior to the LCFF implementation in Academic Years 2013–2016. While this method relied on state tests to obtain its values, literature suggests that this reliance on a single measure for determining

student success can be sufficiently empirical and valid, but does not necessarily provide a complete picture of the student achievement (Dee, 2012; Lee, 2012; Neymotin, 2010). The study used these measures because, currently, the state considers these measures when determining student achievement of EL students. In addition, the focus of the research was also to obtain a sample of districts that may have shown improvement with EL students; therefore, it was appropriate to use the results for purposeful selection, which set up a more detailed analysis of particular districts.

Research question 1a was answered by calculating the mean difference in EL student achievement metrics, for all districts, in the two temporal groupings. When individual districts' mean difference values were determined for all 158 K–12 districts studied, 51 had some improvement in their RFEP scores, while 12 had improvement in EGT, and out of the total sample, only two improved on both metrics. The growth seen during the years prior to LCFF implementation—when budgets had strict guidelines of restricted funds spending as opposed to the unrestricted budgetary dollars introduced in the LCFF paradigm—suggests other variables at play for student success than just funding availability. The funding available to districts was made unrestricted and could be spent on any services the district prioritized. The literature suggests funding increases do not necessarily correlate to the success of the at-risk student population that generated the additional funding (Jimenez-Castellanos & Rodriguez, 2009). Studies often show that a lack of transparency, increasing personnel or administrative costs, and ambiguity of how funds were spent are the main issues in funding and student success in the past; these

transparency issues should be resolved under the LCFF legislation. The legislation now requires that all districts publish all services for at-risk student populations, as well as how they will evaluate those services in their publicly available district LCAP. As part of this legislation, the cost of those services should be clearly provided too (CDE, 2016).

Phase Two. Research question 1, 1b and 1c relied on the qualitative results to elicit how state funding was allocated to EL students and determined the services provided for those students since the enactment of LCFF. The researcher used document analysis of LCAPs for two districts with improved and two districts with declining EL achievement on the measures of RFEP and EGT for comparison. Follow-up interviews with administrators in the two EL improved districts were also performed to augment this analysis. The results suggest that districts with improved metrics for EL students had written multiple, visible services for these students into their LCAP and the services provided were actively working at engaging the EL student, their parents, and district staff in specific ways of support. This study found that five key categories emerged for the allocation of supplemental and concentration funds; namely, (a) curriculum and instruction, (b) parent support, (c) professional development, (d) supplemental instruction, and (e) district policy change, encompassing the services provided to the EL student population. In addition, the active and passive language content of the written action steps in the LCAP documents provided further context in the level of support that EL students would receive, and correlated with improvement and decline in EL student achievement metrics, respectively. This document analysis of two districts' LCAPs with declining

EL achievement was performed and showed that very few services were implemented, or improved, for EL students in the districts. The services did align to the same categories—curriculum and instruction, parent support, professional development, supplemental instruction and district policy change—however, the services were limited in number and scope, and most often referred to continuing already existing programs with no improvement or expansion. The LCAP document of these lower performing districts did not contain services in all five categories and the few services that were documented used passive language with no evidence of new or improved services for their EL students. In one document, from the district with the greatest decline in EL achievement, the only services provided were continuations of programs that were required by California state law prior to LCFF, rather than programs that are reflections of community needs. The results suggest that when a district creates their LCAP, administrators and stakeholders should include direct services to EL students in at least these five categories: curriculum and instruction, parent support, professional development, supplemental instruction and district policy change. Also, the lower performing districts may have viewed the LCAP process more strongly focused on compliance, thus not resulting in achievement improvements (O'Malley et al., 2012; Warren, 2016). The lower performing districts' lack of direct student support did not provide the EL student population with the OTL needed to create parity with their peers (Lee, 2012). The interviews with district administrators, included in this study, validated the categories of action services being utilized in successful districts, but also shed light on the importance of district culture, attitudes, and expectation for administering the policies

to accomplish the aims and goals of these services. The administrators clarified, in these interviews, that the expectations to implement these services successfully were made explicit among district personnel and consistently monitored for compliance and success. All four districts wrote LCAP documents that satisfied the requirement under the law, but the quality of the actions and services between the higher performing districts and the lower performing districts were clear.

Implications of the Study

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design to analyze the EL academic achievement and its possible causes in California for the years 2011–2016. After the quantitative phase, wherein successful EL achievement was found, an in-depth, intrinsic case study on four districts revealed actions and services that correlated to EL student success. The quantitative analysis, paired with the qualitative analysis, showed that the services that were present in the LCAP led to the conclusion that for districts to have a noticeable increase in EL student achievement, they must have visible services that target their EL student population. The document analysis of LCAPs and subsequent interviews illuminated the link between services provided, the processes initiated by the district for engaging stakeholders, and increases in EL student achievement. The evidence suggests that when districts engage in the process of LCAP development by including actions and services specific to EL students, in at least five categories, they are more likely to improve EL achievement. This study provides evidence that the method of qualitatively analyzing LCAP documents for active language action steps that are specifically directed at EL student groups, may improve the outcomes for ELs. In

addition, the study provided evidence that in districts that actively engage with parents and staff in the development of those services contained in the LCAP document, EL achievement subsequently increased.

Implications for Practice

These findings are relevant to districts and county offices of education for a few reasons. First, under the LCFF and LCAP funding scheme, policy priorities are created, implemented, and observed at the district level, and these findings speak directly to the LCAP creation process and improved outcomes for student achievement. Second, these findings are relevant to the review process for county offices of education, which provide assistance and support to districts in the creation and submission process for the LCAP document, because, as Warren (2016) suggests, county offices should ground district accountability in a cycle of continuous improvement going forward.

In the era of local control in California, targeted funding that is generated by EL students is not necessarily spent directly on increasing achievement among these students. Vasquez Heilig et al. (2016) call this approach as the "non-segregative" approach, wherein EL students are not receiving benefits that are precisely tailored to increasing their English language instruction or success, but instead have equal access to the programs that the funds are used to support and create. This non-segregative approach is evident—as shown in this study, in the LCAPs of Districts C and D in the second, qualitative phase—and the non-segregative approach correlates with a decrease in EL student achievement. While the specificity and depth of this study do not make it possible to generalize at the statewide level that all non-segregative

measures are harmful to EL student success, the correlation that is established in this study does illustrate a need for consideration of EL students when creating actions and services at the district level.

This correlation generates the recommendation that districts with a substantial EL population should make EL students visible in LCAP documents by providing targeted programs and improvements in services that directly link funds allotted by the state with a plan to increase achievement for those students. The two districts in this study that improved the achievement of their EL student populations engaged students, parents, and the community in the process of improving services, improved curriculum and professional development, and increased supplemental instruction specifically for EL students, making their EL population visible in the districts' goals. For districts that have substantial EL populations, prioritizing increased achievement for EL students starts with making those students visible in their LCAP.

Following this recommendation, the implications for practice at the county level are to use the LCAP review process as a way to guide districts in improving EL student outcomes by suggesting that EL services be included in districts' LCAPs and, as part of a larger move toward the county as partner in accountability, devise appropriate interventions for districts that need to improve the achievement of their EL students (Warren, 2016). Under the new funding and accountability systems in California, much is still being worked out about the role that county offices play as stakeholders in the LCAP process. This study recommends that as counties and districts continue the process of developing these roles, particular challenges—such as EL student achievement—should be placed at the center of the larger dialog, which

could lead to better systems of accountability and serve as a key area where discussions about the role of counties is resolved.

As county superintendents and administrators continue to see their role in this process "as the primary source of help for underperforming districts," (Warren, 2016; p. 13), new accountability measures are likely to become the substance and identity of that role. This study showed that because of the mixture of quantitative and qualitative data involved in the LCAP and LCFF, mixed-methods techniques for the analysis of district performance are paramount. The explanatory sequential mixed-methods design of this study was devised as a way of accessing both the subjective and objective elements of funding for K–12 education in California and pairing them together to give a more holistic view of districts' challenges and actions in tackling them. An implication of this study is that this, and other mixed-methods techniques, should be applied as part of accountability practices that are only now becoming codified throughout the state.

Implications for Policy

In his "State of the State" address from 2013, Governor Jerry Brown explained, "subsidiarity is the idea that a central authority should only perform those tasks which cannot be performed at a more immediate or local level" (Brown, 2013). While the concept of local control may have broader political implications, in terms of education funding, it enables districts to have the power to prioritize how state funds support programs within their context of their local, demographic, and cultural needs. The role of the state has not entirely disappeared from the education landscape

under the LCFF. Affeldt (2015) notes that the state is still a stakeholder in education finance, and it still plays important parts in teacher credentialing and overall funding.

Under the LCAP and LCFF, decisions about particular policies and outcomes are being made closer to the level of instruction, and policy becomes more closely related, and possibly more causal to student outcomes. The communities where EL students reside should have input into the services being provided to ensure that EL students succeed. Under local control, each district has the legislative license to create and implement those policies needed to support their EL population. In this study, evidence is presented that when districts engage stakeholders, create policies to support actions that make their EL students visible, and implement services directly for EL students, improvements occur in the outcomes for those students.

As districts set polices locally, they begin the process of a cycle of improvement where equitable funding practices can be practiced. Furthermore, when districts begin to use research methods that employ both quantitative and qualitative measures, districts, with the assistance of county offices, can begin to keep themselves accountable (in collaboration with community stakeholders) and engaged in a cycle of inquiry and improvements to further their actions and services for at-risk, underprivileged, and minority students. Now that we are in the era of local control, a new set of skills are being developed by districts that have not implemented these types of inquiries of programs and services. Policy makers need to support county offices of education to provide guidance and oversight on best practices.

The need for expert data analysis and policy research to inform in the creation and analysis of LCAP goals, actions, and services may indicate that local

administration—at districts and/or counties—should consider creating additional positions or roles that are data and policy oriented. These positions could help establish the necessary components of an accountability routine that is, as of yet, still in its nascent stage. Greater mindfulness of the empirical outcomes of the ongoing process to implement local control will result in a greater ability to establish effective accountability systems at the appropriate levels while improving outcomes for districts and their students. Simultaneously, greater mindfulness of the challenges that communities face and a process to make those challenges visible in local policies, is key to establishing effective accountability.

Implications for Further Research

Research being done at the local level could be instrumental in creating a cycle of improvement and codifying new accountability systems that are now being established. Explorations of LCAP documents have shown—in this study and in Vasquez Heilig et al. (2016)—that some LCAP documents do not even meet a basic level of compliance, sites and districts occasionally reported erroneous data, and that, while accountability is being reconstructed, districts are prone to continue accountability measures that rely on high-stakes testing from the NCLB era (which is often needlessly punitive) instead of drawing on the strengths of their community to improve accountability measures. Research on the data generated at the local level for accountability purposes is likely best analyzed at district and county levels, which would allow local administrators to direct research through their intimate knowledge of the particular challenges of sites, neighborhoods, and districts.

As the state collects and publishes data that are generated at the local level, it becomes the task of education and policy researchers to focus on the local level policies that are being instituted, their efficacy, and ways to improve districts' abilities to meet the needs of the communities they serve. The elements of subsidiarity in the LCFF and LCAP funding system introduced a great deal of complexity to education finance in California, but with that complexity comes greater latitude for research into what works in improving the quality of K–12 education. This complexity needs to be met with greater attention to the needs of local communities without the expectation that the state will homogenize systems of accountability or best practices for instituting actions and services at the local level.

This study presents an in-depth analysis of only one subgroup that is recognized in the LCFF by means of generating targeted funding. As of yet, very few studies have been done regarding the LCFF in practice, and this study provides the first in-depth analysis that links together one subgroup's performance with the content of local level policies. Further analyses of the state data collected as part of the bottom-up funding and control paradigm are needed to assess the efficacy of California's funding system. These studies would include analysis of the outcomes for (a) EL students, (b) free/reduced lunch eligible students, (c) homeless and foster youth, as well as (d) the general student population, under the new funding formula. In addition, studies of wider scope than this one could utilize the statewide database to look at each level—state, region, county, and district—to examine the effects and efficacy of any of the elements of the funding scheme on California's K–12 students.

In the process of conducting the present study, some data compiled and published by the California Department of Education were found to be inconsistent and incomplete. This is likely due to the ongoing process of creating new accountability systems at the state and local level (Affeldt, 2015; Warren, 2016). Research into these errors could yield policy recommendations that further strengthen the goals of data-driven accountability.

Research into the outcomes of funding under the LCFF could add to the wider literature on how funding levels affect student outcomes. As noted in chapter two of this dissertation, studies on funding and student outcomes from the NCLB era often have data that are not specific enough to disaggregate funding sources, or analyze systems that do not supply targeted funding. In contrast, the simplicity and transparency of the LCFF creates, at the state level, a consistent laboratory for understanding the effects of funding for traditionally underserved students. However, the LCFF also produces much more complexity and variance in policy at the local level, and further study of how funding levels correlate to student outcomes are necessary, and will likely result in a multiplicity of specific causes, conditions, and variables that can be disaggregated.

Significance of the Study

This study continues research that interrogates the link between K–12 funding and student outcomes. Because of the LCAP's unique situation of transparency and use of unrestricted state funds that must be explicitly accounted for by supplying detailed site-level data and a list of actions and services provided to students, results of this study offer an in-depth view of how the visibility of EL students in local policy

correlates to increases in EL student success. The study also emphasizes methods for analyzing the LCFF and LCAP paradigm that equally accounts for both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the funding system.

This study builds on previous research on the relationship between education spending levels and student outcomes for low-income, EL, and homeless students (Van der Klaauw, 2008; Dee et al., 2012; Hendricks & Barkley, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos & Okhremtchouk, 2013, Ramirez, Siegrist, Krumholz, & Rainey, 2011; Matsudaira, Hosek, & Walsh, 2012). This body of research, however, often suggests that funds have a negative or neutral relationship on student funding. By analyzing district level policies that have been implemented at four districts in California, the negative or neutral relationship found in these studies can be explained as effects of complex funding streams, poor implementation or accountability, and lack of effective targeting. The body of research that shows increases in student achievement based on increases in funding is supported by this study, insomuch as transparent funding in California, as well as local accountability, makes clear that districts that provide EL students with visible, substantive improvements in actions and services have the capacity to increase student achievement with targeted funding (Jones & Slate, 2010; Neymotin, 2010; Henry, Fortner, & Thompson, 2002).

The demands of the LCAP process are high and the expectation to involve community members in its development is new to districts and county offices (Warren, 2016; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2017). In addition, ensuring that EL student populations are getting effective services from their districts under this new funding system is in need of review (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2017). This study adds directly to

the burgeoning conversation about the LCAP and LCFF: the real-world results of the switch to local control, the need for new systems and methods for local oversight and accountability, and the need for an in-depth discussion about how the LCFF addresses equitable educational opportunities for EL students (Affeldt, 2015; Warren, 2016; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2017).

This study addressed, in-depth, ways that districts engaged in this process of LCAP development; it stands as an example of a method for quantitative analysis of student outcomes in the context of the LCFF. Through the careful review of programs, using qualitative methods that are triangulated with quantitative methods, districts would be able to engage in self-reflection and accountability at the local level. This local review is imperative for the shift to local priorities (Vasquez-Helig et al., 2017). This is powerful in providing a method that districts can use to self-assess their programs through both quantitative and/or qualitative means so they can engage in a cycle of continuous improvement.

Limitations

The depth of its scope and methodology limits the conclusions of this study. Specifically, the analysis of four districts, from 158, was purposive and it may have limited the study for the highest and lowest change in outcomes. The applicability of the findings is, with all case studies of similar depth, to be taken in the context of the heterogeneity of a large number of districts. While the correlation of LCAP documents and student success is clear in these cases, more general studies on the statewide data set may show trends, from a wider perspective, that are not visible with this scope.

The method of triangulation helped to illuminate the qualitative and quantitative aspects of K–12 funding in California, and it is important to note that each district faces different challenges. This study engaged directly with the stories of the two highest achieving districts to correlate their success with engagement with the community, families, and students, but did not fully interrogate further causes decreasing EL student success in the two lowest districts. Therefore, it is possible that extraneous factors may have played a role in decreasing EL student achievement in those districts, and that those factors were not accounted for here.

Conclusion of the Study

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach to publicly available data generated as part of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) funding system in California's K–12 school districts. The results of the study showed that the two school districts with the greatest increase in English Language Learner (EL) achievement for years 2013–2016 (versus 2011–2013) had established detailed, specific actions and services targeting EL students in their LCAPs. In the two districts with the greatest decline in EL achievement for years 2013–2016 (versus 2011–2013) there were few services that used additional funding to improve their EL students' outcomes.

The outcome of this analysis is useful in establishing a correlation between services that districts create in their LCAP and student achievement. The visibility of programs for EL students in a district's LCAP correlated to an increase in EL student success in two state-collected metrics. The generalized interpretation of this

outcome—that targeted actions and services for ELs funded by supplemental funding provided by the state for those students—is important in establishing best practices for increasing EL student success as accountability systems in California public education are being created for the LCFF paradigm.

The method used for analysis in this study could be utilized by districts and county offices of education in establishing a cycle of continuous improvement in the LCAP review process (Warren, 2016) or for future research on the effects of local control and accountability more generally.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol for District Administrator

1) Why do you believe your English Language Learners are successful in your district?

Appendix B: Pseudonym Coded Districts and their MD on RFEP and EGT

K-12 District (Pseudonym Coded)	RFEP Mean Difference (MD)	EGT Mean Difference (MD)
1	3.1372	0.2394
2	3.4427	0.7651
3	7.3733	3.5243
4	3.7382	11.874
5	4.8024	7.3116
6	1.093	3.9518
7	4.8403	12.5116
8	0.178	0.2645
9	0.0589	4.24
10	2.8401	7.0755
11	5.0463	7.6474
12	0.5392	2.9409
13	1.9981	3.0973
14	0.1397	3.4539
15	2.5549	0.7159
16	0.4069	4.4601
17	3.3043	15.1028
18	11.6634	15.8294
19	0.9722	1.6363
20	1.9311	8.9039
21	8.4228	10.5513
22	1.6529	19.2561
23	4.6473	1.0937
24	4.6288	10.2493
25	1.3328	2.1068
26	2.0445	5.6235
27	1.6707	3.3371
28	7.573	1.986
29	15.1833	13.7427
30	5.2522	7.2703
31	0.7667	1.0857
32	2.58	9.3027
33	1.0665	9.7521
34	8.0819	6.1301
35	3.4503	5.2726
36	1.8012	3.6612
37	6.0685	1.566
38	1.8608	0.7275
39	2.7473	5.703
40	7.5986	8.6277
41	2.7826	11.3755
42	3.9882	11.2037
43	6.1434	11.1589
44	0.9611	9.3236
45	0.7208	10.1618
46	6.8052	6.4718
47	1.0947	3.9155
48	4.3382	8.7717
49	4.1999	8.3322
50	3.8755	5.403
51	0.7516	4.4959
52	1.1948	0.6219
53	2.3546	3.3143
54	0.0243	1.2652
55	8.8859	20.8952
56	5.339	10.1917
57	1.7678	5.9964
58	0.417	4.0824
59	2.1856	13.3992
60	4.1821	2.4596
61	2.1383	10.052
62	2.0267	18.3093
63	3.7862	11.8209
64	2.3161	6.8794
65	4.0326	2.8036
66	10.9598	0.9054
67	2.1834	15.3039
68	0.0876	10.0852
69	0.7024	1.552
70	1.2997	6.2286
71	2.2704	4.4008
72	0.3081	3.8196
73	11.0971	8.4991
74	3.8049	2.6335
75	4.0296	2.8044
76	0.4484	5.3834
77	2.3741	8.0381
78	3.3039	5.367
79	5.2578	10.8564
80	7.7296	5.0562
81	2.7818	6.2089
82	0.9493	5.8764
83	1.7089	9.3184
84	1.1919	2.4729
85	5.6715	2.0571
86	0.2781	3.885
87	0.8528	2.514
88	1.7919	6.6751
89	1.8467	1.9401
90	1.9968	0.1164
91	3.1031	7.0965
92	0.1293	8.5758
93	4.0911	6.0656
94	2.1424	0.5368
95	4.6151	3.9246
96	1.8763	5.3374
97	0.7352	7.6067
98	0.145	6.4088
99	0.3329	0.0231
100	2.5932	5.5245
101	16.06	7.2072
102	0.4996	3.2713
103	2.5284	1.5755
104	6.3127	1.2809
105	0.1027	10.5532
106	1.132	6.937
107	0.6117	0.0698
108	2.0582	6.7671
109	1.5499	1.4778
110	1.9928	2.9714
111	5.5599	1.5725
112	13.2793	11.9948
113	2.4933	0.6224
114	0.6686	4.1121
115	5.935	6.6552
116	3.5703	7.9917
117	9.6538	7.331
118	0.1595	11.1208
119	3.3082	4.1759
120	0.5462	1.0858
121	2.0408	6.3925
122	2.2083	2.9546
123	2.9063	4.1329
124	0.4858	1.2024
125	1.3275	0.1604
126	1.4757	9.9464
127	0.0697	12.1252
128	1.0673	5.6122
129	0.0425	3.0728
130	0.1535	7.4109
131	2.5849	2.1706
132	1.6249	3.7233
133	8.1939	1.1229
134	3.8706	16.3521
135	0.331	5.2732
136	1.1619	3.1355
137	1.6549	5.978
138	4.2095	5.8898
139	19.6456	7.9893
140	5.0063	2.1251
141	4.8977	4.293
142	8.1943	1.2957
143	0.4125	11.3668
144	5.5294	2.6326
145	0.1608	3.6726
146	4.247	7.1037
147	2.1667	23.1426
148	2.596	8.7105
149	4.553	2.6958
150	8.358	2.7876
151	2.1018	14.5713
152	9.9892	3.4667
153	10.8492	4.7038
154	0.0254	5.1716
155	5.0108	4.6643
156	1.8737	10.5469
157	3.1979	24.3561
158	2.8877	11.0858

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