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Governance Brief

English Learners in Focus

The English Learner Roadmap: Providing Direction for English Learner Success

by Laurie Olsen, Ph.D. and Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Ph.D.

Introduction

In July 2017, the California State Board of Education adopted a historic new English learner education policy, the English Learner Roadmap. The Roadmap offers a vision and direction for English learner (EL) education that sets California on a new course that views the education of English learners as a system-wide responsibility, recognizes the need to provide EL students with a rich and challenging curriculum from early childhood to grade 12, and respects the value of English learners' primary language and culture. The Roadmap is not an additional policy, but acts as an overarching connector that provides guidance on how disparate elements in California's existing English learner education policies relate to each other in a coherent and comprehensive approach. When implemented in counties and school districts, the Roadmap holds promise of greater success for California's English learners.

In order to develop the Roadmap, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson appointed an English Learner Working Group composed of 32 leaders, practitioners, and EL experts from throughout California, including a representative from CSBA. Under the leadership of co-chairs Kenji Hakuta and Laurie Olsen, the group worked together over nine months to review the most recent research, consider how to build coherence across the many related policy and guidance documents that have implications for ELs, and together constructed the English Learner Roadmap policy.

Elements of the Roadmap

This newest English learner policy is deliberately called a Roadmap because it offers direction and goals for educating California's 1.3 million ELs. The Roadmap Mission and Vision articulate the state's goals for ELs:

This brief will answer:

- » **What is the California English Learner Roadmap?**
- » **How are its principles different from former approaches to English learner education?**
- » **How can it help LEAs prepare English learners for 21st-century success?**
- » **What questions should local school boards explore as they seek to implement Roadmap policies and programs?**

Vision

English learners fully and meaningfully access and participate in a 21st-century education from early childhood through grade 12 that results in their attaining high levels of English proficiency, mastery of grade level standards, and opportunities to develop proficiency in multiple languages.

Mission

California schools affirm, welcome, and respond to a diverse range of EL strengths, needs, and identities. California schools prepare graduates with the linguistic, academic, and social skills and competencies they require for college, career, and civic participation in a global, diverse, and multi-lingual world, thus ensuring a thriving future for California.

The Roadmap includes a set of four interrelated research-based principles to guide local educational agencies (LEAs) on a pathway toward meeting the goals of the Mission and Vision. The English Learner Roadmap is intended for use in local planning to promote local capacity building and continuous improvement efforts. Unlike previous policies that have laid out prescriptive mandates for discrete EL programs, the Roadmap provides guidance for every level of the school system (state, county, district, school, and early childhood education) to take responsibility for implementing and strengthening programs and services aligned to the research-based principles. These principles are intended to guide all levels of the system towards a coherent and aligned set of practices, services, relationships, and approaches to teaching and learning that together provide a powerful and effective 21st-century education for California's ELs.

The Four Principles of the Roadmap

Underlying the EL Roadmap's systemic approach is the foundational understanding that simultaneously developing English learners' linguistic and academic capacities is a shared responsibility of all educators, and that all levels of the schooling system have a role to play in ensuring the access and achievement of the 1.3 million ELs who attend California schools.

The four principles are:

- » Assets-Oriented and Needs-Responsive Schools
- » Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access
- » System Conditions to Support Effectiveness
- » Alignment and Articulation within and across Systems

These principles are research- and values-based. They build upon and connect to the foundation of numerous other policies and guidance documents including the *California English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework*, the State Superintendent's *Blueprint for Great Schools 1.0* and *2.0*, the Seal of Biliteracy, Proposition 58 (Education for a Global Economy) legislation, foundational legal precedents, and other state policy and guidance documents.

Principle 1: Assets-Oriented and Needs-Responsive Schools

Preschools and schools are responsive to different English learner strengths, needs, and identities, and support the socio-emotional health and development of English

learners. Programs value and build upon the cultural and linguistic assets students bring to their education in safe and affirming school climates. Educators value and build strong family, community, and school partnerships.

The first principle of the Roadmap sets forth the belief and understanding that the languages and cultures ELs bring to their education are assets for their own learning and important contributions to learning communities. The principle states that these assets are to be valued and built upon in culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, and in programs that support, wherever possible, the development of proficiency in multiple languages. A significant contrast to "one-size-fits-all" curriculum and instruction in the past, this principle makes clear that a single English-learner program approach is unlikely to adequately address the diverse needs of an LEA's EL population. The principle also calls upon educational leaders to learn more about the different needs of this group of students (e.g., of newcomers and Long-Term English Learners), and design approaches to meet those needs. It further suggests that attention must be paid to the climate and culture of schools to ensure that campuses are affirming, inclusive, welcoming, and safe for immigrant and EL students. Finally, principle 1, calls upon educators to value and build strong family and school partnerships.

Principle 1 Example: Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) recognizes the important language and cultural assets of students and their families. The district enrolls more than 30,000 seventh-12th grade students representing more than 50 languages. The district's recognition that students and their families bring a wealth of experiences and wisdom to the educational table is reflected in its approach to supporting the social and academic development of students. The AUHD's educational goals are college, career, and life success—and for AUHSD, this means knowing every student.

The district's programs build literacy in the students' home language through multiple language development options that culminate in the State Seal of Biliteracy. The AUHSD teaching approach ensures that all domains of language are taught throughout the entire curriculum, intentionally providing all students with speaking and writing opportunities using academic language, with a special focus on the needs of Long-Term English Learners. The district's mentoring program helps students prepare for their futures by enabling personal connections with teachers, businesses, and community partners. In many AUHSD schools, "Ted Talk"-type performance tasks deepen students' oral language skills and enhance their civic engagement.

AUHSD fosters a climate that is inclusive and supportive. Many students come from poverty, have been traumatized by refugee experiences, have witnessed violence, and do not have access to healthy socio-emotional support networks. The district believes that all students and families should have a sense of belonging, which requires building a culture of inter-connectedness and compassion for each other and for the greater good. The innovative Parent Learning Walks program engages parents as partners of the school community, empowering them to advocate for their children and to play a more active and robust role in their child's education.

Principle 2: Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access

English learners engage in intellectually rich and developmentally appropriate learning experiences that foster high levels of English proficiency. These experiences integrate language development, literacy, and content learning as well as provide access for comprehension and participation through native language instruction and scaffolding. English learners have meaningful access to a full standards-based and relevant curriculum and the opportunity to develop proficiency in English and other languages.

Principle 2 focuses on curriculum, instruction, and the promise of a rigorous and relevant curriculum for improving EL achievement—provided that students have the support they need in order to participate in, comprehend, and have full access to such curriculum. This principle embraces the new California English Language Arts/English Language Development Standards and Framework. It provides the policy umbrella for the Framework's commitment to language development through all academic content and integrated across the curriculum, including integrated English-language development (ELD) and designated content-based ELD. Mirroring the Framework, the Roadmap calls for teaching pedagogy that emphasizes student engagement, interaction, discourse, inquiry, and critical thinking—with the same high expectations for ELs as for all students. To support such instruction, the Roadmap highlights the importance of rigorous instructional materials, going beyond the Framework to articulate the importance of providing full access to the curriculum, including A-G courses as well as the arts and sciences. Finally, Principle 2, calls upon schools to provide instruction and support in a student's home language, where possible, as a means for students to access curriculum content, build English-language skills, and develop high levels of literacy and proficiency in their first and second languages. This necessitates a range of language-acquisition programs to be

made available to ELs in order to overcome the language barrier, develop proficiency in English, ensure access to the curriculum, and provide options to develop skills in multiple languages.

Teachers need a variety of tools to ensure that EL students learn the content of a full and rigorous curriculum and that they develop English-language fluency. While not the only approach, the value of using English learners' first language for instruction is strongly supported by research. After the passage of Proposition 58, school districts are free to use EL students' primary language and culture as part of an overall approach for ensuring their success.

Principle 2 Example: Oak Grove School District has invested in the rigorous preschool through grade 3 SEAL program to support EL success. The district is located in the San Francisco Bay Area and serves more than 11,000 students. Half of the students are Latino, while 20% are Asian, 20% are White, 5% are Black, and 5% are other ethnicities. Thirty percent of of students are ELs, and 20% are Fluent-English-Proficient (FEP).

In 2013–14, the district piloted the Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) model to increase early EL language and content learning and help EL students avoid becoming Long-Term English Learners. SEAL is a research-based, language-rich model designed to build the capacity of educators to powerfully develop the language and literacy skills of young EL children from preschool through third grade. Working through standards-based, teacher-created, integrated thematic units, children develop language and literacy in and through learning about the world. Teachers receive three years of support through a series of professional development workshops, job-embedded coaching, and collaboration in grade-level teams. The support focuses on English Language Arts (ELA), ELD, Next Generation Science Standards, and Social Studies standards using the lens of research on the development of students taught in more than one language.

Early evidence of improvement motivated district leaders, principals, and teachers to adopt a coherent approach by expanding SEAL across the districts' 14 schools—identifying SEAL as their core strategy for transitioning to the new standards while addressing the needs of young ELs.

An external evaluation found that SEAL changed teacher practices to be more aligned with standards, increased their use of research-based language development strategies, produced higher levels of curriculum articulation, increased student engagement, and had a statistically significant impact on student development in language, literacy, and cognition.

Principle 3: System Conditions that Support Effectiveness

Each level of the school system (state, county, district, school, and early childhood education) 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 are provided to ensure strong programs and increase the capacity of teachers and staff to build on the strengths and meet the needs of English learners.

Effective, comprehensive, and coherent programs and services for ELs can only occur if the system supports building the necessary skills for staff to implement them. This involves hiring and building leaders with the skills and understanding to establish locally appropriate goals and commitments to English learners' curriculum access, growth toward English proficiency, academic achievement, and participation. It also involves providing support and ongoing preparation for leaders to ensure that a focus on progress towards these goals and continuous improvement is maintained across the system. Selection of leaders, leadership development supports, and structures for monitoring progress are part of the picture—but all of this also requires that the school system invest adequate resources in the programs and services to meet EL needs. One key area of investment must be professional development and collaboration time for teachers to plan for both integrated and designated ELD and to learn dual-language pedagogy. And, for those districts moving ahead to implement dual-language and bilingual programs in response to the new policies in California, a high priority should be plans to address the shortage of bilingual teachers and to build a pipeline of educators with skills in addressing the needs of ELs.

Principle 3 Example: Ontario-Montclair School District has a robust EL instruction and monitoring system at all levels that has yielded positive results including higher reclassification rates than both the County of San Bernardino and the State. Ontario-Montclair is the largest PreK-8 district in Southern California with 32 schools serving more than 21,665 students—7,468, or 34.5%, of whom are ELs. The district uses its Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) to articulate its approach for building administrator and teacher capacity to ensure English learners' access to content and development of English proficiency.

Both the district LCAP and each school's plan for student achievement include details of the district-wide monitoring system. This system includes benchmarks for expected annual growth that help the district support schools in taking appropriate steps for ELs who are not progressing

toward English-language proficiency and content knowledge goals.

Instruction is monitored through administrative walk-throughs focused on the implementation of teachers' professional development, and Long-Term ELs are monitored through one-to-one conferences. At the site and teacher level, EL data is evaluated using both summative and formative assessments that drive instruction. District-wide data analysis protocols are conducted school-by-school at regular leadership team meetings to help administrators compare EL achievement with that of other students. Teachers use this data during Professional Learning Community meetings to plan specific interventions for remedying any academic gaps that ELs may show. This continuous cycle of evaluation and monitoring, driven by the LCAP, allows concentric systems at both the district and site levels to support targeted attention to improving outcomes for ELs.

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 21st-century world.

Principle 4 recognizes that language development is a long process that requires articulated pathways across the grade levels and system segments—beginning with a strong foundation in early childhood and continuing through to reclassification, graduation, and higher education. It further affirms that California's goals for ELs go beyond English proficiency and reclassification, aiming to ensure that ELs graduate and are prepared for higher education and civic participation.

Principle 4 Example: The governing board of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) passed a resolution in April 2017, "Preparing LAUSD Students for The Global Economy: Building a Dual Language Immersion Pilot in Early Childhood Education," (Res 076-16/17) which initiated a set of dual-language programs in the district's preschools and transitional kindergartens.

Tied to a strategic plan objective to build a solid foundation for early learning in order to meet the goal of a 100% graduation rate, the resolution cited research on

how high-quality early education impacts later success. It further cited the benefits of bilingualism and the passage of Proposition 58 as evidence of high demand for opportunities and pathways that develop students' fluency in multiple languages. The pilot is meant to inform the expansion of early childhood education dual-immersion programs throughout the district.

Two months later, in June 2017, the board passed an additional policy, a sweeping "Commitment to Biliteracy for All" (Res-103-16/17). This resolution established that attaining bilingualism and biliteracy for all students is a key goal of LAUSD, beginning with the kindergarten class entering the district in 2018–19 (class of 2032) as the first class to graduate biliterate.

The English Learner Roadmap: Important Shifts in Direction

The English Learner Roadmap is a major shift for California schools. Recognizing these shifts is important as LEAs reorient programs and services:

FROM Old Policy and Current Practice	TO New California EL Roadmap Policy
Prescriptive, mandate-driven, compliance focus on exactly what schools need to do	Setting a vision and mission for California schools, with research-based principles to guide local planning and continuous improvement
K-12 system focus	Explicit recognition of early childhood education as a crucial part of the system
English learners as a Title III issue, or isolated compliance issue—the responsibility of ELD teachers and EL specialists	English learners as central to practice, woven throughout the LCAP—everyone's responsibility
Focus on English proficiency only	Focus on English proficiency plus proficiency in multiple languages—and recognition of the role of home language in supporting English and overall literacy
One-size-fits-all programs and approaches	Responsive to diverse EL needs
College and career readiness as goal	College and career readiness AND preparation for civic participation in a global, diverse, multilingual 21st-century world
Focus on lack of English proficiency, i.e., what students don't have and deficiency orientation	Value and build on the linguistic and cultural assets students bring using a culturally responsive curriculum and instruction
No mention of the school climate, or of commitment of schools to be welcoming, safe, and inclusive of English learners	Focus on safe, affirming, and welcoming school climate and culture
ELD as where/how English learners develop English proficiency	Language development in and through content, integrated across the curriculum (Integrated ELD) along with Designated ELD
Structured English Immersion as default program	English learners have choice of research-based language-acquisition programs—including options for developing proficiency in multiple languages
No focus on knowledge and skills of leadership and administrators regarding ELs	Explicit commitment to leadership knowledgeable of and responsive to English learners

What can School Boards do to Support Implementation of the Roadmap?

The Roadmap guides planning and direction for improvement of local programs and services for ELs. In order to achieve the Roadmap's promise, local policies and guidance to schools should be updated to align with its principles. For example, policies regarding goals for ELs, as well as resolutions related to preparation for 21st-century participation and valuing the diversity of the community may need updating.

An important step toward incorporating the Roadmap principles into local programs is to use them as a guide in developing district and county LCAPs. The principles include all eight state priority areas on the LCAP, suggesting the kind of programs, services, and approaches that should be considered in order to ensure the needs of English learners are addressed in the plan. In addition, governing boards can use each principle as a lens for looking across the LCAP priority areas to ensure there is coherence and comprehensiveness in how English learners' needs are being incorporated.

While policies, guidelines, and plans are important, their implementation is key to ensuring positive results for students. In order to implement the EL Roadmap, LEAs should address a number of issues that will help ensure that its principles become actions. To do this, boards should explore the following questions:

1. What are our current vision and goals for English learners? Do they include the principles laid out in the Roadmap?
2. How can we align our vision and goals for EL students with the EL Roadmap?
3. How will we align resources with this vision and goals? What are the areas where resources are most needed (e.g., teacher retention and recruitment, professional development for *all* staff, extra learning time, etc.)?
4. How do we inform and build partnerships with all members of the school community to support the vision and goals?
5. How will we monitor efforts to ensure that the strategies employed by district and county office of education (COE) staff are successful? What are appropriate milestones and progress toward meeting goals?
6. What attitudes, skills, and experience do district and COE leaders need in order to support and pursue a vision and goals that are based on the Roadmap?

Conclusion

The California English Learner Roadmap provides guidance on how to create a coherent and comprehensive approach to English learner education that supports their success in school and beyond. As LEAs throughout California align their services to this Roadmap, a powerful new trajectory is set for the state—one that delivers on the promise of educational equity and access for English learners and fosters a talented, well-educated, multilingual, and multicultural population with enormous potential to contribute to the state's economic and social strengths.

CSBA Resources

English Learners in Focus: Expanding Bilingual Education in California after Proposition 58 (3/17). <http://bit.ly/2zDTU1C>

English Learners in Focus: Ensuring High-Quality Staff for English Learners (7/16). <http://bit.ly/2yyvfbE>

English Learners in Focus: Updated Demographic and Achievement Profile of California's English Learners (9/16). <http://bit.ly/2iUddKq>

English Learners in Focus: The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs (9/14). <http://bit.ly/2zVucXB>

GAMUT Online (Subscribers Only). Sample Policies and Administrative Regulations. www.gamutonline.net

- » AR 4112.22 – Staff Teaching English Language Learners
- » BP/AR 6174 – Education for English Language Learners

External Resources

California Department of Education EL Roadmap webpage. Includes the policy, press releases, frequently asked questions, a guidance document, an LEA self-assessment rubric for determining areas of strength and need in services and programs for English Learners, and other resources for implementation. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rm/>

Prop. 58 Has Passed! Now What? Fact sheet by the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) and Californians Together. <http://bit.ly/2GsFhiT>

Multiple Pathways to Biliteracy. Report by Californians Together. <http://bit.ly/2EliaWM>

California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) Resource Center. <http://www.resources.gocabe.org/>

Laurie Olsen, Ph.D., is the executive director of the Sobrato Early Academic Language Program and the co-chair of the Superintendent for Public Instruction's California English Learner Roadmap Working Group.

Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Ph.D., is the senior director of Policy and Programs for the California School Boards Association.