

## ***Overview of California's Approach to Supporting Multilingual Learners***

March 2025

California's Statewide System of Support (SSOS) provides TK-12 educators, administrators, and communities with resources and guidance to support equitable and effective learning environments for all students. Through evidence-based strategies and universal assistance, the SSOS helps schools and districts address specific needs to improve student outcomes.

For the first time, California is recognizing [Long-Term English Learners \(LTELs\)](#) as a distinct student group on the 2024 California School Dashboard, offering more detailed insights into their academic progress. This overview outlines the statewide resources and initiatives available through the SSOS to support multilingual learners and strengthen the programs and services designed to improve their academic achievement.

### **California's Roadmap and Framework to Support Multilingual Learners**

On July 12, 2017, the California State Board of Education unanimously approved the [California English Learner Roadmap](#), a policy that provides guidance to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in meeting the diverse needs of English learners in public schools. To support implementation, the CA EL Roadmap offers detailed strategies and resources aimed at fostering inclusive and effective educational practices.

Significant areas of support are on the horizon to support multilingual learners—who make up 40% of California students and a majority of incoming kindergarteners—in both mathematics and literacy. On July 12, 2023, the California State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the [2023 Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools \(Mathematics Framework\)](#), which provides explicit guidance for mathematics instruction, assessment planning, and instructional material adoption tailored to the needs of multilingual learners.

The [California English Language Arts/English Language Development \(ELA/ELD\) Framework](#) was adopted by the State Board of Education on July 9, 2014. This framework integrates instruction in English Language Arts and English Language Development to offer a comprehensive guide for teaching English learners and ensuring their proficiency in English in alignment with the [Common Core State Standards](#) and the [California 2012 English Language Development Standards](#). It emphasizes strategies such as phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and reading fluency, while also focusing on listening, speaking, writing, and comprehension skills to support literacy among multilingual learners. The 2023 Budget Act further supports these efforts by funding the development of a Literacy Roadmap to incorporate research-based strategies into broader educational practices, benefiting native English speakers, multilingual learners, and students facing reading difficulties across all grades.

## **Statewide Student-Level Funding**

The [Local Control Funding Formula \(LCFF\)](#), implemented in the 2013–14 school year, replaced the previous K–12 finance system that had been in place for over 40 years. LCFF established uniform grade span grants based on ADA, that reflect adjustments for grades K–3 class sizes and grades 9–12. In addition, supplemental and concentration grants are calculated based on the LEAs unduplicated percentage of English learners (ELs), students eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FRPM), and foster youth pupils. The Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) must demonstrate how an LEA will meet the requirements to proportionally increase or improve service for its unduplicated pupils, including English learners.

## **Statewide Instructional Materials**

Multilingual learners require literacy support that bridges their home language to English, enhances vocabulary and comprehension, and incorporates culturally relevant teaching. For grades K-8, English learners should have access to state-adopted, standards-aligned instructional materials in core subjects like mathematics, science, reading/language arts, and history-social science. These materials should conform to curriculum frameworks and include features tailored to the needs of English learners. Local governing boards are responsible for adopting similar standards-aligned materials for grades 9-12 that cater to all students, ensuring universal access.

## **Statewide Assessment and Accountability**

*English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC):* The [English Language Proficiency Assessment for California](#) (ELPAC) is California’s required English language proficiency (ELP) test for students whose primary language is not English. It replaced the CELDT in 2018 and aligns with the 2012 California ELD Standards. The test consists of two parts: an initial assessment to identify English learners (ELs) and an annual summative assessment to measure their progress in learning English. State and federal laws mandate that local educational agencies administer the ELPAC to eligible students from kindergarten through grade twelve.

*English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI):* The [English Learner Progress Indicator](#) (ELPI) measures the percentage of English learner (EL) students progressing toward English proficiency in grades 1-12, based on their Summative ELPAC and Summative Alternate ELPAC results compared to the previous year. This indicator is reported on the California School Dashboard for districts, county offices of education, and schools enrolling EL students.

*Long-Term English Learners (LTELs):* Following the enactment of Senate Bill 141 in 2023, the [Long-Term English Learner](#) student group is now included as a separate reporting group on the 2024 California School Dashboard. For accountability purposes, an LTEL is defined as an English Learner (EL) who has not achieved English proficiency within seven years of their initial assessment.

*Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP):* The [Local Control and Accountability Plan \(LCAP\)](#) is a three-year strategic plan used by local educational agencies (LEAs) in California—encompassing county offices of education, school districts, and charter schools—to outline goals, actions, services, and financial plans that support positive outcomes for students. It addresses both state and local priorities, providing a framework for LEAs to communicate the rationale behind their chosen programs and services to meet community needs. The LCAP must be organized in a specific sequence with a strong emphasis on strategies to increase or improve services for English learners, foster youth, and low-income students and posted as a single document on the LEA's website.

*State Seal of Biliteracy:* The [State Seal of Biliteracy \(SSB\)](#) program in California, established by AB 815 in 2011 and recently amended, honors high school graduates who demonstrate proficiency in English plus at least one additional language. This recognition is awarded by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction based on criteria outlined in [California Education Code sections 51460–51464](#). The program, effective since January 1, 2012, aims to acknowledge and promote multilingual skills among students.

### **Statewide Professional Learning**

*Educator Workforce Investment Grant EL Roadmap Policy:* In response to the need for statewide implementation of the California EL Roadmap Policy, the California Legislature allocated \$10 million through the [EWIG: EL Roadmap Policy Implementation](#), with the California Department of Education awarding two implementation grants to Californians Together (CalTog) and the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) in early 2020. These grants focused on high-quality instruction for multilingual learners by integrating research-based strategies into professional development and systemic support across various educational roles and levels. At the conclusion of this initiative in 2023, these grants supported capacity building for both in-person and distance learning, adapting to pandemic-related educational challenges, and fostering local planning efforts to tailor the EL Roadmap implementation to diverse educational contexts and share resources and best practices across the state.

*Educator Workforce Investment Grant Effective Language Acquisition Program:* The [Educator Workforce Investment Grant \(EWIG\): Effective Language Acquisition Program](#) was launched with a \$10 million allocation to enhance professional learning (PL) for effective language acquisition strategies for English Learners (ELs). By spring 2023, four regional consortia led by County Offices of Education (COEs) were selected to implement these strategies across California. Each consortium, previously involved in the 2019 EWIG: EL Roadmap initiative, received \$2.5 million to foster bilingual proficiency and integrated language development among educators, counselors, and school leaders. These grantees have initiated several professional development programs and training sessions, emphasizing high-quality learning experiences and ongoing coaching to positively impact language acquisition practices statewide. The fiscal lead grantees include the Sacramento County Office of Education, the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and the Orange County Department of Education.

*Learning Acceleration System Grant:* The [Learning Acceleration System Grant](#) (LASG), administered by the [California Collaborative for Educational Excellence](#), provides evidence-based professional education for educators that can support learning acceleration, particularly in mathematics, literacy, and language development. The literacy components of the LASG are supported through the California Literacy Elevation by Accelerating Reading, or Project CLEAR, and the California Collaborative for Learning Acceleration (CCLA).

- [Project CLEAR](#), led by the San Diego County Office of Education, aims to enhance early literacy (including reading, writing, and letter/word knowledge) and language outcomes across urban, suburban, and rural areas, focusing on equitable support for low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities. It also seeks to boost teacher capacity by promoting asset-based mindsets, professional knowledge, and skills to implement proven literacy acceleration methods. Additionally, the project strives to enhance the abilities of principals, teacher leaders, and administrators to effectively lead and apply theoretical and evidence-based literacy practices and coaching skills.
- The [California Collaborative for Learning Acceleration](#) (CCLA), offers free, asynchronous learning modules for [literacy](#), [mathematics](#), and [language development](#). The CCLA also offers [mathematics, literacy, and leadership workshops](#) for California educators and customized professional learning to partner districts. A recent addition, [BRIDGES to Learning Acceleration](#) addresses seven key areas that are foundational to accelerate student learning. CCLA is led by Santa Clara, in partnership with Placer, Contra Costa, Tulare, Imperial, Riverside, and Los Angeles county offices of education.

*Special Education Resource Lead-Multilingual Students with Exceptional Needs:* The Special Education Resource Leads are embedded in California’s Statewide System of Support (SSOS) by providing statewide resources, training, and best practices to improve outcomes for multilingual students with disabilities. Through [Project MuSE](#), the Imperial County SELPA leads efforts to integrate services for these students by offering statewide in-person and virtual training for educators, support staff, and administrators. Mandated by [Ed Code Section 52073](#), this initiative leverages the [CA Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities](#) to ensure that local educational agencies (LEAs) receive evidence-based strategies to address the complex needs of English learners with disabilities.

*Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program:* The 2023–24 Education Omnibus Trailer Bill (SB 114) allocates \$20 million through 2028–29 for at least five competitive [Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program \(BTPDP\) grants](#) to address the growing need for bilingual teachers in dual language and bilingual programs under the [California Education for a Global Economy \(CA Ed.G.E.\) Initiative](#). Awards to eligible LEAs, including COEs, school districts, and charter schools, in partnership with colleges and nonprofits, based on geographic balance, support bilingual teacher preparation and professional learning. The CDE and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing will oversee implementation. Lead grantees include Kern, San Bernardino, Yolo, and Sacramento County Offices of Education, Azusa Unified, and Los Angeles County Office of Education.

## **Federal Funding and Accountability**

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, revised by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, the [Title III English Learner \(EL\) Student Program](#) helps ELs achieve English proficiency and meet rigorous state academic standards. Title III provides state-level funding and formula subgrants to local educational agencies (LEAs) to support supplementary programs for EL and immigrant students. Funds support language instruction, professional development, curriculum, assessments, intensified instruction, integrated programs, family literacy, ELs with disabilities, college preparation, and administrative costs, ensuring comprehensive support for EL students statewide. Regional leads overseeing Title III assistance throughout the state are also an integral part of the Statewide System of Support.

The California Department of Education (CDE) has also received \$38 million in 2024 [Comprehensive Literacy State Development \(CLSD\) Grant](#) funds to enhance literacy support and improve student outcomes over five years. The grant focuses on four priorities: partnerships with higher education institutions, evidence-based strategies to address COVID-19 learning loss, equitable access to literacy resources for underserved students (including multilingual learners and those with reading disabilities), and professional development for educators during key educational transitions. These efforts aim to create a more cohesive and effective literacy support system statewide.

On February 21, 2025, state leaders from the California Department of Education and the State Board of Education [issued a joint statement](#) to affirm stability in federal education law compliance and focus on student achievement. Additional [information and resources for multilingual learners](#) will be updated and offered through state leadership and the SSOS to ensure all students who bring the asset of a home language other than English to California schools receive equitable access to a meaningful education and that all California students are afforded opportunities to develop biliteracy.

## **Conclusion**

California has taken strategic steps to close opportunity gaps to strengthen the support system for multilingual learners and ensure equitable access to high-quality education. Grounded in evidence-based practices, the state's unwavering commitment to implementing the English Learner Roadmap Policy—alongside aligned resources through the Statewide System of Support—reinforces its priority to close opportunity gaps to ensure academic success for multilingual learners. Targeted investments in professional development prepare educators with effective language acquisition strategies, enhancing instruction and student outcomes. The inclusion of Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) marks a pivotal shift in accountability, leveraging existing statewide investments to provide more focused and impactful support for both educators and multilingual learners. Looking ahead, California remains committed to expanding and refining these efforts, strengthening a comprehensive Statewide System of Support that accelerates progress and success for multilingual learners.