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Resource Needs for English Learners: Getting Down to Policy Recommendations

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# Resource Needs for English Learners:

*Getting Down to  
Policy Recommendations*



University of California  
Linguistic Minority  
Research Institute  
Education Policy Center

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## Acknowledgements

The ideas expressed in *Resource Needs for English Learners: Getting Down to Policy Recommendations*, result from collaboration among experts in English Learner education from around the state. For a list of participants, see Appendix 1 on page 19. We gratefully acknowledge their cooperation.

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# Resource Needs for English Learners: Getting Down to Policy Recommendations<sup>1</sup>

## BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT

**I**n 2006, California's governor and legislature commissioned a set of 23 papers, collectively referred to as *Getting Down to Facts*, funded by a consortium of foundations<sup>2</sup> with the objective of "provid[ing] common ground for understanding the current state of California school finance and governance."<sup>3</sup> The operating hypothesis was that with good information on all aspects of the educational governance and finance systems of the state, efficiencies and funding enhancements could be made that would improve the poor overall achievement of the state's students. The studies were designed to be more descriptive than prescriptive, and were intended to form a basis for engaging stakeholders in deep conversations about possible policy alternatives. These studies were released at several forums in the spring of 2007. Later that year the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded several groups of policy researchers to further develop recommendations that might help the governor and the legislature to act on the vast information compiled in the initial reports.

This document is an extension of the original report, entitled *Resource Needs for California's English Learners*, authored by Patricia Gándara and Russell Rumberger, and is the result of deliberations from several informal meetings and two formal convenings of major stakeholders in the area of English Learner (EL) education. Its intent is to suggest a series of policy options, based on data examined in the initial report, that the state should consider to strengthen the educational offerings and outcomes for California's burgeoning population of linguistic minority students.

## CALIFORNIA'S ENGLISH LEARNERS

**W**e begin with the premise that while one fourth (25%) of California's students are labeled as English Learners, in fact, many additional students need special services to assist them in joining the academic mainstream in English. Some of these are linguistic minority (LM) students, whose families and communities are largely non-English speaking and who may have been designated as English Learners at some time in the past. Others are those who come from language communities characterized by use of non-standard English variants; such students are often referred to as Standard English Learners (SEL). Altogether, approximately half of California's students exist along a continuum of English proficiency from knowing little or none at all, to being in the process of mastering the four domains of standard and academic language: comprehending, speaking, reading, and writing.

According to data from the U.S. Census, there were 3 million children, ages 5-17, living in California in 2005 who spoke a language other than English. These linguistic minority students, some of whom also speak English with some level of proficiency, represent 44 percent of the school-age population (Rumberger, 2006). Nationally, linguistic minority children represent 16 percent of the school-age population. Overall, 29 percent of all LM students in the U.S. reside in California, and the great majority speak Spanish (Gándara & Rumberger, 2007).

Over the last 25 years, the linguistic minority population has increased dramatically in both California and in the rest of the U.S. In California, it has increased by 187 percent and in the U.S.

<sup>1</sup> This report was prepared by Patricia Gándara, UCLA; Julie Maxwell-Jolly, UC Davis; and Russell Rumberger, UC Santa Barbara.

<sup>2</sup> This \$2.6 million project was invited (commissioned?) by the governor of California and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> This language is taken from the website of the Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice, the coordinating body for the studies at Stanford University. <http://irepp.stanford.edu/projects/cafinance.htm>

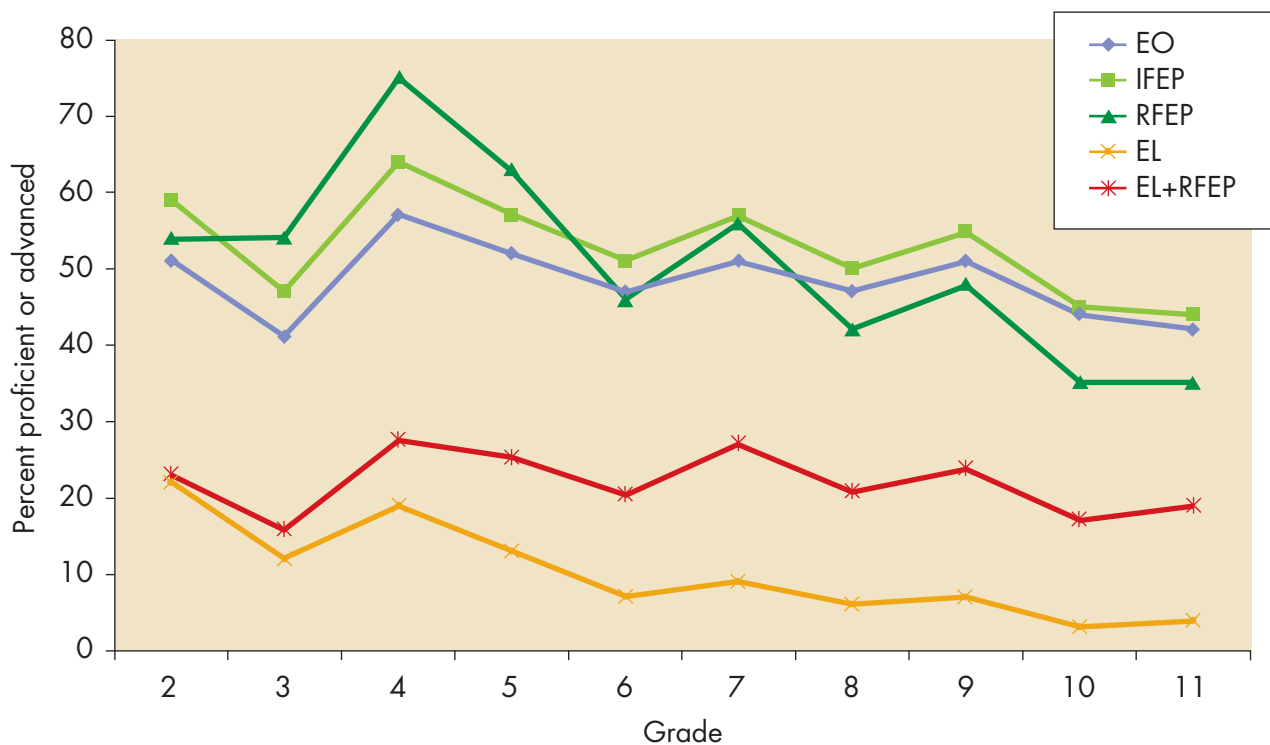
by 113 percent. Demographers project that these percentages will continue to grow (Fry, 2007). Most of these students are also poor (as defined by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, the primary way in which government entities categorize low income within schools)—about 85 percent of EL students in California are economically disadvantaged (California Legislative Analysts Office, 2007, p. E-123). Thus, these students face at least a double challenge: that of needing to learn English and that of being economically disadvantaged. More than for any other group of students, these disadvantages are exacerbated by acute isolation in schools that are disproportionately attended by other English Learners. For example, in 2005 more than half of all K-6 English Learners attended just 21 percent of the state’s schools, and in these schools they comprised more than 50

percent of all students (Rumberger et al., 2006). Such settings can provide limited opportunities to be exposed to strong English language models and to the knowledge and habits that facilitate navigating the U.S. school system.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level on the California Standards Test in English Language Arts in 2005, by language background.

Fifty-one percent of English-only (EO) students score at the proficient level in grade 2, declining to 42 percent by grade 11; language minority students who entered school already proficient in English<sup>4</sup> (usually bilingual children) score consistently higher than EO students at all grade levels. While a surprisingly high 22 percent of second grade English Learners actually score proficient in English Language Arts (ELA), this

**Figure 1: Performance on California Standards Test, English Language Arts by Language 2005**



SOURCE: California State Department of Education, *Dataquest*. Retrieved September 30, 2006, from <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.

<sup>4</sup>Classified as Initially Fluent English Proficient or IFEP



level declines persistently over the grade span and barely any are proficient by grade 11. Because the definition of English Learner includes an inability to do grade level work in English, this raises questions about the demands of the test and/or the accuracy of categorization of EL students at the second grade. The assumption must be that most of these students are at the point of testing out of the EL category, and that the performance of students at later grades is actually a more accurate representation of the ELA skills of English Learners.

Students who are reclassified as Fluent English Proficient or R-FEP (and thus began as English Learners) initially perform higher than EO students in the lower grades, but by grade 8 their scores decline below those of EO students. Because the number of English Learners declines over the grades, as more and more students are reclassified to Fluent English Proficient, and because we argue that EL and R-FEP are not actually dichotomous categories, it is appropriate to combine current ELs and former ELs for purposes of tracking academic performance (identified in Figure 1 as EL+RFEP). The combined scores for the group are relatively low and remain fairly stable over time: 23 percent score at the proficient level in grade 2, declining to 19 percent in grade 11.

## CONDITIONS OF LEARNING FOR CALIFORNIA'S ENGLISH LEARNERS

*I*n our work tracking the conditions of education for California's English Learners we document seven different dimensions on which these students receive a demonstrably inferior education, even when compared to other poor and low-income students. These include:

(1) **Inequitable access to appropriately trained teachers.** English Learners are more likely than any other group of students to be taught by a teacher who lacks appropriate teaching credentials. For example, Rumberger (2003) found that while 14 percent of teachers statewide were not fully credentialed, 25



percent of teachers of English Learners lacked a full teaching credential. Although the percent of teachers lacking credentials has continued to decline each year, ELs continue to be disproportionately taught by those who are most under-qualified. In 2005, fewer than half (48%) of teachers of EL students had an appropriate EL authorization to teach them (Esch et al., 2005).

- (2) **Inadequate professional development opportunities to help teachers address their instructional needs.** In a recent survey of 5,300 teachers of English Learners in California, Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly and Driscoll (2005) found that in classrooms where 26-50 percent of the students were designated EL, more than half of the teachers had no more than one professional development session devoted to the instruction of EL students over a period of five years. Moreover, about one-third of respondents complained that sessions were of low quality and limited utility.
- (3) **Inequitable access to appropriate assessment to measure their achievement, gauge their learning needs, and hold the system accountable for their progress.** Because the state's accountability system consists of

standards-based tests developed for English speakers, and makes no accommodation for the fact that EL students are, by definition, not proficient in English, these tests are neither valid nor reliable indicators of what these students know and can do (AERA/APA/NCME, 1999). Thus, it is difficult to separate students' linguistic difficulties from those related to content.

- (4) **Inadequate instructional time to accomplish learning goals.** Across the state, English Learners are provided no additional classroom instructional time even though they have additional learning tasks: acquiring English as well as learning a new culture and its demands. One way that schools can effectively provide more instructional time is by providing additional instructors within the same time; that is, more one-on-one instruction within the confines of the same number of hours. However, classrooms in California with large numbers of ELs have fewer adult assistants to provide individual attention for students—an average of 7 hours assistance weekly for classrooms with more than 50 percent EL students, versus 11 hours for those with no ELs (Gándara et al., 2003).
- (5) **Inequitable access to instructional materials and curriculum.** A 2002 survey of 829 California teachers found that among classrooms with over 30 percent EL students, 29 percent of teachers reported not having adequate materials in English, while in classrooms with fewer than 30 percent EL students, only 19 percent of teachers reported this same shortage (cited in Gándara et al., 2003).
- (6) **Inequitable access to adequate facilities.** In the same survey of California teachers cited above, 43 percent of teachers in schools with more than 25 percent EL students reported that the physical facilities were only fair or poor; whereas in schools with fewer than 25 percent

EL students, only 26 percent of teachers reported similar conditions.

- (7) **Intense segregation into schools and classrooms that place them at particularly high risk for educational failure.** In 2005, more than half of California's elementary English Learners attended schools where they comprised more than 50 percent of the student body, which limited their exposure to native English speakers who serve as language models (Rumberger, Gándara, & Merino, 2006).

All of these conditions contribute to the lack of progress in narrowing the sizeable achievement gap between English-only and linguistic minority students. The lack of a clear consensus about what the most important goals of instruction are for LM and EL students may also contribute to this gap. Is the goal simply to gain sufficient English proficiency to be able to join the mainstream? Is it acquisition of English *and* proficiency in subject matter? Is it a sustained closing of the achievement gap for these students? Different goals require different programs and resources. Of course, for some students the answer is actually competence in two languages, and most of these students are found in the dwindling number of bilingual programs or the increasing number of dual language programs in the state. Although schools are required by law to both promote the acquisition of English and to provide access to content, we argue that the first goal mentioned above—proficiency in English—so dominates education and policy discussions that it often appears to be the only goal for these students. The reality, however, is that the second goal—English proficiency and subject matter mastery—ought to be the minimal standard. Furthermore, competence in two languages should be a viable option for California's students, both English Learners and English speakers alike, as the additional resources required to achieve such a goal would be relatively modest.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See Gándara & Rumberger, 2007, for an expanded discussion of these costs.



## CALIFORNIA'S LANGUAGE POLICY ENVIRONMENT AND CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

In spite of laws passed in the 1970s and 1980s that mandated bilingual education for most English Learners, California has never provided instruction in the primary language for the majority of its EL students. Prior to the 1998 passage of Proposition 227—the ballot initiative that aimed to dismantle bilingual education in the state—only 29 percent of eligible students were enrolled in a bilingual program (California Department of Education, 2007). The reasons for the relatively low penetration of bilingual education are many, but most fundamentally the state lacked sufficient numbers of appropriately credentialed teachers to adequately staff bilingual classrooms. With the passage of Proposition 227, the state witnessed a sharp decline in students receiving primary language instruction and in teachers engaged in this instruction. The decline in bilingual teachers in the classroom has resource repercussions for the state, as these teachers form part of the infrastructure to serve

EL students and their families, independent of the type of instructional program to which students are assigned.

Today, post-Proposition 227, fewer than 6 percent of English Learners in California receive bilingual instruction. It is notable that this decline has occurred in the face of a strong and mounting research base that finds primary language instruction to be a superior approach for some students (see, for example, August and Shanahan, 2006). Thus, California is limited in its approaches to EL education, and this fact affects pedagogical practices, the goals of instruction for these students, and parent involvement, as there are fewer teachers who speak the language of students' families. Any consideration of resources for EL students must take into account this dwindling infrastructure as well as the methods and goals of instruction that are supported. Partly in response to Proposition 227, a growing number of schools are offering two-way dual immersion programs, in which both English speakers and English Learners are taught bilingually. Research shows that these programs often produce superior academic outcomes for ELs when compared to English-only programs (see, for example, Genesee et al., 2006). We assert, therefore, that the state should take into account the potential option of providing instruction with a goal of biliteracy for some English Learners and their English speaking peers whose parents choose it.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our initial report for the *Getting Down to Facts* project included broad areas of resource needs for English Learner (and linguistic minority) students, but did not suggest specific policy options. Moreover, in that document we raise the complex issue of differentiating costs for educating poor or low income students and the costs for educating English Learners or linguistic minority students above and beyond addressing the needs incurred by



economic disadvantage. We note in that document, however, that there are indeed areas of additional need, including the preparation and skill development of teachers, appropriate materials, valid assessments, probable additional instructional time, and smaller items such as translation of communications, and programs and strategies to engage immigrant parents in the schools.

Potential policy recommendations based on our earlier work, including ways in which these needs could be addressed through legislation, regulation, or changes in practice, were developed in informal conversations with knowledgeable researchers, policymakers, and advocates for EL students in California. In August 2007 a draft of these recommendations was presented to stakeholders representing school districts, state agencies, advocacy organizations, researchers, and policy makers. In September 2007 we reviewed a newly-refined list of potential policy recommendations with the stakeholders and received further participant feedback.

In the ensuing months we tested out the list of recommendations in several public forums and in consultation with other members of the initial *Getting Down to Facts* project, as well as with individuals who were familiar with the work of the Governor's Committee on Educational Excellence which was developing its own set of recommendations. We believed it was important to consider how the recommendations we brought forward might complement those suggested by others, or, where necessary, to provide a counter-argument to recommendations that we considered potentially harmful to the interests of linguistic minority students. Many of the individuals who participated in one or more of the formal meetings were also consulted over time, and all are listed in Appendix A.<sup>6</sup> We do not include the numerous individuals who provided thoughtful, albeit informal, advice and consultation. The result of these deliberations follows.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Funding

The *Getting Down to Facts* studies were designed to study resource commitments and funding mechanisms as well as per-student dollar needs to meet some specified achievement goal (generally defined as achieving a level of proficiency in key academic areas) for California's students. As such, it is not surprising that some of the most prominent recommendations to come from this group would include recommendations to re-design the state's system of school finance, which today is a complex and cumbersome structure of revenue limits and over 100 different formula-driven categorical programs. One prominent recommendation is that the state abandon its system of categorical funding, currently accounting for about one-third of all dollars flowing to schools, in favor of a pupil-weighted system. Such a system would target specific student characteristics requiring attention, such as poverty or English Learner status, and assign a weight that would generate additional funds for each student. Thus, a student in the free lunch program would generate the base revenue limit plus

<sup>6</sup>While we are deeply indebted to each of these individuals for their expert consultation, they cannot be held responsible for the final recommendations presented here. As all policy is a negotiation of different concerns and interests, we cannot assert that everyone consulted is in total agreement with all of the recommendations presented here.

an additional weight to meet the specific needs associated with coming from a low-income home. This proposal also assumes that many small and very specific categorical funding sources would be collapsed into the base revenue limit or into a block grant to districts to be used more flexibly at the school site.

We are agnostic on the issue of a weighted funding system versus a categorical one, with the exception that, if the state chooses to move toward a weighted system of pupil funding, we strongly support a specific, identified weight for EL and linguistic minority students that is separate from the weight for poverty or any other characteristic alone.<sup>7</sup> Because, as we have argued, linguistic minority students exist along a continuum from having little or no understanding of English to testing as fluent in English but often living in linguistically isolated circumstances and lacking academic English skills, the weight assigned to these students should reflect this variation in circumstances. Students with little or no understanding of English may require much more intensive intervention, but those who are conversationally fluent in English and are reclassified as “fluent” English speakers may still require some, albeit perhaps reduced, ongoing support to develop appropriate academic English skills across the four domains of language. There has been a well-observed phenomenon that once students reach a level of basic proficiency (level 3 on the CELDT<sup>8</sup>) it is increasingly difficult for many to reach the higher levels of early advanced and advanced proficiency. Yet many students who are mainstreamed at this point, particularly those at the secondary level receive little or no further assistance in language acquisition. These ongoing needs should be acknowledged and supported. Moreover, the need to support redesignated students in order to help them further develop their academic English skills should be recognized so that student classification

and placement are not conflated with the schools’ concerns about losing resources to meet instructional needs.

The basis for an independent weight for English Learner or linguistic minority students rests on several previously-identified areas, requiring resources in addition to those needed to address issues of poverty. These include: (1) additional and specific teacher professional development to be able to meet the instructional needs of linguistic minority students; (2) additional books and materials to help these students develop strong academic English and bridge languages as well as, where appropriate, to develop literacy in two or more languages; (3) additional instructional time through reduced student-teacher ratios and/or additional hours in the day, week, or year to help students catch up with their English-speaking peers; (4) funding to develop and administer valid assessments of these students’ academic skills; and (5) additional funds to help bring non-English-speaking parents into closer contact with schools.

Our own review of studies that have attempted to specify a particular weight for English Learner (as opposed to linguistic minority) status yielded widely differing numbers (Gándara & Rumberger, 2007). The Legislative Analyst’s 2007 budget analysis looked at other states’ formulae that reflected similarly varying weights. The state of California, through its categorical funding system, currently provides about 13 percent more funding for EL students, which is considerably lower than other states that specify an additional amount, and, given that there has been no overall narrowing of the achievement gap over the last decade,<sup>9</sup> is apparently insufficient.

Additionally, whether a pupil weighting system, or some other finance structure is adopted, linguistic isolation should be factored into the resource needs of English Learners, much as concentrated poverty is widely considered to be

<sup>7</sup>The Governor’s Committee on Education Excellence Report, *Students First: Renewing Hope for California’s Future*, recommends separate funding weights for low-income and EL students. See: <http://www.everychildprepared.org/>

<sup>8</sup>The California English Language Development Test, first introduced in 2001, and recalibrated in 2006-07

<sup>9</sup>Governor’s Committee on Education Excellence Report recommends an initial augmentation of 40 percent for low-income students and 20 percent for English learners (p. 23 of the Executive Summary).

an additional disadvantage for student learning. Students who are not routinely exposed to formal English in their environment cannot be expected to learn it in the same way as students who are. In addition to lacking appropriate language models, students in this circumstance are much less likely to have the opportunity to practice the English they are learning in school. Long summer vacations from school can be especially problematic for students in linguistically isolated settings. A funding formula for EL students should provide some additional resources for added interventions to counteract these and other effects of linguistic isolation. Thus we concur with the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence that an initial additional 20 percent above and beyond the weight for poor students be assigned to EL students, and that this be adjusted as well for linguistic isolation.

**Recommendation #1:** *The State of California should set an initial funding augmentation of 20 percent for English Learners above and beyond the augmentation for poverty to be applied to a weighted system of pupil funding, an improved categorical system, or any other funding mechanism that the state adopts. Moreover, students who attend schools that are 50% or more English Learners should receive an additional augmentation of 5 percent that reflects the additional interventions that may be necessary to help them join the English mainstream.*

**Recommendation #2:** *The state should also consider an augmentation for linguistic minority students—those whose language backgrounds result in an ongoing need for support to achieve full proficiency in standard and academic English. This would include students who are Standard English Learners as well as those who have been reclassified as Fluent in English, but who still struggle with academic English.*

We additionally concur with the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence that the specific weight assigned for English Learners and

linguistic minority students is a “best estimate,” based on studies with widely varying outcomes, so the State should closely monitor the adequacy of these additional funds, and recalibrate the weights as more information becomes available.

## Accountability

While we agree with others that categorical programs are sometimes unwieldy and overly restrictive, we caution that often the reason for developing these programs in the first place was to fill some specific unmet need that was not being attended to with general funds, and to provide a mechanism for ensuring that the funds were used for their intended purpose. If categorical programs were dismantled and replaced with block grants or enhanced base revenue limits as has been recommended, schools would have increased flexibility to choose how they spent their funds as long as students were meeting specific academic goals. However, there is a significant barrier to the success and viability of this approach in the current California context: the lack of valid and reliable measures of achievement for EL students and the considerable time it takes before EL students can be expected to demonstrate sufficient competency in English to be measured accurately by these assessments. We cannot support an oversight model based on an outcome measure that testing experts agree is seriously flawed. The move to this kind of approach would require the development of valid and reliable measures of student achievement across a variety of domains (not just CELDT scores). Until a valid testing system is in place for linguistic minority and English Learner students, other accountability approaches must be explored.

Categorical programs have had an oversight process for a number of years albeit limited in effectiveness. Categorical Program Monitoring (formerly the Coordinated Compliance Review, CCR) was strengthened for a number of years by the Comité consent decree<sup>10</sup> that required, among

<sup>10</sup> The Comité Compliance unit grew out of the *Comite De Padres et al. vs. Superintendent of Public Instruction* 1985 ruling

other things, increased resources for and attention to EL education in the program review process and added support for schools and districts as they attempted to bring their programs into compliance with requirements. Eventually, however, Comité was overturned largely because the California Department of Education (CDE) lacked the necessary resources to fulfill the requirements of the decree. Categorical program reviews continue to take place, but on a much reduced schedule and with little ability to gain in-depth knowledge of how schools are actually using resources and/or if they are using these to best effect. Nonetheless, if categorical programs end, so too, will their associated oversight mechanism.

As outcome approaches to accountability for funding are not yet appropriate, we look to other approaches. One way of fostering school decisions that support appropriate and effective spending for EL students is to ensure that principals, or other chief administrators at the school site level, have the knowledge and training to identify high quality English Learner instruction and thus to make well-informed decisions about use of instructional resources.

In addition to a structural approach to oversight, we recommend a process approach. This process should include collection of basic data on EL/LM resource expenditures and achievement over time. Data collection simply for data collection's sake is costly and burdensome; but, specific well-defined data on expenditures and achievement for this group can allow schools to monitor their progress, better assess their own needs, make data-based decisions about spending, and provide the ability to do cross-site comparisons. As better assessments of EL student achievement are developed, this approach would become increasingly informative. Such formative assessment of expenditures and outcomes could provide important data for developing strengthened practices in the school and more informed accountability about resource uses.



**Recommendation #3:** *The state should develop an evaluation template that can be used by schools and districts to help them collect formative, and to the extent possible, summative (outcome) data on resource expenditures and EL student academic progress to aid schools in data-based decision making. Select data from this evaluation should be reported annually through the school's online report card.*

### **Building the Teacher Infrastructure**

There is little debate that highly qualified teachers are students' most critical resource (Hanushek, 1986; 1992; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Boyd, Loeb, Wykoff et al., 2007) and that EL students are the least likely to have qualified teachers by any definition, whether with appropriate credentials, experience, or skills in teaching them (Wechsler et al., 2007). There is no single greater resource need for these students, and yet it has remained elusive, in part because English Learners tend to be clustered in the schools and neighborhoods that are least attractive to teachers, and because state policy has largely ignored the specific needs of these students and their teachers.





The dire teacher shortages and large numbers of under-prepared teachers of the recent past have abated. Currently only about 15,000 of the state's teachers lack a preliminary teaching credential compared to six years ago when 42,000 of California's 307,000 teachers did not have this basic authorization. Nonetheless, poor, minority, and English Learner students continue to have a disproportionate share of under-credentialed and novice teachers who are not yet as effective as those with more experience (Weschler et al., 2007). Moreover, there is evidence that many teachers who have completed a full complement of teacher preparation courses do not feel competent to teach EL students (CSU Office of the Chancellor, 2003; Esch et al., 2005), and even many teachers with experience indicate feeling unprepared to meet the needs of English Learners (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005). Studies of professional development (Pérez et al., 2004) and teacher preparation show limited capacity to help teachers acquire these skills. Moreover, while induction programs are intended to strengthen new teachers' skills in this area, too often there are too few teaching staff available with the expertise to provide appropriate support for EL instruction. In the past, the Federal Government, through Title VII, provided funding

to Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to train the faculty who would prepare bilingual and ESL teachers, but this funding source was eliminated in the 1994 reauthorization of Title VII. Since that time there has been a declining capacity in the IHEs to provide this vital service for new teachers.

**Recommendation #4:** *The State should establish several Centers for Research and Teaching Excellence for English Learners in key regions where both need and resources converge.*

In order to improve the quality of teacher preparation for working with English Learners we need to put what we already know together with new knowledge in order to form a comprehensive approach to preparing teachers to work effectively with EL students. Centers for Research and Teaching Excellence for English Learners would be designed to do that. An important feature of the Centers is that they would draw on existing state resources to create consortia that share resources, responsibility, and expertise. The Centers would be established at several places around the state, using the expertise and resources from the University of California, California State University, private colleges and institutions, schools, and County Offices of Education, combined with some clustering of federal Title III funds, Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) funds, and possibly assistance from foundations. In combination with university researchers and teacher preparation faculty, the Centers would call on the expertise of the most knowledgeable teachers and education leaders in the area of EL instruction from participating districts. Thus, the Centers would marshal existing resources from many partners with only minor additional support from the state to leverage the partnerships, and they would consolidate state resources where they can be more systematically disseminated.

These Centers would be regional partnerships and would serve as incubators for research-based best practices in the preparation and professional

development of teachers. They would bring research and practice together at one site, normally a university campus with close proximity to at least one cooperating school district. The Centers would bring together the most knowledgeable teachers, faculty, experts, and researchers to be “in residence” for a period of time. In this setting, research on critical issues that can be applied to teaching and teacher preparation would occur simultaneously with teacher preparation through an apprenticeship model where prospective teachers hone their skills by working side by side with experts. The apprenticeship model has been employed successfully in the International Schools<sup>11</sup> that have demonstrated extremely positive outcomes for a range of English Learner students. The Centers would provide professional development in EL instructional skills for existing teachers as well. A key role of the Centers would be to disseminate best practices for faculty who prepare teachers of English Learners and linguistic minority students, thereby strengthening the capacity of the state’s IHEs to prepare new generations of teachers of these students. The work that would go on at these Centers would serve to inform policy and practice in a number of key areas.

Some specific and fundamental questions that could be addressed by the Centers include:

- 1) What is essential for teachers of EL and LM students to know and be able to do?
- 2) How do EL students’ needs differ (for example, between secondary, elementary, newcomer and longer term ELs) and thus, how does teacher knowledge and skill need to differ in order to address their needs?
- 3) When is the most appropriate time and by what criteria should EL students be reclassified as no longer being English Learners?
- 4) What are appropriate benchmarks in both English (and possibly another language) and content-specific skills for EL students?

- 5) What should be the content of instruction for academic literacy in a range of subjects and how should instruction be organized at the various grade levels (elementary and secondary)?
- 6) How can we best provide critical skills and knowledge to California’s current and future teaching force at both the elementary and secondary levels?

Prospective teachers might apprentice for 3 to 9 months working in an affiliate school and in the Center alongside highly skilled mentors. The Centers would also train professional developers who would share the Center-developed knowledge with other teacher training institutions, districts, and schools. The Centers would focus on English Learners but the knowledge base would improve learning for all students. They would draw on the collaborations between universities and actual schools and districts such as the professional development schools (e.g., Lieberman, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Finally, the Centers could serve as sites for developing additional means for increasing the capacity of schools to meet the needs of English Learners. For example, they could work cooperatively with the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing to develop new authorizations for teacher and administrator specializations, discussed below.

An important element of the Centers would be ongoing evaluation of both their products and process, in order to have assurance that they are developing the best practices with the best potential for enhanced outcomes for both teachers and students. Schools of Education are likely to have a strong interest in participating in careful and rigorous formative and summative evaluation of the work of the Centers. We anticipate that this would be an attractive element for foundations to support.

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<sup>11</sup> This model involves new teacher candidates from the beginning in a partnership with an expert teacher who both models and advises on effective pedagogical practices. The new teacher then takes responsibility for lessons under the direct guidance of the expert. It differs dramatically from the classroom-based or didactic model and also from the mentoring model in which new teachers are often left with little actual support, only occasional critiques of their performance.

## Training and credentialing at the secondary level

Under the current system, California requires all multiple and single subject credential holders to have a Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD) certificate or an AB 1059 (Ducheny, 1999) credential, which includes basic coursework in second language acquisition, instructional accommodations for English Learners, and the role of culture in learning, and results in an English Learner authorization<sup>12</sup>. How effective this coursework is in preparing teachers to meet the needs of English Learners remains an issue of considerable debate. However, the knowledge and skills included in these two certifications appear inadequate to prepare teachers

to meet the needs of students in secondary settings who are in departmentalized (English as a Second Language/English Language Development (ESL/ELD) courses, and who are often either

English Learners are twice as likely to drop out of high school as all other students.

newcomers to the language or students who have failed to progress in previous years. Evidence for the inadequacy of this training comes from the exceptionally high dropout rates for English Learners in secondary schools, a body of research that points to the critical issue of motivation, and teachers' expressions of frustration in attempting to meet the needs of these students. English Learners are twice as likely to drop out of high school as all other students (Rumberger, 2007; Ruiz de Velasco & Fix, 2000), and among the reasons given for this is the lack of appropriate courses (Callahan & Gándara, 2004; Ruiz de Velasco & Fix, 2000), feelings of isolation and lack of belonging (Gibson et al., 2004), and frustration with falling behind academically (Callahan & Gándara, 2004).

Meltzer and Hamann (2004) synthesized a large body of research on secondary English Learners and concluded that perhaps the most critical problem for these students was a waning of motivation to continue their studies. In our own survey of California teachers, one of the most significant frustrations reported by secondary teachers was their inability to communicate, and therefore motivate, their students (Gándara et al., 2005). We believe that it is critical to develop additional, specific training for secondary teachers of linguistic minority students, and that special credentials should be awarded to those teachers who complete this training.

Several other states, such as New York, Maryland, North Carolina, Florida, Oklahoma and Arizona, offer English Language Development (ELD)/English as a Second Language (ESL) single subject credentials for high school teachers. Legislation would be needed to change credentialing policy, add additional authorizations to the education code and for the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to create the standards for this type of credential.

**Recommendation #5:** *The California Teacher Credentialing Commission should design and adopt two forms of single subject specialist certifications for teachers in grades 7-12. The content of these certifications would be established by a group of experts in the field, relying on research-based findings from empirical work that might be carried out in the Centers for Research and Teaching Excellence for English Learners. One form of this certification would be an ELD Specialist credential/certificate for middle and high school teachers who teach ELD as a content area. This increased specialization could be obtained at the preliminary (initial credential) or advanced credential level. A second form of certification could be earned by educators who provide support, mentoring, and/or professional development (including literacy coaching) for the instruction of ELs.*

<sup>12</sup> See CTC: <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/leaflets/cl628c.pdf>.

## An Enhanced Role for Bilingual Teachers

Bilingual teachers in California schools are often overburdened with duties outside of their own classrooms. Their specialized expertise in the instruction of English Learners, their ability to communicate with parents, students, and community members, and their ability to informally assess EL students, places them in high demand in schools regardless of the school's program of instruction. Furthermore because there are so few teachers with the full range of skills to serve EL students available and willing to serve in this role, the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program struggles to provide appropriately trained mentors for teachers of EL students. In addition, research shows that “the teacher next door” is often a more effective change agent than an educational consultant who is not as familiar with the school and its population. Bilingual teachers are critically needed in every one of these capacities, but so many extra duties create the risk of burn-out. We believe that it is important to acknowledge the advanced skills of these teachers, to allow them opportunities to support their colleagues without having to do so at cost to their own classroom responsibilities, and to provide an enhanced role that would be both challenging and rewarding. This could encourage more teachers to join their ranks and reduce their turnover. We therefore recommend for bilingual teachers (those who have a BCLAD or similar credential) that:

**Recommendation #6:** *Bilingual resource teacher positions should be funded at attractive levels and be offered at every school with EL students and APLE (forgivable loan) awards should be increased for credentialed bilingual teachers from \$11,000 to \$18,000—the level of awards for special education, math, and science teachers.*



## THE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE

There is a longstanding literature<sup>13</sup> on the importance of the role of administrators as instructional leaders for schools, and this is equally true in schools with English Learners. However, many administrators lack the skills needed to provide support and guidance for teachers and programs for English Learners. The words of one teacher we interviewed in 2005 echoed the view of many of her colleagues,

*You talk to your principal... and there's an assumption that your administrator... understands about the whole picture of what a comprehensive EL program is, and this isn't always the case. And, I don't even know if it's on anybody's horizon at the state (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005, p. 14).*

If California changes the school finance system in ways that reduce regulation associated with categorical funding, and/or moves toward a block grant system, it will become increasingly critical that principals have the background and knowledge to assess the adequacy of their

<sup>13</sup> See for example, Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Tucker, 2002.



programs for English Learners and that they can make informed choices about expenditures on behalf of these students. Without developing this capacity among administrators, California is ignoring a very important means for improving EL education.

The first step must be to define what we believe to be the necessary skills and knowledge for administrators with regard to English Learner education. In addition to working through the Centers discussed above, there are existing organi-



zations that can be of great help in developing guidelines in this area. The California Latino Superintendents Association (CALSA), for example has an extensive administrator-mentoring program and The California School Boards Association (CSBA) has a Latino school board member organization that attends to these issues. Guidelines for necessary skills and knowledge would not only be useful for school administrators but for school board members and superintendents as well.

Initially we suggest that the guidelines developed through this process be included in a voluntary

authorization rather than a credential. Districts should cover the costs for such training for all of their chief administrators, and possibly board members as well.

Once the skills and knowledge are established, the actual training for the Administrative Certification could be done through organizations such as those mentioned above. There are programs that might serve as partial models and/or would provide guidance in the development of such certification currently in existence. These include the PROMISE Initiative leadership strand, the California Tomorrow ELL secondary leadership program, and the work that West Ed has done on educational leadership through its Quality Teaching for English Learners program. Some County Offices of Education, including San Joaquin and Los Angeles County, are also developing programs to support administrators of schools with large EL populations. Ultimately, these skills and knowledge need to be incorporated in the preparation of principals through preservice and inservice to ensure that all receive it.

**Recommendation #7:** *The State should design and award a Supplementary Administrative Certification in EL instructional services initially on a volunteer basis, but Principal Leadership programs being conducted in California should also adopt the content of this certification for all principals in training.*

## THE INSTRUCTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

### Valid and Reliable Assessment

**A**lthough it will require time and considerable resources to develop a system of valid and reliable assessment that can adequately measure the progress of students who are in the process of learning the language of the test, consortia are developing around the country to design new and more valid systems of assessment.<sup>14</sup> California

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Mary Ann Zehr's blog at Ed Week, describing work of the consortia on proficiency testing. [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2007/11/states\\_collaborate\\_on\\_englishp.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2007/11/states_collaborate_on_englishp.html)

should be involved in this effort; and, if California were to call for the federal government to play a larger role in these efforts, or to urge test makers to move forward aggressively in this area, it would have considerable influence. California represents a large market (with one-third of all the nation's English Learners), and an important testing ground for innovation. One important step in this direction would be to acknowledge the legitimacy of the case brought by Coachella Valley Unified School District and others requesting that the state at least adhere to the guidelines laid down in NCLB for the appropriate assessment of English Learners, given the clear limitations of existing measurements.<sup>15</sup> The lawsuit requests that students either be tested in primary language or in an appropriately modified test that reflects that English ability. Removing the pressure from school districts to produce impossible target scores for students who do not comprehend the language of the test—while also requiring accountability for EL students' linguistic and academic progress—would be an important first step. This requires examining EL student progress in ELD as a function of time in U.S. schools (currently done under the state's Title III annual measurable achievement objectives 1 and 2), and more importantly, looking at EL students' academic progress and achievement as a function of their ELD level and time in U.S. schools.

**Recommendation #8:** *All schools should report California English Language Development Test (CELDT) scores, along with the California Standards Test (CST) scores, in a way that allows policymakers and practitioners to easily evaluate to what extent CELDT is aligned with or predicts CST performance.*

There is still much research to be conducted on the predictive validity of the newly recalibrated CELDT test, as well as serious issues to be addressed with respect to criterion validity of

academic subject tests that are likely to be invalid measures in the first place. Nevertheless, showing the relationship between CELDT results and CST results, particularly for students in U.S. schools for 5 or more years, can help educators examine and better understand the relationships between the two tests, pinpoint areas of state standards where students need better instruction, and prioritize teacher professional development and student placement decisions. As CALPADS becomes operational and allows for the linking of multiple test results and length of time in U.S. schools for individual students, this relatively simple cross tabulation, disaggregated by time, will focus state and local accountability efforts on those EL students being most poorly served by our educational system.

Districts use multiple criteria in making reclassification decisions. While all districts use CELDT and CST-ELA, districts vary in the performance levels they set on these assessments. Moreover, they use other, local criteria as well (e.g., grades, district assessments). Recent exploratory research (Robinson, 2008) examining the effect of reclassification on subsequent test scores suggested little impact for elementary grades, though possibly more impact at secondary level. However, this research was limited to a single district and its criteria. Conducting similar analyses using data from different districts with differing reclassification criteria, as well as different instructional supports for pre- and post-reclassified students, could be extremely helpful to educators and policymakers in making determinations about optimal reclassification criteria and policies.

**Recommendation #9:** *Require each district to report reclassification criteria to the state, and make this information available online.*

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Declaration of Edward Haertel in Support of Plaintiff's Motion for Issuance of Writ of Mandate, in *Coachella Valley Unified School District et al. v. State of California*, Arnold Schwarzenegger et al., April 23, 2007.

## Curriculum and Instructional Materials Strategies

Good and appropriate instructional materials can enhance teaching and learning and excite teachers and students, while poor materials can dampen their interest and yield inadequate and inaccurate learning outcomes. And, spending resources on teaching materials that cannot be understood or used by English Learners is a poor use of scarce dollars. A significant body of research indicates that materials that are designed for students who are learning English can enhance education effectiveness for these students (Bailey & Butler, 2003; Short et al., 2007). The majority of state-adopted programs are not based on research on English Learners, and therefore fail to address the specific needs of these students. Moreover, the great diversity in the EL population (e.g., differences in age at entry in California schools, language background, first language skills, home language, and socio-economic status) translates to equal diversity in their English and academic learning needs, and requires differentiated materials to meet these needs. Teachers and principals indicate that they need these materials in their schools (Pérez et al., 2004) and this was strongly reiterated by the administrators and experts who joined in shaping these recommendations.

Currently there are very few commercially available materials designed specifically for English Learners. This is largely because state policy provides funding overwhelmingly for adopted materials. Since EL materials are not currently adopted, publishers have no financial incentive to develop them. Most of what does exist takes the form of add-ons to the currently adopted curricula for English speakers. Many experienced teachers of EL students report that these materials are not well-designed for the needs of their English Learners. A frequent comment from teachers in focus groups (conducted as part of a larger teacher study [Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005]) was that EL students are an “afterthought” in curricu-

lar packages, and that these include a few pages in the teacher’s manual, with very limited suggestions for use with EL students. Moreover, these inadequate materials have a negative effect on the content of professional development for teachers of English Learners since so much of the professional development offered is based on the use of these same materials. California State Assembly Bill 466 (AB 466, Strom-Martin, 2001) includes incentive funding for districts to provide training in math and reading for teachers through state-approved providers. Unfortunately, these providers often have limited EL expertise. Another State Assembly measure, AB 472, expands this training, but is limited to teachers who have already received training under AB 466, compounding the problem of inadequate professional development.

These are examples of well-intentioned policy based on reasonable assumptions (that schools should use materials that teach the skills and knowledge for which they are held accountable and that professional development will help teachers to do this). However, while this may be reasonable for many students, it is not so for ELs who cannot access the curriculum materials because of their lack of English proficiency. The research and development on which these materials (and the assessments that go with them) are based, in most cases, has not involved English Learners, thus the materials are often inappropriate for EL students. Schools are caught between a rock and a hard place: current policy makes it very difficult for them to use materials that are not state adopted, but the state adoption process has not included adequate materials designed for the particular needs of English Learners.

Materials for English Learners (and linguistic minority students) should reflect the English Language Development standards in their design and should reflect knowledge of the process of acquisition of second language skills. Additionally, teachers and administrators with expertise in the instruction of English Learners should be

relied upon to use their best judgment to choose the materials that are most appropriate for their students.

**Recommendation #10:** *We propose that in schools and districts where current mandated practices are not resulting in satisfactory progress for English Learners, those that are willing to partner with an approved technical assistance agency or research organization, such as a university, be given the opportunity to exercise more choice in both materials and pedagogical practices. We call these “Zones of Choice”.*

Within these Zones of Choice, teachers, in conjunction with researchers and technical assistance providers, could target the development of materials and instructional strategies for their English Learner students. Much of this work could take place in a Center for Research and Teaching Excellence for English Learners described earlier. For example, schools in “choice zones” could target the most recent immigrants, those who are in the lowest achieving schools, or those who are proficient on the CELDT but can not move beyond this because they need focused instruction in academic language. Such materials would be developed and used on a pilot basis with careful evaluation of their usefulness and ability to boost student learning. This would not, however, be “experimentation,” but materials and strategies based on significant research evidence. One example of possible pilot materials includes texts focusing on the needs of English Learners to attain academic vocabulary, genres, and usage. Some work on developing the appropriate content of such materials for ELs in science has already been done under the auspices of the California Department of Education, and thus could be built upon.

The prevailing recommendation and requirement for schools that enter Program Improvement (PI) status is to implement their currently

unsuccessful programs of instruction for ELs more rigorously. Districts do not have the option to re-consider these programs and to try something that might be more effective with their students. Given that not many schools are “graduating” from PI status, it appears that “doing the same thing only more” is not working. This proposal would give flexibility to schools whose EL students are not thriving to try something different through these Zones of Choice. This approach would provide for some underperforming schools with PI and/or the QEIA funds to come to the state with a plan for improvement that allows flexibility and adopts curriculum and instructional approaches that have been proven in other contexts. These schools could be required to develop a plan for improvement with an outside provider who is expert in the field of EL instruction. Such a plan would have the additional requirement of including research-based practices for ELs, such as those being developed currently by the CDE or those encompassed in the National Literacy Panel recommendations. The PI and QEIA programs already have significant funding so this idea would not require new resources.

Once these schools met existing PI and QEIA requirements, they would be free to choose how to address the needs of their students. Schools or districts in this program would be required to develop a comprehensive educational and evaluation plan including a strategy for how they will partner with experts, and would have to show results based on carefully collected data after a reasonable period of time.<sup>16</sup> This has been accomplished in other states with great success.

California can, and *must*, improve on the way it educates English Learners and linguistic minority students. We hope that these recommendations can play a significant role in that improvement.

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<sup>16</sup> A similar recommendation was made to address the problem of high school dropouts, 30 percent of whom are English learners. The California Dropout Research Project Policy Committee Report, *Solving California’s Dropout Crisis*, proposes establishing “lighthouse” districts who would adopt proven school reform practices, including those targeting English learners, and evaluate their effectiveness, in exchange for the use of categorical funds and temporary waivers from state and federal accountability requirements. See: [http://lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs\\_policyreport.htm](http://lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs_policyreport.htm)



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# Appendix 1: List of Attendees

EL Policy Meeting, Monday, August 27, 2007

Resources for High Quality Teachers and EL Student Assessment

## Education Researchers/Professionals

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Patricia Gándara	UCLA
Kenji Hakuta	Stanford University
Julie Maxwell-Jolly	UC Davis
Magaly Lavadenz	Loyola Marymount University
Robert Linqunti	West Ed
Barbara J. Merino	UC Davis
Nadeen T. Ruiz	CSUS Sacramento
Russell Rumberger	UC Santa Barbara & UC Linguistic Minority Research Institute
Aida Walqui	West Ed

## Legislature & State

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Marisol Avina	Assembly Education Committee
Rebecca Baumann	Assemblymember Loni Hancock
Kathleen Chavira	Senate Education Committee
Kim Connor	Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Patricia L. de Cos	California Research Bureau
Rachel Ehlers	Legislative Analyst's Office
Leonor Ehling	Senate Office of Research
Mufaddal Ezzy	Senator Tom Torlakson
Beth Graybill	Senate Education Committee
Jennifer Kuhn	Legislative Analyst's Office
Melinda Melindez	Senate Majority Leader Gloria Romero
Luis Patino	Assemblymember Tony Mendoza
Rick Simpson	Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez
Paul Warren	Legislative Analyst's Office

## Appendix 2: List of Attendees

EL Policy Meeting, September 24, 2007

Resources for High Quality Teachers and EL Student Assessment

### **Researchers, Advocates, Education Professionals**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Patricia Gándara	UCLA
Susan Emerson	Escondido High School
Julie Maxwell-Jolly	UC Davis
Magaly Lavadenz	Loyola Marymount University
Norm Gold	Gold Associates
Liz Guillen	Public Advocates
Barbara J. Merino	UC Davis
Nadeen T. Ruiz	CSUS Sacramento
Russell Rumberger	UC Santa Barbara & UC Linguistic Minority Research Institute
Aida Walqui	West Ed
Jorge Ruiz de Velasco	Stanford University
Edgar Lampkin	Yolo County Office of Education
Maggie Mejia	Sacramento Unified School District

### **Legislature & State**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Marisol Avina	Assembly Education Committee
Rebecca Baumann	Assemblymember Loni Hancock
Kathleen Chavira	Senate Education Committee
Kim Connor	Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Patricia L. de Cos	California Research Bureau
Rachel Ehlers	Legislative Analyst's Office
Leonor Ehling	Senate Office of Research
Mufaddal Ezzy	Senator Tom Torlakson
Beth Graybill	Senate Education Committee
Jennifer Kuhn	Legislative Analyst's Office
Melinda Melindez	Senate Majority Leader Gloria Romero
Luis Patino	Assemblymember Tony Mendoza
Kimberly Rodriguez	Assembly Appropriations Committee
Rick Simpson	Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez
Paul Warren	Legislative Analyst's Office
Jim Wilson	Senate Education Committee





University of California

Linguistic Minority

Research Institute

Education Policy Center

