LISTENING TO TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A Survey of California Teachers' Challenges, Experiences, and Professional Development Needs

Patricia Gándara • Julie Maxwell-Jolly • Anne Driscoll

Listening to Teachers of English Language Learners is the product of collaboration between Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (The Center), and the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute (UC LMRI).

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The **UC Linguistic Minority Research Institute** is a multi-campus research unit of the University of California established in 1984 to pursue "...knowledge applicable to educational policy and practice in the area of language minority students' academic achievement and knowledge," including their access to the University of California and other institutions of higher education.

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The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning
133 Mission Street, Suite 220
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
www.cftl.org

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THE CENTER FOR THE FUTURE OF TEACHING & LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA UC LMRI LINGUISTIC MINORITY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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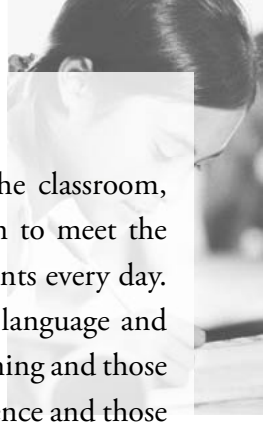
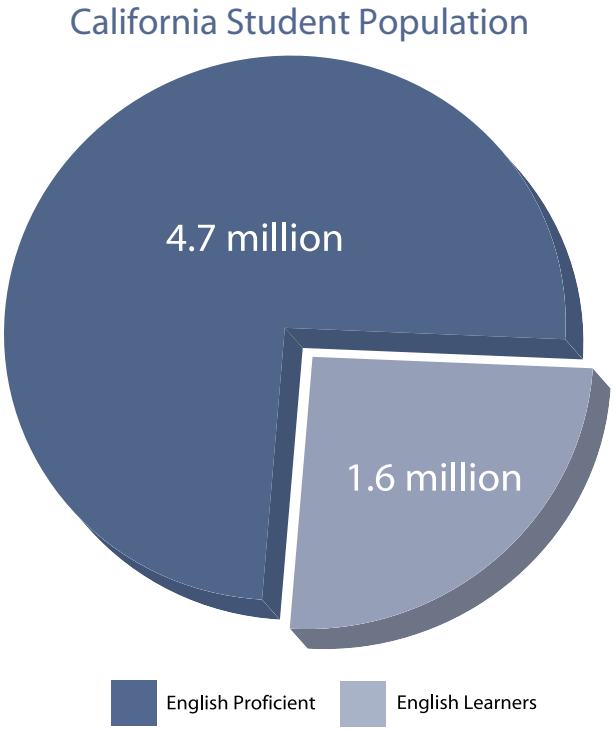


Introduction

The students in California's public schools come from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Almost 1.6 million, approximately 25%, of these youngsters are classified as English Learners or "ELs"[1] and require special assistance from their teachers and schools to meet the state's rigorous academic content standards while also learning English. With 32% of all EL students in the country, California has a higher concentration of English learners than anywhere else in the U.S. California's growth in EL students is also greater than the rest of the nation. Most of the state's English learners, 85%, are Spanish speakers, with only five other language groups (Vietnamese, Filipino, Cantonese, Hmong, Korean) even reaching the level of 1 to 2 percent of the EL population. The rest of the state's EL students speak one of 51 other primary languages catalogued in the latest California language census. An additional one million students come from homes where a language other than English is spoken. Overall, students who speak a language other than English at home account for 40% of California's K-12 school population [1]. Addressing the education needs of this population of students is critical to California's future not only because of their increasing numbers, but because the majority of these students are not thriving in California schools [2].

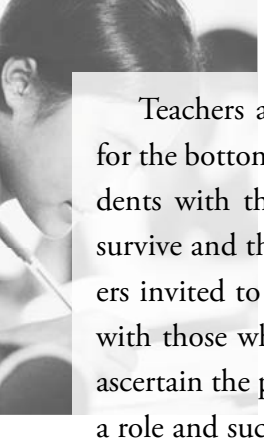
As long as students with limited English language skills have attended California schools a debate has raged among educators and policy-makers regarding how best to educate these children. A major focal point of this debate is bilingual education. That is, the viability, advisability, and effectiveness of using students' primary language in instruction. However, everyone agrees that ELs must learn English, learn it well, and meet rigorous standards. No matter what the method or program of instruction, teachers of English language learners need special skills and training to effectively accomplish this task.

While this debate continues outside the classroom, inside the classroom teachers are called on to meet the challenge of teaching English learner students every day. Teachers who speak their students' home language and those who do not, teachers with special training and those without, teachers who have years of experience and those who have taught for only weeks are in front of classrooms with EL students. Just as teachers vary in preparation and experience,[2] their English learner students have diverse academic, language, and social needs. In addition to the wide variety of languages they speak, ELs also have a wide range of previous life and schooling experiences, and those who are immigrants come from many different countries with differing cultural traditions.



[1] English learner or English language learner is the term currently used by the California Department of Education to refer to students who have not passed an English language proficiency test or met academic standards in English that fulfill the state's criteria for the definition of English language proficiency.

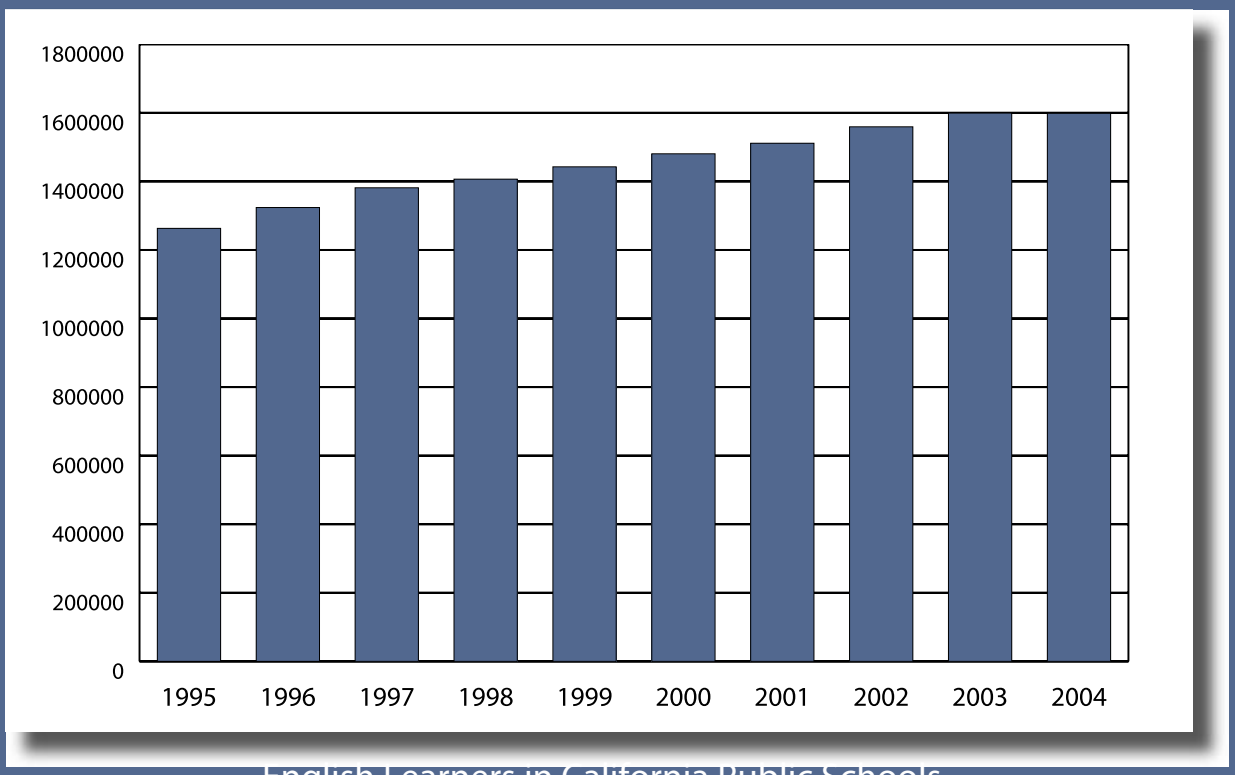
[2] Appendix A1 provides an overview of the various types of EL related California teaching credentials.



Teachers are both on the front line and responsible for the bottom line when it comes to providing these students with the skills and knowledge they will need to survive and thrive in U.S. society. Yet seldom are teachers invited to share their experiences and their concerns with those who shape education policy. It is critical to ascertain the perspectives of teachers who have so central a role and such a large stake in these issues if instruction for EL students is to significantly improve.

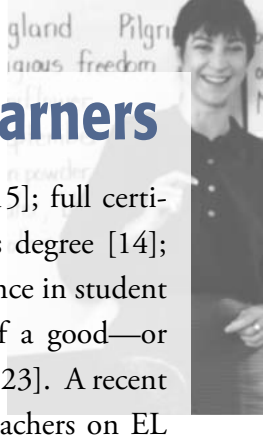
The state of California has a huge stake in how these students fare academically, and although most learn to speak English, the majority of ELs do not achieve at levels that will provide them—or the state—with much of a future. Only 10% of English learners were able to pass the English Language Arts portion of the California Standards Test in spite of the fact that 47% passed the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) of English proficiency in 2004 [2]. Moreover, only 39% of EL students were able to pass the English Language Arts portion of the California High School Exit Exam in 2004 compared to 81% of English speakers (including both English-only and former EL students), and only 49% of ELs could pass the math portion compared with 78% of their English proficient peers. It is not surprising, then, that we find that only 29% of EL students in Los Angeles high schools are still in school four years after entering the 9th grade.[3] For all of these reasons, we set out to ask teachers about their greatest challenges with regard to educating English learners, to analyze how these challenges vary according to factors such as teacher experience, training, and student need, and to discover the kinds of support they have—and need—for doing their jobs effectively.

[3] Data from the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education.



English Learners in California Public Schools

High Quality and Effective Teaching for English Learners



Although empirical studies are limited, we do have some knowledge of the kinds of preparation that teachers need to be successful with linguistic minority students, based on qualitative studies and expert opinion.

Syntheses of these studies find that the most successful teachers of EL students have identifiable pedagogical and cultural skills and knowledge including the ability to communicate effectively with students and to engage their families [3,4,5]. They also have extensive skills in teaching the mechanics of language and how it is used in different contexts and for different purposes [6]. Good

Knowledge and Skills That Contribute to Successful EL Teaching

- Ability to communicate with students
- Ability to engage students' families
- Knowledge of language uses, forms, mechanics, and how to teach these
- A feeling of efficacy with regard to teaching English language learners

EL teachers also have a sense of self-confidence regarding their ability to teach EL students [7], a finding that echoes a broader body of research on teacher efficacy in general and its effect on student achievement [8, 9, 10, 11].

The quality and extent of teacher preparation is therefore critical; although teachers cannot be assigned either all the credit or all the blame for student achievement, they play a central role in students' education. This is particularly true for students who are especially vulnerable, such as English learners. A large body of research finds that teachers with knowledge of teaching and learning gained in education coursework [12]; deep content knowledge [13]; a quality education that results in higher scores on teacher certification tests [14, 15]; full certification in their field [16, 17]; a Master's degree [14]; and experience [18, 19, 14] make a difference in student achievement. Furthermore, the effects of a good—or bad—teacher persist over time [20, 21, 22, 23]. A recent study of the effect of the best-prepared teachers on EL student learning, conducted in the Los Angeles Unified School District, found that the students of teachers with specialized training and who spoke the students' language showed greater academic gains than those with teachers who lacked such preparation [24].

In summary, English learners represent large and increasing numbers of California's school children and these students have academic and language challenges beyond those of most students. Further, teacher quality is critical to student learning; teacher preparation and expertise are part of the quality equation, but teachers of EL students often lack that preparation and expertise.[4] What we did not know, and what we aimed to find out in this study, was 1) the most difficult challenges teachers face in EL classrooms every day, 2) how teachers themselves view their knowledge and preparation for meeting the needs of these students, and 3) their views on the professional development and other support that would best help them meet those challenges. Educator responses to these questions provide the data for this report.

Factors that Contribute to Effective Instruction

- Knowledge of teaching and learning
- Deep content knowledge
- Experience
- Full certification in the field

4. The Center has reported in *California's Teaching Force 2004: Key Issues and Trends* that in the school year 2003-04, schools with the greatest proportion of ELs have, on average, 11% underprepared teachers.

The Study Sample

The survey we used for this study was designed by our team based on a review of literature on teacher effectiveness and satisfaction, a review of previously conducted teacher survey studies, and our own studies in schools and classrooms with EL students. We piloted the survey in the winter of 2003 and began the study in the spring of 2004. We used both a paper and pencil and an online version of the survey, and found no significant differences in response patterns between the two survey methods.

Our goal in devising this sample was to include teachers from districts that represent the geographic, demographic, economic, and programmatic diversity of California's school districts. We also sought to include teachers with varying credentials and training (Appendix A1), who were teaching English language learners in a variety of programs including bilingual, dual immersion, structured English immersion, and mainstream. With these goals in mind, we approached scores of districts around the state where there was interest in these issues, and thus where we might gain permission to contact teachers and ask for their participation.

Ultimately, teachers from 22 small, medium and large districts participated in the study, with the majority coming from 10 principal districts. In addition to the survey, four focus groups were conducted, each in a different geographic region with different program and demographic characteristics. The insights gathered from these groups helped us make sense of the survey data and added depth to the findings.

Almost 5,300 educators responded to the online or paper and pencil survey. Of these, approximately 4,500 were currently working in the classroom and 4,000 were working in regular (not resource) classrooms with EL students. Although not randomly selected, the study participants reflect the demographics for teachers in the state of California with regard to gender[5] and ethnicity (Appendix A2). They also closely reflect the state profile of teachers with specialized training for working with English language learners. The percentages of teachers with a Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) authorization generally mirror state CLAD numbers collected by the CDE. The 11% of our respondents with a Bilingual, Cross-cultual, Language, and Academic Development (BCLAD) authorization

[5] Approximately 78% of our respondents were female, close to the 72% of the statewide teacher pool that is female.

Table 1
% Teachers with In and Out of Class Assistance for ELs by Classroom Model

	Any In-class Assistance	Any Out-of-class Assistance
Mainstream Model	38.6	54.8***
All Other Models	39.1	47.3

***p<.001

is similar to an estimate of 9% based on an analysis of data from the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and the state Language Census by the UC Linguistic Minority Research Institute [25].

More than half (approximately 58%) of the sampled K-6 classroom teachers reported teaching their English learner students in mainstream settings, with about 15% teaching in structured English immersion (SEI). Few teachers, about 7%, reported teaching in bilingual or dual language programs. Some of the classroom teachers, 12%, reported using a resource model and we understand this to mean that they were teaching in either a mainstream or SEI program in which EL students receive assistance from a resource teacher. The remaining 8% of the sample did not indicate in what type of classroom they teach.

More than half (55%) of the teachers in the sample worked in classrooms where their students received some sort of pull-out instruction. This practice was even more prevalent among teachers in smaller districts and those with fewer EL students. The research consistently finds pull-out instruction as a strategy for providing academic support to be among the least successful strategies for teaching EL students. Reasons include students' lost opportunities to learn what their classmates are exposed to, instruction that is inconsistent with what students who remain in the classroom are learning, and valuable time lost in transitions [26, 27]. The percent of sampled teachers whose students received in-class assistance was consistent across mainstream, structured English immersion and bilingual program models, at approximately 40%, and generally consistent among districts of differing sizes and EL concentrations (Table 1).

Teacher Challenges

FINDING 1 Teachers focused on what they could do to improve student learning and did not, for the most part, blame the students or their families for low achievement.

Before exploring the challenges that teachers discussed, we believe that it is important to note that the majority of teacher respondents felt positively about students' willingness and determination to learn and about parents' desire to support their children's academic achievement. Overall, teachers' comments reflected a sense that they were eager to help their English learner students and were sincerely interested in obtaining the tools to do so. Even teachers who discussed a lack of assistance from home most often did so in the context of work, language, and cultural barriers that put parents of EL students at a disadvantage with regard to supporting their children's schooling.

An open-ended question was posed to learn what teachers found to be the most challenging aspect of working with English language learners. The range of challenges was wide, reflecting teachers' differing circumstances, background, preparation, and grade level (K-6 or 7-12, Figure 1). Nonetheless, the majority of teachers cited challenges in five principal areas.

FINDING 2 Communication with students and their families was of utmost importance to teachers. The inability to connect with parents, inform them of standards, expectations, and ways to help was the most commonly named challenge for those teaching in K-6. Seventh-12th grade teachers most often mentioned communicating with, understanding, and connecting with students as the greatest challenge they faced.

The challenge most often cited by K-6 teachers (27%) centered on their struggles to communicate with, connect to, and understand students' families and communities (Figure 1). Typical respondent comments cited the teacher's inability to speak the parents' language, parents' inability to speak English and the consequent inability of parents to help students with English language homework despite their desire to do so, and community factors of all kinds that limit families' ability to support their children's education. While teachers acknowledge the value of family and community in the education of these students, many feel unable to call on this critical resource. Middle and high school teachers probably cited this challenge less often due to the organization of secondary schools in which teachers routinely see 150 or more students per day. Generally they have much less

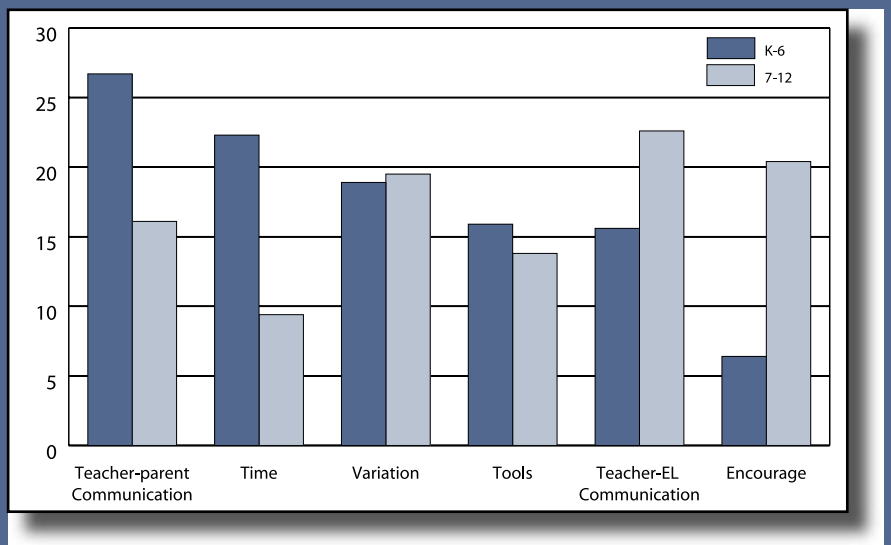
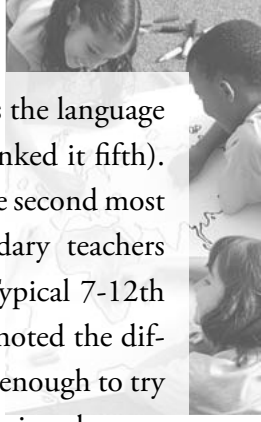


Figure 1: Top Challenges of Elementary & Secondary Teachers



contact with individual students and rely less on students' families for information and support than do elementary teachers.

Teachers reinforced these survey findings in our focus groups. They expressed a desire to include parents more meaningfully in the school community and spoke of parents' desire for the same. Several teachers noted their district's failure to devote resources to the training of teachers, aides, and other personnel to communicate with parents and/or to provide teachers the time to make useful contact with families. Some mentioned hearing of or working with programs that had successfully improved school-community communication and relations.

For secondary teachers, the most commonly mentioned challenge in teaching their EL students was the language and culture barrier (elementary teachers ranked it fifth). The difficulty of motivating students was the second most commonly cited challenge among secondary teachers while K-6 teachers rarely mentioned it. Typical 7-12th grade teacher comments on this challenge noted the difficulty of helping students feel comfortable enough to try their beginning English speaking skills, helping them to feel part of the school or class, convincing them that school can help them, and keeping them absorbed and challenged with academic content appropriate to their English language skills. If "challenging without discouraging" students is difficult when teachers and students speak the same language, it is that much more difficult when they do not.

Teacher-Parent Communication Comments

"If I cannot communicate with parents, I cannot get the kind of support I need in the classroom."
Elementary school teacher in a large urban district

"Parents admit they are little help to their child because they cannot read what I send home in English."
High school teacher in a medium-sized urban district

"My biggest challenge is the language barrier between the parents and myself in order to let parents know about the students' progress, concerns, and such."
Elementary teacher in a small urban fringe district

FINDING 3 Having enough time to teach EL students all of the required subject matter, including English language development, presented the second greatest teaching challenge for elementary teachers.

More than 20% of elementary school teachers rated insufficient time as a significant challenge, making it the second most commonly cited challenge for K-6 teachers. In general, they said that they lack sufficient time to do everything they need to do and that students lack adequate time to learn everything they need to learn. Respondents were frustrated that there was not enough time to teach their EL students the regular curriculum, English language development, and to understand and address other students' needs. Some teachers said their students spent much of the day in pull-out programs, which further cut into their classroom time. Others said that they needed to spend small group or individual time with their EL students but that the school day did not allow time for this. Finally, some teachers expressed a need to have more time to plan, observe successful teachers

Teacher Comments on the Lack of Adequate Time

"How do I spend 40 minutes a day on ELD and still fit in the time required by the state for all other subjects?"
Elementary school teacher in a large urban district

"The lack of time; it takes longer to do the lessons because I scaffold and pre-teach."
Elementary school teacher in a small urban fringe district

"The greatest challenge is having the time to give them what they need while meeting the needs of all the other students in the class."
Elementary school teacher in a large urban fringe district

"Learning another language takes a long time yet students are expected to learn content, and language simultaneously in a short time."
Middle school teacher in a small rural district

and, in particular, collaborate with their colleagues about effective teaching strategies.

Secondary teachers did not cite the challenge of time as often as their K-6 colleagues. This may be because secondary teachers have virtually no flexibility with regard to class time. Every secondary teacher has a set number of minutes to teach each group of students—no more and no less—thus they do not see modifying this as a possibility [28].

Secondary teachers in focus groups expressed concern about their students' ability to meet advancement and graduation requirements within the four years allotted for high school. One said, "If you arrive in your junior year in high school and you're trying to face all of these graduation requirements, it's very distressing… our kids are worried, they're scared." Secondary teachers also wanted more time to observe and collaborate with others, and to learn the fundamentals of their students' first language.

FINDING 4 Teachers expressed frustration with the wide range of English language and academic levels often found in their classrooms.

Both elementary and secondary teachers agreed that variability of students' academic skills, English language proficiency, and background was a significant problem and both groups ranked variability in academic level, language proficiency and background third among their top five challenges.

Rather than clustering English learners by language needs, California's current policy places the great majority of English learners in mainstream classes. This means that the same teacher might have orally proficient EL students who lack academic English skills, students who just entered the country and have little or no English but who received an education in their native language, native English speakers who have good academic preparation, and other students who have little formal education. In addition, teachers must address the different academic needs of native and fluent English speakers in the same classroom. While all teachers must deal with a certain amount of diversity of skills and preparation among their students, such huge differences can create daunting challenges for teachers when they do not have adequate support from district resources, policies and practices.

Teacher Comments on the Variation in Student Needs

"Every student is at a different level and the curriculum is not well-designed to meet everyone's needs."
Elementary school teacher in a large urban district

"50% of the class doesn't need ELD support and the remainder are at all different levels of English acquisition. It is really tough to balance so many levels."
Elementary school teacher in a small rural district

"My greatest challenge is differentiation: I have an extremely wide variety of skill levels in the same classroom for each section."
High school teacher in a small rural district

FINDING 5 Teachers were challenged by the lack of tools to teach, including appropriate assessment materials and instruments.

Lack of appropriate tools and materials was either the fourth (for elementary teachers) or fifth (for secondary teachers) most commonly cited challenge, and was also related to teachers' concerns about testing. Many teachers said that they did not have textbooks written in a way that made the material accessible to ELs: most used the same textbooks with their EL students as with English-speaking students, even though the ELs often cannot understand the text. This echoes a finding from the state's study of English learner education after Proposition 227 [29]. Teachers also felt a need for more high-interest and varied English language development materials and wanted guidance from the most commonly used scripted programs on working successfully with their EL students. Focus group participants cited examples of instruction-focused professional development that used packaged curricula in which the trainer had no knowledge or expertise in EL education and whose only guidance was to refer participants to the teacher's manual.

Ideally, assessment materials are teaching tools and the lack of appropriate assessment materials for determining EL students' grasp of academic subjects was particularly troublesome for teachers. As one respondent said:

> *It would really be helpful if for brand new students to our district we had some kind of a preliminary assessment to give us some real information about whether this child is really below grade level, on grade level, anywhere-- that could be used to get them into interventions early in the year.*
>
> Middle school teacher in a small rural school district

Teachers also felt that the current state testing system uses instruments that cannot adequately assess academic achievement for their English language learners. Teachers said that ELs are tested whether they understand the language of the test or not, thus it is often impossible to know if students' low scores are due to language problems or to lack of academic skill. Furthermore, according to many teachers, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), used to assess the English language proficiency of all California's English language learners, does not provide them a great deal of useful information of a diagnostic nature, a problem compounded by a reporting time line that does not allow teachers to plan effectively for instruction.

Some teachers commented that the tests of academic achievement including the California Standards Tests and the California High School Exit Exam could actually be harmful to students, especially those with the least English language proficiency. As one elementary teacher participant commented, "It really concerns me that our second graders at seven or eight years old are being told that they are "far below basic." And a secondary teacher said that her EL students,

> *...don't understand the English questions on any of the state assessment tests so of course they are going to fail and they are placed into the far below basic category. This is just maddening to all of us because they [the students] really are very intelligent.*
>
> High school teacher in a large urban district

FINDING 6 The more preparation that teachers had for working with English language learners, the more likely they were to cite challenges involving shortcomings in instructional programs and resources for these students.

Both elementary and secondary teachers with the greatest amount of preparation for working with EL students were the most likely to note certain shortcomings in the instructional services provided for EL students. In fact, the more preparation teachers had, the more likely they were to cite such challenges (Tables 2 & 3).

Table 2

Top Challenges Faced by Elementary Classroom Teachers with a CLAD, BCLAD, or Neither Credential

	% Elementary School Teachers		
	Neither	CLAD	BCLAD
Teacher-parent/community communication & home-community issues	26.2	27.3	25.1
Lack of time to teach ELs*	21.2	21.5	27.3
Variability in student academic and English needs/levels including different needs of EL and English-only students*	16.3	18.9	23.0
Lack of appropriate tools & materials***	14.8	13.8	26.5
Teacher-EL communication about academic, social, and personal issues*	14.7	17.0	11.1
Lack of support from state, federal, district and/or school policy***	8.8	13.0	20.0

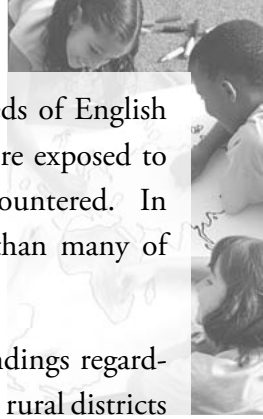
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 3

Top Challenges Faced by Secondary Classroom Teachers with a CLAD/BCLAD or Neither Credential

	% Secondary School Teachers		
	Neither	CLAD	BCLAD
Teacher-EL communication about academic, social, & personal issues*	25.9	20.6	14.0
Encouraging/motivating ELs	18.5	21.4	26.7
Variability in student academic & English needs/levels including different needs of English learner and English only students*	17.7	19.7	30.2
Teacher-parent/community communication & home-community issues*	13.5	18.6	15.1
ELs' English skills too low for them to do required class-work	11.6	11.0	7.0
Lack of appropriate tools & materials***	9.9	15.9	24.4
Lack of support from state, federal, district and/or school policy***	8.2	11.0	23.3
ELs lack basic readiness to learn***	5.2	8.5	17.4

*p≤0.05; **p≤0.01; ***p≤0.001



This was particularly significant for the challenge of "lack of appropriate tools and materials" (including assessment tools), and lack of adequate support from local, state and federal policies. In our analyses we observed that teachers with the highest levels of preparation were much more likely than other teachers to have classrooms with high concentrations of EL students, and therefore had more students needing the extra attention required for ensuring they learn both English and academic content. In addition, these teachers could communicate with their students more easily and were thus able to recognize when students were not learning. Finally, many of the most prepared teachers we surveyed took on extra duties including calling parents for their non-bilingual colleagues and translating in person and on paper. They were often "on call" for the variety of needs of English learners on their campus and were therefore exposed to many of the problems these students encountered. In short, these teachers had a "bigger job" than many of their colleagues.

Finally, with respect to district level findings regarding teacher challenges, teachers in small and rural districts felt the most challenged in many areas. These small and rural districts face the same challenges as urban districts with regard to the demands inherent in working successfully with English learners, but often do not have the same resources, such as access to universities, that provide professional development and prospective teachers.

Effects of Teacher Certification and Professional Development

FINDING 7 Greater preparation for teaching English learners equaled greater teacher confidence in their skills for working with these students successfully.

Because there is evidence that the more competent teachers feel, the more successfully they teach [8, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 9, 10, 35], respondents were asked to rate their own abilities to teach English learners in six areas as poor, fair, good, or excellent. These areas were pedagogy, ELD, English reading, English writing, primary language reading and primary language writing. On average, teachers rated themselves as "good" or slightly higher in only one area: teaching reading at the elementary level. Secondary teachers rated their teaching ability lower in virtually every area than K-6 teachers (Table 4).

The difference in self-rated ability between teachers with a BCLAD and those without special certification (neither a CLAD nor a BCLAD) was statistically significant in every area of instruction. BCLAD teachers felt the most confident of all teachers (including those with a CLAD) of their ability in general pedagogy, reading, and English Language Development, as well as in the expected areas of primary language reading and writing. CLAD teachers rated themselves as significantly more competent in every area except primary language reading and writing than those with no special EL credential. In fact, teachers with any professional development that focused on increasing skills for teaching EL students rated themselves significantly more able to teach these students across all categories of instruction than teachers with no such training. This was particularly true of in-service (professional development) presented by or at a college or university—a finding that suggests the need for further research into the characteristics and quality of various in-service programs. The survey data indicate that professional development makes a difference in how confident teachers feel meeting the challenge of teaching English learners.

In addition to in-service and preservice professional development, our analyses indicated that other factors are positively associated with higher self-rated ability to teach specific subjects to EL students (Appendix A3). For example, the more years that teachers worked with EL students, the more highly they rated their ability to teach these students in all areas except the primary language. We also observed that teachers with more EL students in their classrooms felt more competent to teach these students. These results were similar for secondary and elementary teachers except that the percent of ELs in the class was not associated with self-rated ability for secondary teachers.

Table 4

Elementary and Secondary School Teachers' Self-rated Ability to Teach ELs by CLAD/BCLAD Credential[6]

	Elementary School Teachers			Secondary School Teachers		
	BCLAD	CLAD	Neither	BCLAD	CLAD	Neither
Pedagogy (2,271/1,168)	3.09	2.84	2.66[7]	3.14	2.92	2.51
ELD (2,278/1,150)	3.16	3.00	2.85	3.13	2.74	2.40
Read (2,252/1,028)	3.15	3.03	2.89	3.14	2.81	2.49
Write (2,237/1,018)	3.00	2.88	2.70	3.09	2.77	2.48
Primary language reading (1,983/867)	3.16	1.84	1.84	3.06	1.71	1.74
Primary language writing (1,968/856)	3.06	1.79	1.80	3.03	1.66	1.71

First number = N for Elementary School Teachers
Second number = N for Secondary School Teachers

[6] Differences between Neither and BCLAD are statistically significant in every area.
[7] 1=poor, 2=fair, 3-good, 4=excellent.

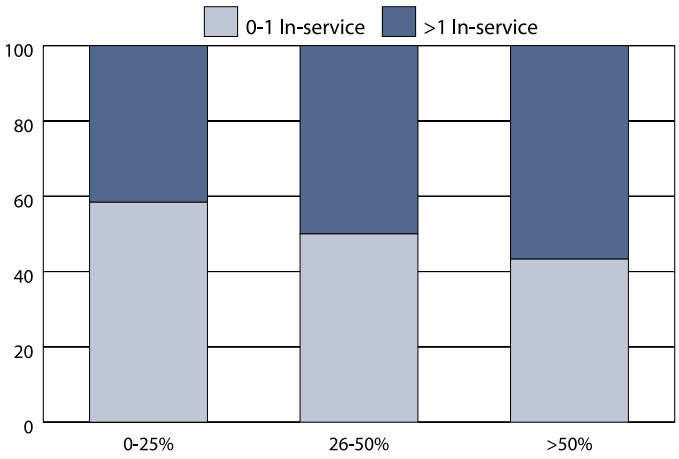
FINDING 8 Over the last five years, many EL teachers had little or no professional development designed to help them teach these students and the quality of training was uneven.

Teachers who had more English learners in their classrooms received more in-service training sessions that focused on teaching these students.[8] Nonetheless, during the last five years, 43% of teachers with 50% or more English learners in their classrooms had received no more than one in-service that focused on the instruction of English learners. For those teachers with 26-50% English learners in their classes, half had had no, or only one, such professional development. Furthermore, only half of the new teachers in the sample, those required by law to participate in some EL-focused in-service as part of their induction and progress toward a credential, had done so (Figure 2).

The very low percentage of in-service time devoted to instruction of English learners is confirmed by two other recent studies [36, 25]. The quality of such in-service is of concern as well (Table 5). For example, several teachers noted that their EL in-service was taught by a presenter with very limited knowledge and experience with EL students and thus did not provide adequate or appropriate information to help teachers improve English learner instruction.

Focus group participants discussed this quality problem. They described attending professional development in which attention to how they could adapt the curriculum to EL students was an afterthought on the part of in-service developers and clearly not the area of presenters' expertise. Teachers also noted the need for school and district administrators to gain more understanding about the challenges of, and solutions to, working successfully with EL students.

Figure 2: Proportion of K-6 Teachers Who Had 0-1 Professional Development In-services by Percent of ELs in Classroom



8. Teachers indicated the number of sessions in which they participated, but their reporting on the number of hours was not reliable because many teachers did not answer this part of the question.

Table 5
Frequently Cited Problems with EL Teacher Professional Development

	% Elementary	% Secondary	All
Poorly planned and executed presentation by uninformed presenter with little or no EL experience	28.4	31.1	29.3
Not appropriate to teachers' needs for skills and knowledge; provided information that was not new	27.2	31.4	28.9
Not applicable or appropriate for teaching EL students	16.8	13.6	15.5
Not practical for use in the classroom and did not provide follow-up showing teachers how to implement what they learned	14.8	12.1	13.9

You assume that your administrator...understands about the whole picture of what a comprehensive EL program is, but this isn't always the case. And, I don't even know if it's on anybody's horizon at the state.

Middle school teacher in a medium-sized rural district

Elementary and secondary teachers generally agreed on the professional development they found most and least useful. Over 35% of both groups cited professional development focused on strategies for teaching a second language and on the learning, developmental and other factors unique to second language learners as the most useful. Both groups also found professional development on linguistics too theoretical and thus least useful.

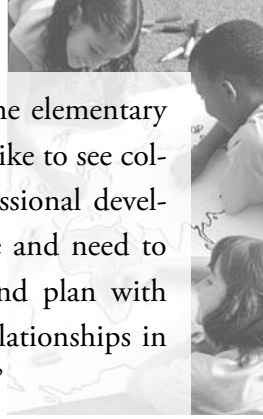
Aside from these "most" and "least" useful topics, teachers at the elementary and secondary levels differed substantially with regard to the professional development subjects they preferred. For example, elementary teachers cited in-service on English language development as most useful while secondary teachers found in-service on cultural issues and strategies for teaching academic subjects the most useful topics of professional development (Appendix A4).

Table 6

Types of Professional Development Needed by Teachers with a CLAD, BCLAD or Neither of These Credentials

	% Elementary School Teachers			% Secondary Teachers		
	Neither	CLAD	BCLAD	Neither	CLAD	BCLAD
Reading and writing	14.2	16.6	19.7	10.6	12.2	15.1
Instructional strategies	8.7	10.1	10.3	11.3	8.0	11.6
ELD	11.2	10.6	15.1	4.9***	9.4	8.1
Use of time and resources	7.7	7.4	7.6	6.2	6.7	10.5
Levels and needs	5.3***	5.1	11.1	4.7	4.6	1.2
Learn primary language (L_1)	3.8*	5.2	7.8	4.9	6.4	8.1
Collaboration with teachers	2.3	2.4	3.2	2.2	3.9	2.3
Cultural issues	3.2	3.6	4.0	3.5	4.5	3.5
Content areas	5.5	5.9	7.0	4.9*	8.8	4.6

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001



Teachers were asked what kinds of professional development would most help them improve their teaching of English language learners via an open-ended question. No matter what their level of preparation, teachers at the elementary level most often wanted professional development in reading and writing in English, ELD, and instructional strategies. The exception was BCLAD teachers, who said they needed help addressing the diverse skill levels of their students significantly more often than those with CLAD or no special EL certification (Table 6).

Secondary teachers (no matter what their credential) often asked for professional development in the same areas as their elementary school teacher peers. However, secondary teachers with neither credential were significantly more likely to say they needed help in the areas of ELD and content teaching than teachers at this level with a CLAD or BCLAD (Table 6).

Several focus group teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels said that they would like to see collaboration as a central part of their professional development. These teachers expressed a desire and need to observe successful teachers, collaborate and plan with their colleagues, and establish coaching relationships in an ongoing manner rather than "one-shot."

Need for Teacher Support

FINDING 9 Teachers most often chose paraprofessional help, more time to teach and to collaborate with peers, and better ELD materials when presented with choices of additional assistance for their teaching.

When asked to choose from a list of kinds of additional support teachers might need, those selected most often by elementary school teachers were 1) more paraprofessional assistance; 2) more time to teach students; 3) additional time for collaboration with colleagues; and 4) better ELD materials (Table 7).

Secondary teachers in the sample saw their needs quite similarly, but in a different order: more opportunities for teacher collaboration, better materials, and more paraprofessional help. It is of note that secondary teachers often chose additional time, although in an earlier question they did not rank time to teach as a significant challenge. We conjecture that secondary teachers believe that with all of the challenges they face in the existing system, more time is among the least of their problems. However, given their choice of what they might change or add to the existing system and what factors might be within the control of this system, more time to teach their EL students would be useful.

Teachers with a BCLAD or equivalent credential were more likely than all others to note the need for better materials in both English and the primary language. They also noted more often the need for additional support from the principal for their work, more time for collaboration with colleagues and more coherent standards for ELs (Table 7). These teachers were also more likely to cite the importance of training in the students' languages than were other teachers; CLAD-trained teachers also saw this as more important than teachers with no specialized training.

Table 7

Improvements Listed by % of Elementary and Secondary School Teachers to Aid Teaching By Credential

	% Elementary School Teachers			% Secondary School Teachers		
	Neither	CLAD	BCLAD	Neither	CLAD	BCLAD
More paraprofessional assistance	56.3	59.2	52.7	38.2	41.2	44.2
More time to teach EL students	50.8	53.8	57.3	30.6***	41.2	53.5
More time& support for collaboration	49.8*	52.0	58.9	46.0*	52.9	55.8
Better ESL/ELD materials	46.7***	53.4	61.4	34.5***	44.3	60.5
Better academic materials in English	39.2	44.1	46.2	35.4**	41.5	52.3
More coherent standards for EL students	29.8*	29.8	37.3	26.3	28.3	31.4
Better primary language materials	22.8***	21.7	34.6	17.3***	18.4	39.5
More principal support	10.8***	11.0	20.5	8.4**	13.9	17.4

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

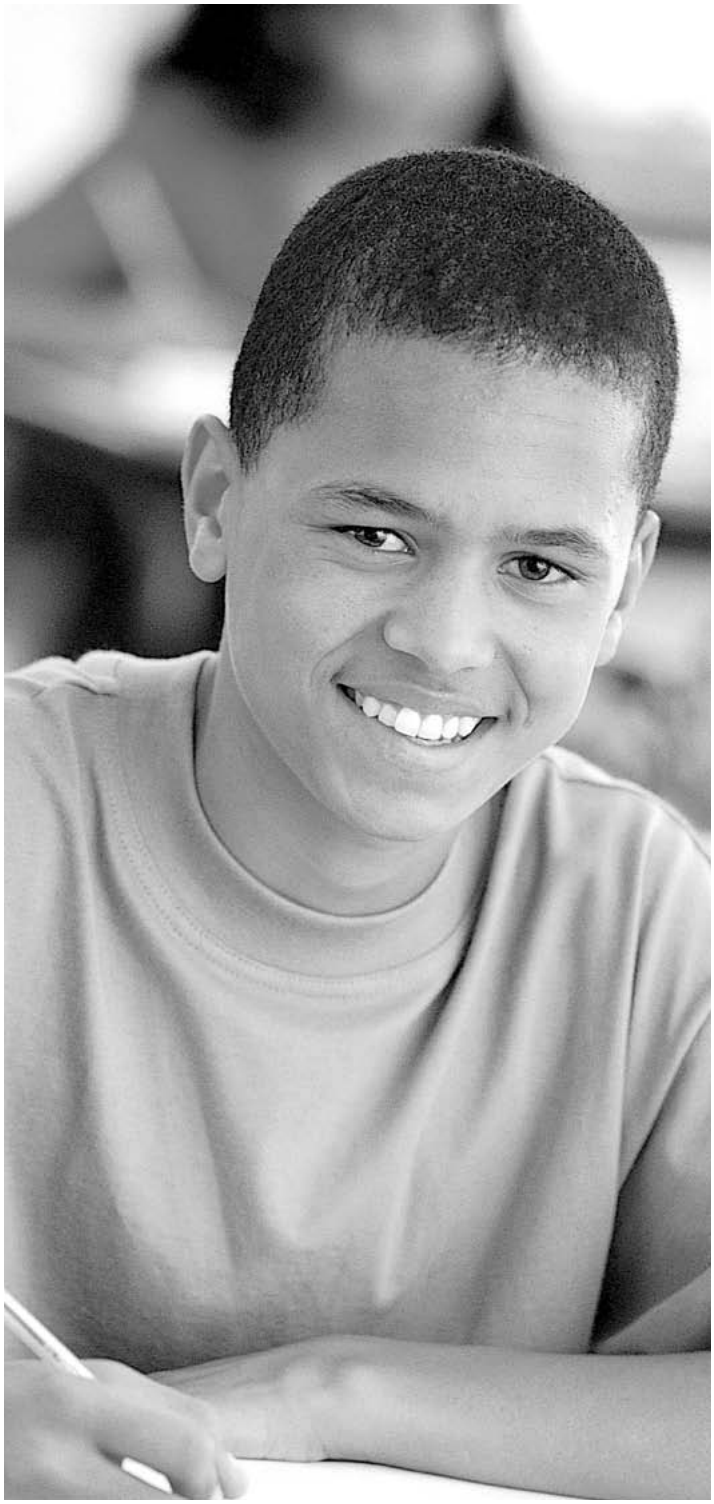
Summary of Findings

The challenges that California's teachers most frequently noted include teacher-parent communication and understanding of home-community issues, the need for more time to teach English learners both English and academic subjects, and the extremely variable academic and English language needs of their students. Another major challenge, especially at the secondary level, was teachers' inability to communicate with their students about the academic content of the class as well as the social and personal issues that can hamper student learning.

Teachers with the most preparation for working with EL students, those with a BCLAD, more often than their peers cited the challenges of variability in student academic and English needs, lack of appropriate tools and materials, and lack of adequate support from the school, district, and state and federal policy-makers. These teachers more often said that their EL students did not have the prerequisite skills they needed to do grade-level course work.

Notwithstanding the challenges they identified, BCLAD teachers felt most competent to meet EL students' needs. Elementary teachers generally felt more competent to teach EL students than secondary teachers; they were also more likely than secondary teachers to have a CLAD or BCLAD credential. Overall, the greater a teacher's preparation for working with EL students, the more professionally competent he or she felt to teach them. More years of experience teaching ELs was also associated with higher self-rated teaching ability in all areas except primary language reading and writing.

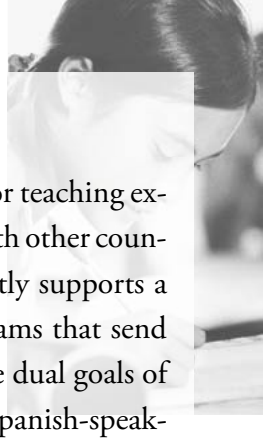
Both elementary and secondary teachers most often cited professional development from which they learned about the developmental and other characteristics of second language learners to be the most useful among those in which they had participated. In all other areas, teachers at the elementary and secondary levels differed substantially with regard to the professional development subjects that they found most useful. Teachers also varied in the answers they provided regarding why a particular in-service was most useful. Secondary respondents most often said it was because professional development provided them with cultural insights that helped them understand their students. There was much less consensus among elementary school teachers.



Teachers with all kinds of certification at all grade levels generally agreed about the overall range of professional development topics that would most help them improve their teaching of English language learners. Their top choices included second language reading/writing, various kinds of teaching strategies, and English language development. Teachers also reported that one of the best formats for learning these skills was by observing skilled teachers. Teachers wanted professional development structured around in-class opportunities to work alongside a skilled professional. All of these data support the need for developing policies to strengthen professional development and preparation for teachers of English learner students that take into account differences in teacher knowledge, expertise, and experience, and plan programs accordingly.

Elementary and secondary teachers across all districts generally agreed on what other kinds of support would most help them meet the needs of their EL students. These included 1) more and better ELD materials, 2) more time to teach students and to collaborate with colleagues, and 3) more paraprofessional assistance. Finally, teachers in small and rural districts felt the most challenged in many areas. These small and rural districts face the same challenges as urban districts with regard to the demands inherent in working successfully with English learners, but often do not have the same resources as larger districts.

In closing, we were inspired by the commitment and thoughtfulness of these educators, and their optimistic attitude that they could do better if given the proper tools. At the same time, we are left with a keen awareness of the work that remains to be done, and a conviction that changes must be made if we are to provide teachers with the tools and knowledge they need to successfully educate the state's 1.6 million English learners.



Recommendations

As we stated at the outset of this report, the teachers who are on the front lines of California's education system are seldom asked about classroom challenges or the support they need to ensure that *every* child in California can meet the state's rigorous academic standards. Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (the Center), and the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute (UC LMRI) have asked teachers of English learners about the challenges they face and the support they need. It is now incumbent on policy-makers at the local, regional and state levels to use this information to strengthen and improve teaching for California's English learner student population. As first steps we recommend the following:

1. **Convene a statewide summit to address the issues raised by teachers.**

   We recommend that the governor and the leadership of the Legislature organize and convene a summit of policy-makers, educational experts and, most importantly, EL classroom teachers on Teaching California's English Learners. The purpose of the summit would be to chart a course of action that ensures high quality instruction for all English learners. Issues that should be considered include:

   a) The appropriate preparation and responsibilities of teachers of English learners as well as the possibility of offering additional EL credentials, credential routes, and competencies.

   b) Potential incentives to retain highly qualified and experienced EL teachers in the education system.

   c) The need for greater differentiation of professional development for EL teachers that responds to the range of challenges at the elementary and secondary levels *and* that includes the topics and delivery approaches of professional development that meet teachers' needs for improving EL instruction.

   d) The benefits of and opportunities for teaching exchanges and other joint activities with other countries. For example, Mexico currently supports a number of teacher exchange programs that send skilled teachers to the U.S. with the dual goals of helping U.S. schools work with Spanish-speaking students, and strengthening the English skills of the Mexican teachers. These experts would help California's higher education programs incorporate effective teaching and communication strategies into the training of future faculty.

   e) The need for and important elements of an English learner educational data system as an element of the teacher data system.

   f) The appropriateness of and alternatives to the current system of placing the majority of EL students in mainstream classes and the extensive use of pull-out instruction.

2. **Develop a clearinghouse of existing materials and resources to aid teachers of English learners.**

   Such a clearinghouse, administered by the county offices of education in collaboration with a college or university, could gather curricula, assessment tools, research, professional development as well as evaluations and advice about using these from those in the field.

3. **Develop a package of school and district EL program/resource evaluation tools.**

   We recommend that the California Department of Education develop and make available to local schools and districts a package of evaluation tools and instruments to evaluate the quality of local programs for English learners and identify areas in need of improvement. The package should focus in part on the use of resources that respondents to the survey said they most needed:

   - Paraprofessional assistance
   - More time to teach students

- Additional time for collaboration with colleagues
- Better English language development materials
- Higher quality EL professional development with more teacher- and student-responsive topics

We further recommend that as part of this process CDE identify state, federal, and other resources that local schools and districts can use to make any needed EL program improvements.

4. **Give professional development for working with EL students a higher priority.**

   We recommend that local school districts give high priority to the professional development needs of teachers of English learners as they implement the Teacher Credentialing or Professional Development Block Grant, recognizing the differing needs of teachers at the elementary and secondary levels identified in this research. We also suggest that teacher induction, required by state law, include a more explicit focus on EL education, particularly for teachers in schools with large numbers of English language learners.

5. **Develop, seek resources for, and begin to implement a well-planned and rigorous research agenda.**

   We recommend that continued research on the education of English learners be commissioned and supported. There is still much that we do not know that is of critical importance to the success of EL students. Some of the most urgent research questions are:

   a) How is teaching and learning time organized for English learners in mainstream and other classes, and how can it be most effectively organized?

   b) What are the critical competencies of effective teachers of English learners that lead to increased achievement for their students?

   c) What are the characteristics of a comprehensive assessment program that could help teachers of English learners understand and meet their students' needs?

   d) How can we better address the unique and specific needs of rural areas and small districts that have limited resources? Thought and analysis need to be applied to developing models.

   e) What are the most appropriate ways of addressing the language, academic, social and other schooling needs of EL students at both the elementary and secondary levels? That is, how can we improve on the current approach that is often frustrating to teachers and largely unsuccessful with students?

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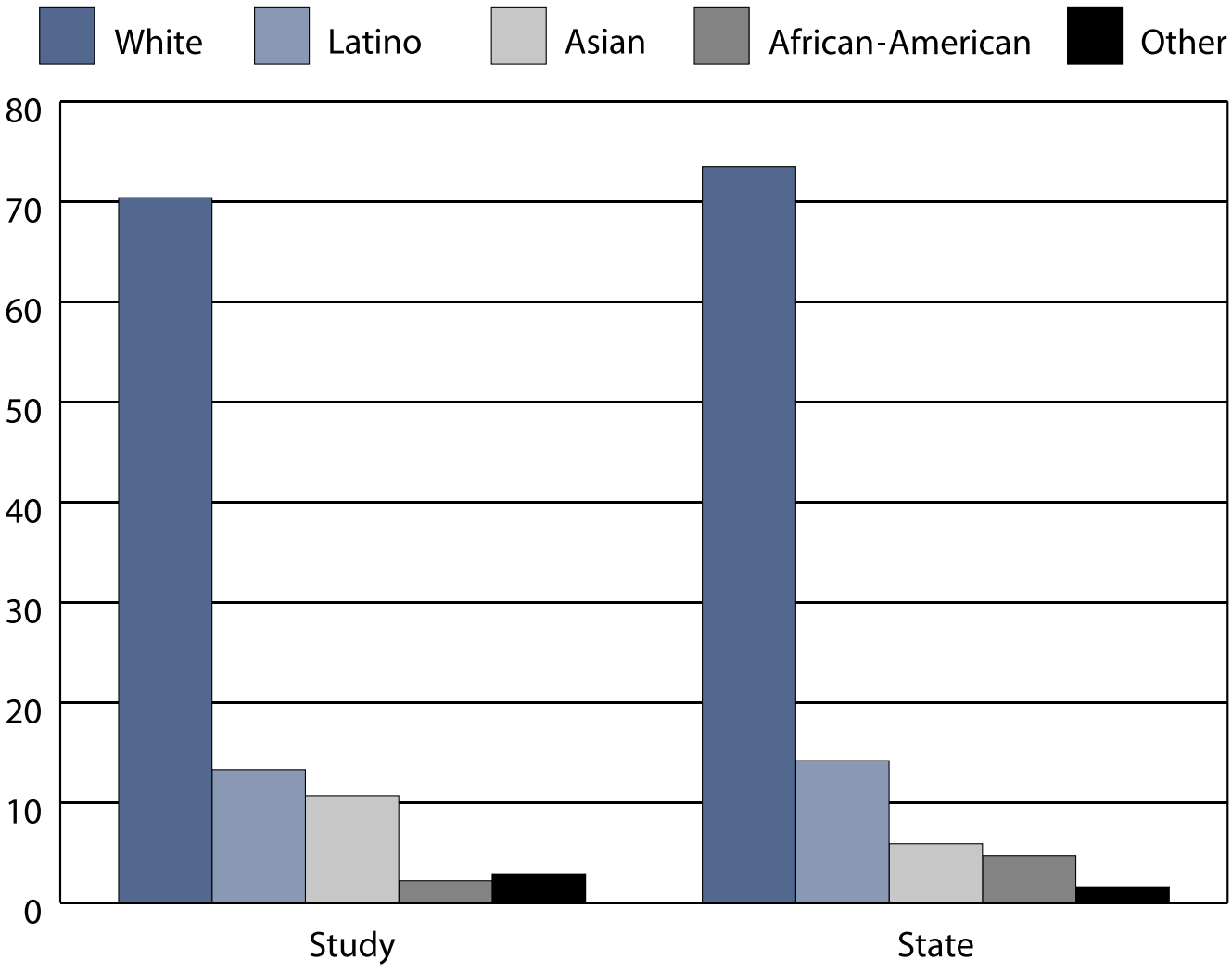
Appendix A1

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Authorizations for Working with English Language Learners

Authorization	AB 1059: Infused EL Content	SB395 Permit	CLAD/CTEL	BCLAD
Who can earn this certification?	All new teachers earning a credential after 2002	Teachers with credential who have EL experience	Already credentialed teachers	New teachers or already credentialed teachers
Where and how do they earn it?	Part of the regular credential program in every institution, public or private, that provides teacher preparation	Experience along with 45 hours of training provided by a CCTC approved agency and performance-based exam	Exam or 60 hours of course work in a CCTC approved program. CLAD is being phased out and its replacement, California Teachers of English Learners certification, based on a review and revision of CLAD competencies, phased in	New teachers: courses, including several in a 2nd language, as part of a BCLAD emphasis credential program or exam Credentialed teachers: courses or exam
What is the content of this certification?	Some of the content from the CLAD areas of expertise (methodological vs. cultural emphasis)	Same general subject areas as CLAD but fewer hours	1) Language structure; 1st and 2nd language acquisition 2) Bilingual, English language development, and content instruction methodologies 3) Culture/cultural diversity	Same as for CLAD plus: 4) Methodology of L1 instruction 5) Culture of emphasis 6) Language of emphasis
What does this certification authorize?	Providing English language instructional services to EL students including ELD, ESL, & SDAIE	Providing English language instructional services to EL students including ELD, ESL, & SDAIE	Providing English language instructional services to EL students including ELD, ESL, & SDAIE	Providing English language services to EL students including ELD, ESL, and SDAIE. Also authorizes L1 instruction

Appendix A2

Teacher Ethnicity



Appendix A3

OLS Regression Models Predicting Elementary Teachers' Self-rated Ability to Teach ELs[9]

	Pedagogy	ELD	Reading	Writing	Reading L_1	Writing L_1
Years experience teaching EL students	***	***	***	***	NS[10]	NS
CLAD credential vs. neither certification	***	***	***	***	NS	NS
BCLAD credential vs. no certification	***	***	***	***	***	***
Participated in District in-service vs. no inservice	**	*	NS	NS	NS	NS
Participated in inservice provided by a college or university vs. no in-service	***	***	**	**	NS	NS
Teachers with a greater % of ELs in class	*	*	***	*	*	*
R^2	0.10	0.11	0.08	0.09	0.21	0.21
N	1,880	1,889	1,863	1,852	1,643	1,631

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

OLS Regression Models Predicting Secondary Teachers' Self-rated Ability to Teach ELs

	Pedagogy	ELD	Reading	Writing	Reading L_1	Writing L_1
Years experience teaching EL students	***	***	*	*	NS	NS
CLAD credential vs. neither certification	***	***	***	***	NS	NS
BCLAD credential vs. no certification	***	***	***	***	***	***
Participated in District in-service vs. no inservice	**	**	**	**	NS	NS
Participated in inservice provided by a college or university vs. no inservice	***	***	***	***	***	***
Teachers with % ELs in class	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
R^2	0.17	0.12	0.09	0.09	0.13	0.14
N	1,080	1,066	956	946	806	797

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

9. On both tables, all associations are positive
10. On both tables NS = no association

Appendix A4

Percent of Elementary, Secondary and All Teachers Reporting Reasons Why They Found Particular Kinds of In-service Most Helpful*

In-service provided the following:	K-6	H.S.	All
1. Cultural insight and understanding of second language learners and how they learn a new language	24.5	61.3	24.8
2. Skills and information that proved useful in the classroom and actually improved teaching	24.2	21.9	23.3
3. Practical ideas that could be used realistically with EL students for teaching a variety of topics	20.6	24.7	21.9
4. New information that was relevant to their situations including new information about standards and curriculum	17.6	15.6	17.0
5. Concrete plans/ideas that could be used in the classroom *immediately*	11.6	9.4	10.9
N Who answered this question	612	320	926

*Classroom teachers who reported having 2 or more types of in-service

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The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning

133 Mission Street, Suite 220, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Fax: 831-427-1612 E-mail: info@cftl.org

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning
133 Mission Street, Suite 220
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
www.cftl.org