# Seizing the Opportunity to Narrow the Achievement Gap for English Learners:

## Research-based Recommendations for the Use of LCFF Funds

**Patricia Gándara with Maria Estela Zárate**

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**www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The new state funding formula (LCFF[1]) provides an unprecedented opportunity to innovate and reshape the way schools address the educational needs of English learners. However it is critical that funds be spent carefully on interventions that are supported by solid research. The following recommendations are organized according to the state's 8 LCAP[2] priorities and are culled from the research on English learners. Clearly no school or district can adopt all or probably even most of the recommendations with current funding and in the short run, rather this should be seen as a menu of research-based options. Schools and districts must set their own priorities. There are no silver bullets in education but the research tells us that, on balance, the options recommended here provide the best odds of making a significant difference for the education of EL students. (The full policy report, which follows, provides expanded descriptions of the recommendations, related research summaries, with citations, and metrics for tracking the implementation of these recommendations).

## PRIORITY 1: BASIC SERVICES

**1.1**      Use resources to attract highly effective, fully credentialed bilingual teachers.

**1.2**      Provide full-day kindergarten where it does not now exist, and preschool to the extent possible.

**1.3**      Provide extended learning time.

**1.4**      Increase social workers, parent liaisons, nurses, counselors, psychologists, and librarians with specialization in books about the cultures and in the languages of the students, and who to the extent possible, are bilingual.

**1.5**      Provide library books, consumables, and other supplementary materials that can be used at home with parents, in the language of the parents whenever possible.

**1.6**      Ensure adequate nutrition during school hours.

## PRIORITY 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STANDARDS AND ELD STANDARDS

**2.1**      Conduct needs assessment of teachers, administrators, and instructional support staff, including on-campus after school program providers, to identify critical professional development needs.

**2.2**      Build strong infrastructure for professional development of teachers, administrators, and school-based after school program providers.

**2.3**      Provide professional development around the implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English Learners, specifically, and how to align these with ELD standards.

## PRIORITY 3: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

**3.1**      Increase bilingual personnel (or bilingual skills of existing personnel), especially front office staff, teachers and counselors, regardless of type of language program provided.

**3.2**      Use bilingual parent liaisons to develop links between the community and school.

**3.3**      Provide parent empowerment, advocacy, and family literacy programs in schools serving English Learners.

**3.4**      Broaden the representation of EL parents in school decision-making.

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[1] Local Control Funding Formula (AB 97, SB 91, and SB 97)
[2] Local Control Accountability Plan (Education Codes 52060-52077)

**3.5** Fully fund District English Learner Advisory Committees (DELAC/ELAC).

**3.6** In teacher and principal evaluations or reviews, include the ways in which they integrate, accommodate, and seek ELs' parental participation.

## PRIORITY 4: PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

**4.1** Establish bilingual and two-way dual language programs where a critical mass of parents of EL students (and others) request such a program

**4.2** Assess and report outcomes in both English and the native language if ELs are currently or have recently received instruction in the native language, and if valid instruments are available in that language.

**4.3** Monitor reclassification rates for schools and districts, but student academic progress as EL and as reclassified EL (R-FEP) should be the primary measure of success, not rates of reclassification alone.

**4.4**. Train personnel to evaluate transcripts from non-U.S. schools so that students can be accurately placed and receive credit for courses taken and passed outside the U.S.

## PRIORITY 5: PUPIL ENGAGEMENT

**5.1** Link every EL student to at least one extra-curricular activity of his or her choice.

**5.2** Integrate EL students with academically successful non-ELs for at least part of every day.

**5.3** Through professional development for both faculty and staff, dispel stereotypes about the academic potential of EL students.

## PRIORITY 6: SCHOOL CLIMATE

**6.1** Incorporate innovative measures to reduce racial, socio-economic, and linguistic segregation among students.

**6.2** Increase awareness of and prevent practices and incidents that create a hostile or exclusionary environment for EL students.

## PRIORITY 7: COURSE ACCESS

**7.1** Ensure EL students have full access to rigorous academic content in all core content areas and enrichment courses.

**7.2** Ensure access to the full range of college preparatory courses or course content at the middle and high school level for EL students.

**7.3** Provide EL and reclassified (R-FEP) students the option of taking an extra year to complete graduation requirements and/or a college preparatory curriculum.

**7.4** Provide ongoing monitoring and support for R-FEP students as they transition to mainstream classrooms.

## PRIORITY 8: OTHER PUPIL OUTCOMES

**8.1** Establish a differentiated process for identifying EL students for special education.

**8.2** Ensure access to training in the use of computers and other technologies for EL students

**8.3** Provide career and college planning guidance geared to EL's needs.

# Seizing the Opportunity to Narrow the Achievement Gap for English Learners:

## Research-based Recommendations for the Use of LCFF Funds

Patricia Gándara with Maria Estela Zárate
Civil Rights Project at UCLA

The historic Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which became law in 2013, provides California with an unprecedented opportunity to significantly narrow the achievement gaps between its English Learners (ELs) and all other students. But that opportunity can slip away if newly available funds are not spent carefully and focused directly on those students who generate them. Indeed, the California Legislature has established the targeting of these students' needs as an absolute priority. English Learners (most of whom are also low-income[1]) have not made sufficient progress toward closing achievement gaps with more advantaged students in spite of a variety of efforts over the last several decades. As Veronica Aguila notes in the California State Department of Education publication, *Improving Education for English Learners: Research-based Approaches*, "It is clear that more effective approaches are needed to improve the services provided to the English learner population."[2]

Today the challenges are even greater than they have been in the past with the advent of Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS, to which the state of California has subscribed along with 44 other states and the District of Columbia, are more heavily language based and call on students to not simply provide the right answer on an exam, but to be able to explain that answer in both oral and written forms.[3] For students who struggle with English, the new and higher standards will impose new challenges that neither EL students nor most of their teachers are prepared to meet.[4] Thus, simply providing more of the same kinds of interventions is unlikely to deliver on the promise of significantly enhancing outcomes for ELs. We argue that instruction and school-related services for ELs need to go **beyond** established practices or simply improving compliance with the existing education code. We believe that the new funding formula provides an opportunity for schools, districts, and teachers to innovate and implement **research-based** practices. To this end, we offer recommendations for practices that hold particular promise for improving the academic outcomes for English Learners in California schools.

Below, we provide specific recommendations, according to the state's 8 priorities, for addressing the special needs of English Learners, and suggestions for metrics that can be used to track schools' and districts' progress in implementing these recommendations. Clearly no school or district can adopt all of the recommendations or probably even most with current funding and in the short run; rather this should be seen as a menu of research-based options. Schools and districts will need to set their own priorities.

# CALIFORNIA'S EIGHT PRIORITIES

## PRIORITY 1: BASIC SERVICES

*"The degree to which teachers are appropriately assigned pursuant to Education Code 44258.9, and fully credentialed in the subject areas for the pupils they are teaching; pupils have access to standards-aligned instructional materials pursuant to Education Code section 60119; and school facilities are maintained in good repair pursuant to Education code section 17002(d)."*

Access to a fully credentialed and highly qualified teacher is an essential basic service and having an effective teacher is the single most important in-school factor influencing student performance.[5] Yet, a disproportionate number of ELs are taught by out-of-field teachers and teachers without standard certification.[6] And access to fully credentialed teachers is not sufficient. The mantra that "good teaching is good teaching for all students" has been cited to suggest that any good teacher should be able to meet the needs of the English Learners in his or her classroom with a little orientation to cultural and linguistic diversity. But the evidence suggests that this is not the case.

Even highly skilled teachers' instruction must be adapted to differences in knowledge, background, learning style, and first language characteristics of their EL students,[7] and knowledge of the student's home language is a significant asset in this regard.[8] Many fully credentialed teachers feel they lack the preparation to adequately meet the specific needs of ELs.[9] And many excellent teachers have textbook knowledge of how to address the needs of English Learners but have difficulty translating this into practice when faced with a classroom full of students with varying needs. The research on teacher preparation and professional development has consistently found that teachers not only need theoretical knowledge and specific strategies, but they also need opportunities to plan lessons, observe skilled educators utilizing these strategies, practice the strategies themselves, receive feedback and coaching, and interact with colleagues in a supportive network to refine their practices.[10] And if they are to teach ELs effectively, they need to have had these experiences with EL students.

**1.1** **Use resources to attract fully credentialed, highly effective bilingual teachers.** Research indicates that teachers who do not speak the language of their students can mistake silence or failure to contribute to classroom discussion as lack of understanding when students simply do not have the oral English skills to explain what they understand, and conversely teachers can assume students understand more than they do if their oral language is well developed but their comprehension skills have not yet caught up.[11] A recent study of a large school district with many EL students found that highly effective teachers who also held bilingual certification were more effective with EL students by a significant margin (more than .10 standard deviation difference in test scores) in both English and math than those without such certification.[12] The research is clear that bilingual teachers:

- ➤ draw upon more pedagogical strategies and skills specific to teaching ELs[13]
- ➤ are more likely to seek out and communicate with parents of ELs, building home-school connections[14]
- ➤ are able to informally assess ELs' understanding and to modify instruction and instructional materials accordingly.[15]
- ➤ are better able to motivate ELs to learn by fostering closer relationships with them.[16]

Schools should recruit via advertising and outreach to bilingual teachers, stipends to attract them, and/or paid incentives to complete bilingual training. In addition, districts should survey the current staff with bilingual certification not assigned to EL classes and provide professional development and incentives to support teacher transfers to the needed classrooms.

**Metric:** Increase in hiring, assigning, and retaining fully credentialed, highly effective bilingual teachers. ("Highly effective" may be defined in different ways, but at a minimum includes teachers with strong recommendations from former employers and/or instructors and appropriate experience with ELs.)

### BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

We argue that "basic services" for English Learners and low-income students should reach beyond the classroom. If EL students' instruction is enhanced by another new instructional strategy, but no additional time is provided to address the dual academic challenges they face (both language and content learning), achievement outcomes are not likely to approximate those of their English-speaking peers.[17] Moreover, if most of the variance in school achievement for many of these students is attributable to poverty rather than school factors,[18] then it is imperative that schools use some of the enhanced funding to address students' basic needs. Seven decades ago, Abraham Maslow[19] asserted that certain basic human needs (e.g., food, shelter, health, security) had to be fulfilled before a person could focus on more abstract activities, such as classroom learning. Since that time evidence has accumulated to sustain this assertion.[20] In every society, poor children fare worse than non-poor children in school, but those gaps are larger in the United States (and in California) than in any other developed nation.[21] Given this reality, the basic conditions of learning must extend beyond the classroom, to the context of the school and the conditions that students experience before they enter the classroom.

Below we list key "basic services" and metrics that may be used to measure a school or district's progress toward fulfilling the needs of EL students.

**1.2**     **Provide full-day kindergarten where it does not exist, and preschool to the extent possible.** ELs are less likely than other children to attend any preschool, even though they are likely to be significantly behind other students in readiness skills when they enter kindergarten.[22] These gaps tend to grow over time, as ELs must play "catch up" with their peers who have had the advantage of more time dedicated to learning. Only about half of English Learners in California attend a full-day kindergarten, less attend preschool, and this varies widely across the state.[23] Research on the effects of early education on ELs and other low-income children is robust and consistent in finding long-term positive effects on academic outcomes.[24] Both preschool and full-day kindergartens have long-term positive effects on both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, especially in high quality programs[25] and for English Learners in particular.[26] Given that early education is so critical in setting up children for success in school, and that so many English Learners either do not attend preschool or attend preschools of questionable quality,[27] full-day kindergarten and/or preschool can help to make up for the early deficits.

**Metric:** Document increases in the availability of early learning opportunities (preschool and/or kindergarten)

**1.3**    **Provide extended learning time,** which is a sine qua non of equalizing opportunity for ELs. The research on the effects of extended learning time in K-12 education is robust and promising, when the time is used effectively to engage students and provide support in key areas.[28] And, because ELs have "double the work"[29] to do in school – both learning a new language and culture, as well as attempting to keep up with grade level demands across the curriculum – additional time is a particularly critical resource for these students.

**Metric:** Number of hours added to EL students' instructional time (by days or hours depending on the program and services) and nature of learning opportunities, including after school programming.

**1.4**    **Increase social workers, parent liaisons, nurses, counselors, psychologists, and librarians with specialization in books about the cultures and in the languages of the students, and who to the extent possible, are bilingual.** The typical high school in California has 1 counselor for more than 800 students, and in K-8 the typical school has no social worker and no nurse readily available.[30] Librarians are rare.[31] Yet most students attending these schools are also low-income and come from homes with significant economic needs; they often need to be connected to social and mental health services as well as accessible health care, including dentists and eye doctors. Unhealthy children, children lacking adequate nutrition, children in unstable home environments, and children who are stressed are not ready to learn and no amount of good instruction can wholly overcome these challenges.

**Metric:** Increase bilingual personnel in the categories of social work, parent liaison, nurse, librarian (with knowledge of primary language books), counselor, and psychologist. This may be measured in hours dedicated to these services rather than full time employees.

**1.5**    **Provide library books, consumables, and other supplementary materials that can be used at home with parents, in the language of the parents whenever possible.** Reading, in any language, is the cornerstone to school success[32]. Most parents of ELs want to help their children succeed in school but do not know how and do not have materials at home that can support children's learning in a language that parents can use[33]. At the elementary level, story books in the home language and other supplemental materials that parents can use with their children can foster this critical home support. Research shows that when books are made available to parents and students, they engage in more frequent reading with their children,[34] which is predictive of better educational outcomes.[35]

**Metric:** Increase in purchase of books and materials in native language available for students and parents over baseline purchases (before LCFF funds).

**1.6**.    **Ensure adequate nutrition during school hours.** Given that EL students have one of the highest poverty rates in the nation and nutrition is linked to schooling outcomes, schools should make every effort to ensure that these students are well nourished while at school.[36]

**Metric:** Document funds dedicated to fully functioning and nutritious breakfast *and* lunch program.

# PRIORITY 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STANDARDS AND ELD STANDARDS

*"Implementation of academic content and performance standards adopted by the state board for all pupils, including English learners."*

All English Learners need English Language Development (ELD) provided by skilled and experienced teachers with specialization in this area.[37] Additionally, ELD should be provided during a portion of the day set aside for this purpose, and integrated with other subject matter[38] and the CCSS. If teachers do not have specific training in both ELD and CCSS alignment, high quality professional development should be provided. The literature to date suggests that most teachers receive relatively little preparation for teaching ELs and the professional development they do receive is often less than effective.[39] Teachers want more *effective* professional development that is collaborative, ongoing, and embedded in school practice, especially regarding English Learners and the Common Core.[40] The state ELA/ELD framework provides the guidelines and should be considered an essential element of this professional development (http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/cc/cd/ela-eldfwchapters.asp).

**2.1** **Conduct a needs assessment of teachers, administrators, and instructional support staff, including on-campus after school program providers, to identify their critical professional development needs related to classroom instruction of English Learners.** Professional development should be matched to the specific needs identified by instructional personnel. Many times teachers do not know what they don't know, especially in an instructional area in which they have had little preparation,[41] but as a starting point, teachers want to be listened to about their needs.[42] Effective professional development addresses the actual needs of staff, rather than assumed needs.[43]

> **Metric:** Independent (externally administered and analyzed) surveys of teachers about (1) their professional development needs for addressing the linguistic and academic needs of ELs; (2) the perceived effectiveness of the professional development provided; (3) the degree to which they have implemented practices acquired through professional development; and (4) their continuing needs.

**2.2** **Build strong infrastructure for the professional development of district teachers, administrators, and school-based after school program providers.** Where there are limited human resources, districts can partner with other districts or with recognized institutions/agencies that specialize in professional development for staff serving ELs.

> **Metrics:** *(a)* Document plans for developing or improving their infrastructures for professional development specific to ELs, including their choice of providers, partnership development, and resource allocation. *(b)* Document how the choice of providers has been evaluated as well as provide some measure of the effectiveness of the professional development over time (e.g., anonymous surveys conducted by an external evaluation specialist as well as other evidence of impact on teachers).

**2.3** **Provide professional development around the implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English Learners, specifically, and how to align these with ELD standards.**

> **Metric:** Districts/schools specifically document how they have attempted to meet instructional staff's needs for greater preparation for implementing CCSS, including the use of the ELA/ELD framework.

## PRIORITY 3: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

*"Efforts to seek parent input in decision making, promotion of parent participation for unduplicated pupils and special need subgroups."*

Parents are a critical learning resource for any student, including ELs, yet relatively little is done to enlist the parents or guardians of English Learners in their children's education, at home or at school.[44] Research has shown that some forms of parent involvement are linked to better student outcomes.[45] While the research on parent involvement tends to focus on traditional forms of participation in school-based activities, such as parent associations, fundraising, luncheons, and daytime volunteer requests, these may not be optimal ways to enlist all parents' or guardians' support.[46] Immigrant parents often have inconsistent experiences and unclear expectations of how communication with teachers should ensue.[47] Having a clear school-wide strategy to engage parents and guardians, providing clear information about the program options available to their children, and conveying the importance of home-based support, will lessen parents' uncertainty about how to participate in their child's education.

**3.1** **Increase bilingual personnel (or bilingual skills of existing personnel), especially front office staff, teachers, and counselors, regardless of the type of language assistance program provided.** Research has shown that schools serving high percentages of ELs tend to be less welcoming than other schools.[48] As such, it is critically important to have welcoming staff in the front office that can communicate with parents. When school administrators, counselors, and other school staff also speak the same language as the parents or guardians, they will make stronger and more engaging connections to the school. Bilingual flyers, automated phone messages, and letters may effectively communicate events and announcements but do not yield the types of relationships that result in meaningful parent-teacher communication.[49] Parents and guardians are more apt to respond to a personalized invitation from their child's teacher when the invitation is issued in the language that parents or guardians speak and/or read.[50]

**Metric:** Increase in staffing of bilingual personnel or opportunities for enhancing non-English language skills by category over baseline year.

**3.2** **Use bilingual parent liaisons to develop links between the community and school.** Because many immigrant parents may not feel comfortable initiating contact and pursuing communication with teachers and staff, especially those who do not speak their language, schools should consider parent peers or community members to outreach to parents and guardians.[51] Having parent liaisons that are knowledgeable members of the community and can speak and write in the parents' and guardians' primary language is one method to augment communication and coordinate activities to increase parents' and guardians' participation in school and in decision-making processes. A parent liaison can be an important access point to school and community resources and information for parents and guardians, as well.[52]

**Metric:** Increase in hiring or hours assigned for parent liaisons.

**3.3** **Provide parent empowerment, advocacy, and family literacy programs in schools serving English Learners.** Parents of ELs seldom have had much experience with California schools, especially at the high school level, and may not know how to navigate educational systems and advocate for their children.[53] For example, they may not know what kinds of programs are available to their children or how to help their child chart a pathway to college.[54] It is critical that parents be given clear information about the types

of instructional programs that may be available for EL students, including a description of the research on outcomes for these programs. Schools that provide this information help ensure that parents are able to advocate for their children and that their voices are valued in making decisions about their children's education. Research has shown that, when well implemented, these types of programs have an impact on parental behaviors that support their children's learning.[55]

**Metrics: *(a)*** Document the resources dedicated to establishing or maintaining parent advocacy programs and family literacy activities, including numbers of meetings and numbers of parents or guardians in attendance. ***(b)*** Document the information provided to parents and guardians of EL about the types of instructional programs that can be made available to them, and the expected outcomes for each.

3.4   **Broaden the representation of EL parents in schools' decision-making processes.** Reports from schools and districts suggest that relatively few parents participate in parent committees such that the voice of the broader community is seldom heard.[56] Schools need to seek innovative ways to be more inclusive. For example, parent liaisons and parent advocacy program personnel can be used to reach out to a broader group of parents and seek their participation in decision-making. Parents who feel ineffective because their contributions are not valued or who feel unwelcomed in committees are not likely to return.

**Metric:** Report the multiple mediums and the frequency in which the schools seek to recruit all parents, as well as the number of new parents or guardians enlisted.

3.5   **Fully fund District English Learner Advisory Committees (DELAC/ELAC).** In some places, support for these committees has been weak, and they take the brunt of district budget cuts. The DELAC and ELAC committees, at a minimum, tend to have knowledgeable parents and community members that can form a base of parent involvement.

**Metric:** Document funds dedicated to supporting DELAC and ELAC and document frequency of meetings held and numbers in attendance.

3.6   **In teacher and administrator evaluations or reviews, include the ways in which they integrate, accommodate, and seek ELs' parental participation.** There is rarely a school-wide or professional expectation that teachers and school personnel pursue parental participation and communication beyond annual or semi-annual parent-teacher conferences or conversations related to behavioral issues.[57] Making teachers responsible, in part, for integrating parents and families into their practice can further institutionalize the expectation that all teachers and school personnel need to seek respectful and welcoming interactions and communication with parents. This necessarily looks different at elementary and secondary schools, however all teachers and administrators can increase outreach and communication with parents and guardians, *with adequate support* from bilingual personnel if the teacher or administrator does not speak the language of the parents.

**Metrics: *(a)*** Document inclusion of parent/guardian outreach as a consideration in teacher evaluation rubrics/protocols. ***(b)*** Establish and document formal pairing of monolingual English-speaking teachers with a bilingual teacher/administrator/counselor to provide support and ensure that this outreach occurs. ***(c)*** Document provision of a stipend to bilingual teachers where they are used to support their monolingual peers in outreach activities

## PRIORITY 4: PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

*"Performance on standardized tests, scores on Academic Performance Index, share of pupils that are college and career ready, share of English learners that become English proficient, English learner reclassification rates, share of pupils that pass Advanced Placement exams with 3 or higher, share of pupils determined prepared for college by the Early Assessment Program."*

There is an emerging consensus that instructional programs that utilize students' primary language can be an effective method of increasing EL achievement, and research has identified a host of cognitive and social benefits to learning bilingually,[58] and especially in two-way dual-language programs that bring native speakers of English together with English learners.[59] Nonetheless, high quality English-only programs can also be an effective option for increasing English literacy,[60] and strong ELD instruction is critical to all EL students. Regardless of the language instruction program to which students are assigned, it is essential to document academic growth in all languages in which they are instructed. Such assessment ought to be undertaken with instruments designed specifically for ELs and the focus of assessment should be on diagnosing students' needs in order to improve instruction. Academic achievement testing in English while students are still learning English, however, should not be used for high stakes purposes such as grade placement, school accountability, or teacher evaluation. Academic content examinations in English administered to students who are not English proficient will yield invalid results.[61]

Additionally, those students who have taken and passed courses in schools outside the U.S. should be evaluated and given academic credit for this coursework. It is common for California schools to overlook these students' previous instruction and place them in lower grades and lower-level courses than they qualify for, which often demoralizes students and can lead to dropping out.[62]

One important form of documentation of bilingual skills is the Seal of Biliteracy (a certification indicating the student is fully proficient in at least two languages), which all students should have the opportunity to earn.[63]

**4.1** **Establish bilingual and two-way dual language programs where a critical mass of parents of EL students (and others) requests such a program.** High quality dual language programs, especially two-way programs that bring native English speakers together with native speakers of other languages in the same instructional program, appear to yield impressive academic and socio-emotional outcomes for English Learners,[64] appear to be the most successful at narrowing achievement gaps, and often advance greater English proficiency.

**Metric:** Provide evidence of increased expenditures and implementation of high quality dual language (including bilingual) programs and increased numbers and percentages of EL enrollment in these programs, where they have been requested by parents.

**4.2** **Assess and report outcomes in both English and the native language if ELs are currently or have recently received instruction in the native language, and if valid instruments are available in that language.** At a minimum, incorporate the state's SBAC assessment, which should include a full battery of assessment in Spanish and English, as well as assessment of English language development.[65]

**Metrics:** *(a)* Assess progress in languages that have been recently or currently used to instruct the student and award academic credit for achievement in all languages that are assessed. *(b)* Document the numbers and percent of EL students on the pathway and/or receiving the Seal of Biliteracy.

**4.3    Monitor reclassification rates for schools and districts, but student academic progress as EL and as Reclassified EL should be the primary measure of a school's success, NOT rates of reclassification alone.**

**Metric:** Demonstrate growth in academic achievement and English language proficiency, assessed by valid instruments that allow expression in the languages that the student uses to learn and communicate, both for ELs and R-FEPs. Assessments may include grades, qualitative measures (e.g., teacher reports and work products), in addition to test scores.

**4.4    Train personnel to evaluate transcripts from non-U.S. schools so that students can be accurately placed and receive credit for courses taken and passed outside the U.S.**

**Metric:** Designate and train a staff member to evaluate transcripts from outside the U.S. This person may serve multiple schools in the district.

## PRIORITY 5: PUPIL ENGAGEMENT

*"School attendance rates, chronic absenteeism rates, middle school drop out rates, high school drop out rates, high school graduation rates."*

English learners are more likely to drop out of school than most other categories of students. There are three primary reasons for this: (1) lack of integration into the school, e.g., lacking school-oriented peers and social and academic engagement activities[66]; (2) limited opportunities to learn, e.g., poor quality and limited instructional offerings, limited contact with mainstream students; and (3) low teacher expectations.[67] Students that have difficulty communicating in English are especially at risk for being marginalized in school and feeling a sense of not belonging.[68] Several studies have confirmed that ELs often lack access to more challenging and interesting classes, and the tedium of remedial education causes students to lose motivation.[69] Additionally, teachers tend to hold low evaluations and expectations of ELs' academic abilities.[70] However, Ream and Rumberger[71] found that ELs who were actively engaged in school activities were less likely to drop out than those that had no such connections. Having friends who are engaged in school is also an important factor in not dropping out.[72] Moreover, validation of home language and culture has been shown to increase motivation and self-efficacy, which are known correlates of academic achievement.[73]

**5.1    Link every EL student to at least one extra-curricular activity of his or her choice.** Integrate students in extracurricular activities—clubs, sports, service activities that also foster civic engagement, music and arts programs, organized academic and non-academic activities, and after school programs—that provide supportive peer groups and a sense of belonging at school. Ensure that cost is not a barrier to any of these activities for any student.

**Metric:** Monitor and increase the number of ELs that are enrolled in (and attending) at least one extracurricular activity.

**5.2    Integrate EL students with academically successful non-ELs for at least part of every day.** ELs should not be confined to a special EL track or to ESL or remedial courses.

**Metric:** Percent of EL students who are assigned to <u>at least</u> 2 courses, for 2 hours per day, that enroll at least half non-EL students and that are non-remedial.

**5.3    Use professional development to dispel stereotypes about the academic potential of EL students for both faculty and staff.** Knowing more about the challenges ELs face both inside and outside of school and the lack of attachment that so many feel in school[74] can help to dispel stereotypes about EL students and their families.[75] Teachers sometimes believe that EL students do not participate because they do not care about school, when it is fear of being teased by other students that keeps them from speaking up,[76] or that they willfully refuse to do homework when it is lack of understanding of the assignment, lack of a place to do homework, or competing responsibilities that result in unfinished assignments.[77]

**Metric:** Document inclusion of content focused on "understanding immigrant students and families" in staff professional development.

## PRIORITY 6. SCHOOL CLIMATE

*"Pupil suspension rates, pupil expulsion rates, other local measures including surveys of pupils, parents and teachers on the sense of safety and school connectedness."*

California is the most segregated state in the nation for Latino students,[78] many of whom are ELs. About one-third of these Latino ELs are attending schools and live in communities where they are linguistically isolated; they seldom come in contact with other students who are native English speakers.[79] ELs commonly experience triple segregation, by race/ethnicity, poverty, and language. Given that research has shown that one of the best predictors of learning English rapidly and well is having a friend who is a native English speaker,[80] such environments make it difficult to learn English well. Moreover, ELs in California are the most likely of all subgroups to attend low performing schools[81] that are especially ill prepared to serve them. Not only are EL students often segregated in low-performing schools, they frequently occupy marginal social spaces within the schools[82] and can be victims of bullying. For example, where ELs are segregated from their English speaking peers they are often looked on as "those kids," and made to feel unwelcome in the school.[83] These behaviors can go unnoticed by school personnel and have deleterious effects on students' motivation to learn. However, schools can consciously integrate EL students for significant periods of the day into classes and other activities with native English speakers, they can create peer partner programs that bring ELs into close contact with native English speaking peers. School districts can create two-way dual language and magnet programs designed to attract a broad range of students, English Learners.

**6.1    Incorporate innovative measures to break down racial, socio-economic, and linguistic segregation and bring students together across these lines.** School events and programs can be organized to provide the opportunity for interaction between EL and non-EL students such as Big Brother/Sister (native English speaker) programs where these students are paired with an EL student from a lower grade level.

**Metrics:** *(a)* Document the establishment of instructional and non-instructional programs that integrate EL students with native English speakers and other students. *(b)* Document the creation of language and other magnet programs that attract a diverse student body and incorporate the cultural and linguistic assets of EL students.

**6.2** **Increase awareness and prevent practices and incidents that create a hostile or exclusionary environment for EL students.**

> **Metrics:** *(a)* Document and reduce incidents of bullying with data disaggregated by EL status. *(b)* Utilize existing data sources (i.e., Healthy Kids Survey) to examine and report on school climate for EL students compared to all others.

## PRIORITY 7: COURSE ACCESS

*"Pupil enrollment in a broad course of study that includes all of the subject areas described in Education Code section 51210 and subdivisions (a) to (i), inclusive, of section 51220, as applicable."*

In many school districts, EL students do not have access to the same course selection or content as their non-EL peers. In the early years, this can be evident in receiving watered-down academic content or not having access to "enrichment" classes in favor of more emphasis on basic language and reading development interventions[84]. In the later years, a more deleterious consequence incurred by ELs is the reduced or lack of access to courses that are required for high school graduation and/or college admissions[85]. Sometimes, the barriers that ELs face are not related to academic performance or even English proficiency and rather it is EL placement alone that impedes access to academic content.[86]

A well intended, albeit not always desirable remedy, is increased pressure to reclassify students so that they may have access to more rigorous instruction and the full range of courses. Yet recent research has called into question the practice of rapid reclassification to English-proficient status, finding that many students who are reclassified in their first years of school experience declining academic performance later on.[87] Moreover, students who are reclassified in secondary schools with the goal of increasing their access to more rigorous college preparatory coursework do not always gain such access.[88] At the same time, reclassification generally results in the loss of targeted academic support that the state is committed to providing for those students who begin their schooling without knowing English.[89] This loss of support has been shown to be associated with declining academic performance.[90] There is also increasing evidence that EL students who receive quality instruction in bilingual and dual language programs outperform their EL peers who were educated in English-only settings,[91] suggesting that students in these high performing programs should not be exited out of them in a rush to reclassify students.

Rather than postponing access to more rigorous coursework until reclassification, EL students should have access to rigorous and quality instruction *while classified as EL.* Moreover, reclassified students should continue to receive language development support after reclassification to lessen the impact of sudden programmatic changes.[92]

**7.1** **Ensure EL students have full access to rigorous academic content in all core content areas and enrichment courses as their non-EL peers across K-12.** Schools can provide extended class periods, tutoring, and linguistic support that facilitate EL students' complete access to the full range of academic content.

> **Metrics:** *(a)* Report the percent of EL students receiving academic content instruction in their primary language or with primary language support by school. *(b)* Report the percent of EL students receiving content instruction in mainstream courses with additional supportive scaffolding beyond the classroom, such as tutorial or extended day support. *(c)* Report the percent of EL students participating in enrichment courses and gifted and talented classes, by class type (e.g., art, GATE, music, AP, IB).

**7.2    Ensure access to the full range of college preparatory courses or course content at the middle and high school level for EL students.** In order to gain admission to a baccalaureate-granting public college or university in California,[93] students need to complete a specific number of courses in major subject areas. Yet, only a very small proportion of EL students graduate having completed A-G college preparatory requirements.[94] Rigorous academic content in high school, often designated as honors or AP, should not be withheld from EL students. EL students should be given access to these courses and receive linguistic support to excel in them. Some strategies for providing access to the mainstream curriculum include: (a) inclusion of primary language instruction; (b) provision of a "shadow course" or "Lab course" that provides linguistic scaffolding for the core course (this can be offered as an additional period); and (c) peer and tutorial support for classes that are in offered in English.

**Metric:** Increase and document the proportion of EL students that take and complete A-G, honors, and AP courses, score 3 or higher on AP exams, and are determined to be ready for college based on EAP exam.

**7.3    Provide EL or previously-EL classified students the option of taking an extra year to complete graduation requirements and/or a college preparatory curriculum.** It is exceedingly difficult, and sometimes impossible when district policy requires ELs to take a series of ELD or ESL classes before they are eligible for regular English courses to complete their high school requirements. Moreover, immigrant students who may have interrupted schooling and need to make up classes for graduation also need more time than other students to complete coursework.[95] Many schools refer these students to adult school and these types of transitions often result in dropping out.[96]

**Metric:** Report and increase the number of students who are allowed to complete a 5th year at each high school.

**7.4    Provide ongoing monitoring and support for reclassified EL students (R-FEPs) as they transition to mainstream classrooms.** Administrators need to inform teachers which students have been reclassified so that they may be able to provide additional language supports. The quality of post-reclassification support should be such that it is present, accessible, consistent, and embedded in instructional practice. This recommendation can also be supported by LCFF funds for low-income students.

**Metrics: *(a)*** Document and monitor reclassified students' grades and test scores. ***(b)*** Report in detail schools' and school districts' systems of post-reclassification support.

## PRIORITY 8: OTHER PUPIL OUTCOMES

*"Pupil outcomes in the subject areas described in Education Code section 51210 and subdivisions (a) to (i) inclusive, of Education Code section 51220, as applicable."*

**8.1    Establish a differentiated process for identifying EL students as needing special education.** Prior research has found that EL status is often associated with learning disability even after controlling for a host of other related factors.[97] It is critical to distinguish between language proficiency and cognitive impairments. To do so, schools need to employ the services of assessment specialists (e.g., school

psychologists) who, to the extent possible, speak the language of the student. A lack of specific skills in assessing English Learners often leads to disproportionate identification for special education, a label that can result in life long negative consequences.[98]

**Metrics:** *(a)* Document the percent of EL students identified for special education and endeavor to reduce over-representation of EL students in this category. *(b)* Document efforts to recruit, hire, or employ the services of bilingual school psychologists and other special education personnel.

**8.2** **Ensure access to training in the use of computers and other technologies for EL students.** There is strong documented evidence that ELs have much less access to computers and the Internet, as well as instruction in how to use technology for academic purposes.[99] These gaps in use and training in technology exacerbate achievement gaps for ELs.[100] Moreover, with the advent of new standards and respective assessments (SBAC) that rely on technological proficiency, it is important that these students not be penalized by their lack of ability to navigate technology.

**Metric:** Document and increase utilization and access to computers, software, and other technology in classes serving the specific needs of EL students (e.g., ESL, ELD).

**8.3** **Provide career and college planning guidance geared to ELs' needs.** Most high school EL students are the first in their families to enroll in college, and as such their families lack knowledge of the college and career planning process. Lack of familiarity with U.S. higher education systems is then compounded by linguistic barriers.[101] One way to address this information deficit is to provide career and college planning to EL students and their families in the primary language and in a way that strategically addresses their EL status. Unfortunately, most high school counselors are not trained in college counseling or their time is dedicated to other tasks, especially in low performing schools.[102] Even fewer counselors are bilingual with expertise in the issues that affect many EL and immigrant students and their families, such as AB540 status, problems of undocumented status of a family member, or testing and assessment of college readiness and remedial courses required of students who do not pass the English assessments..

**Metrics:** *(a)* Increase bilingual counselors at each school. *(b)* Document specific training for school counseling staff related to college counseling for immigrant and EL students. (Workshops are provided by some colleges and universities at a modest cost to schools, for example at several UC and CSU campuses.)

# NOTES

[1] In 2007, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) estimated that 85% of California's ELs also met the criteria for low income (see http://www.lao.ca.gov/handouts/education,/2007/English_Learner_Assembly_041007.pdf.) Since that time, Latinos—who are also 85% of the state's EL students—suffered the greatest economic losses as a result of the Great Recession, leading us to conclude that 85% is a lower bar for the overlap between EL status and low income.

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