

# California English Learner Roadmap

Developing English learner (EL) students' linguistic and academic capacities is a shared responsibility of all educators across the system



21st century Education  
Multilingual Proficiency  
Academic Mastery







## **California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy: Educational Programs and Services for English Learners**

This policy is intended to assist the California Department of Education in providing guidance to local educational agencies (LEAs) in welcoming, understanding, and educating the diverse population of students who are English learners attending California public schools. Many English learners represent the newest members of our society (including recently arrived immigrants and children of immigrants) who bring a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds and come from families with rich social and linguistic experiences. They also bring skills in their primary languages that contribute enormously to the state's economic and social strengths as a talented multilingual and multicultural population.

This policy explicitly focuses on English learners in the context of the state's efforts to improve the educational system, the quality of teaching and learning, and educational outcomes. It centers on standards, curriculum frameworks, assessment, accountability/school improvement, educator quality, early childhood/preschool, social and family support services, parent/community involvement, and higher education. Its purpose is to promote local capacity-building and continuous improvement in each of these areas and their interrelationship, based on evidence of effectiveness from local experience as well as the most current rigorous research evidence that speaks to the strengths and needs of the diverse population of English learners.

The impetus for this policy comes from a number of important related developments in California as well as nationally. If properly coordinated and articulated as part of a coherent California English Learner Roadmap, these developments can better serve the state's large population of English learners to attain college- and career-ready standards and to further promote the rich linguistic diversity of the state as it thrives in a global economy and culture of learning, innovation, and advanced technology.

The adopted academic State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards, and corresponding English Language Development (ELD) standards, signal an important shift toward emphasizing academic uses of language for all students, and student engagement with college- and career-ready curriculum using English and other languages. Taken together, these standards highlight the tightly interconnected nature of developing disciplinary content understandings, analytical practices, and academic uses of language for all students. This shift enables the educational system to move beyond remediating students' English language skills to simultaneously developing their language and literacy skills while engaging in the full range of academic content learning. The State Seal of Biliteracy encourages districts to recognize students' biliterate proficiency. Developing assessments in languages other than English that are aligned to state academic standards (e.g., the California Spanish Assessment) are key to recognizing biliteracy and academic achievement in more than one language. The passage of the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative, known as

Findings include the following:

- English language proficiency development is a process that takes five to seven years for those entering with emerging English, benefits from coherent and aligned instruction across that time period, and can take place as an integrated process simultaneous with academic content learning in addition to designated ELD and the development of bilingualism/biliteracy.
- Bilingualism provides benefits from the capacity to communicate in more than one language and may enhance cognitive skills, as well as improve academic outcomes.
- Establishing proper and consistent procedures and criteria for identifying, monitoring, and exiting English learners using appropriate assessment procedures—while developing professional capacity to use assessment results—constitutes a key lever for effective system improvement.
- The diversity of the EL population (e.g., newcomers, long-term English learners, students with interrupted formal education, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and the expected continuous exiting of students from the EL category) necessitates pedagogy and educational support services that are differentiated and responsive.
- Brain development research reinforces the crucial period of birth through early childhood in the areas of cognitive, social, and language development. There is great need for coherent, aligned support for dual language learners across the preschool and primary grade systems to begin developing their bilingual and biliterate capacities.

The current research evidence base also supports the need to attend to the following instructional factors:

- Explicit literacy instruction especially in the early grades
- Peer-assisted and small-group learning opportunities
- Providing academic language support during content area instruction, balanced with structured explicit opportunities for oral and written language skills development
- Appropriate assessment in various forms (e.g., formative, benchmark, summative) to understand and support student learning
- Processes related to social emotional development and identity formation

California is a state that welcomes newcomers and their families, and that addresses their linguistic diversity with a positive, additive orientation. Our schools need to reflect

**Principle #3: SYSTEM CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT EFFECTIVENESS**

Each level of the school system (state, county, district, school, pre-school) has leaders and educators who are knowledgeable of and responsive to the strengths and needs of English learners and their communities, and utilize valid assessment and other data systems that inform instruction and continuous improvement; resources and tiered support is provided to ensure strong programs and build the capacity of teachers and staff to build on the strengths and meet the needs of English learners.

**Principle #4: ALIGNMENT AND ARTICULATION WITHIN AND ACROSS SYSTEMS**

English learners experience a coherent, articulated and aligned set of practices and pathways across grade levels and educational segments beginning with a strong foundation in early childhood and continuing through to reclassification, graduation and higher education. These pathways foster the skills, language(s), literacy and knowledge students need for college- and career-readiness and participation in a global, diverse multilingual 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

The California State Board of Education will direct the California Department of Education to provide guidance to districts and intermediary support organizations (e.g., county offices of education, California Collaborative for Educational Excellence) on how districts and schools can implement and strengthen comprehensive, research-based programs and services for all profiles of English learners via the LCAP, and provide support for establishing continuous improvement strategies and expectations that enable access to college- and career-ready learning as well as opportunities to attain the State Seal of Biliteracy.

The guidance will invest in and build educators' professional capacity; emphasize collaborative efforts; support effective pedagogy; and develop systemic solutions to create a coherent and positive education system. The guidance will encourage innovative district and school implementation of evidence-based practices for curricula, materials adoption and development, instruction, professional development and leadership that are responsive to the differentiated strengths and needs of English learners, and strengthening appropriate assessment tools and practices. The guidance will be consistent with the requirements set forth in state and federal laws addressing English learners.

Adopted by the California State Board of Education (SBE) on July 12, 2017. To obtain the posted SBE agenda and item, please visit the California Department of Education SBE Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/agenda201707.asp>.