Similar English Learner Students, Different Results:
Why Do Some Schools Do Better?

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A follow-up analysis, based upon a large-scale survey of California elementary schools serving high proportions of low-income and EL students.

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Similar English Learner Students, Different Results: Why Do Some Schools Do Better?

In Spring 2006 California released its first ever school-level Academic Performance Index (API) scores for English Learners. These EL-API scores were based on California Standards Tests in English language arts and math taken in the spring of 2005. These scores now make it possible to identify how well schools are doing with their English learner student population, in the same way that the school-wide API makes that possible for all of a school's students.

Why is this important? The number of EL students in California schools—and the proportion of all students they represent—has grown dramatically since 1980. Today, nearly 1.6 million pupils in California's kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) public education system—or one in four—are English learners (ELs). At the elementary level, EL students comprise 33% of the total. In fact, California currently educates close to one-third of all the English learners in the nation.[1] They are enrolled in almost every California district and in the vast majority of schools.

California's K–12 English Learner population has grown from 8% to 25% in 25 years
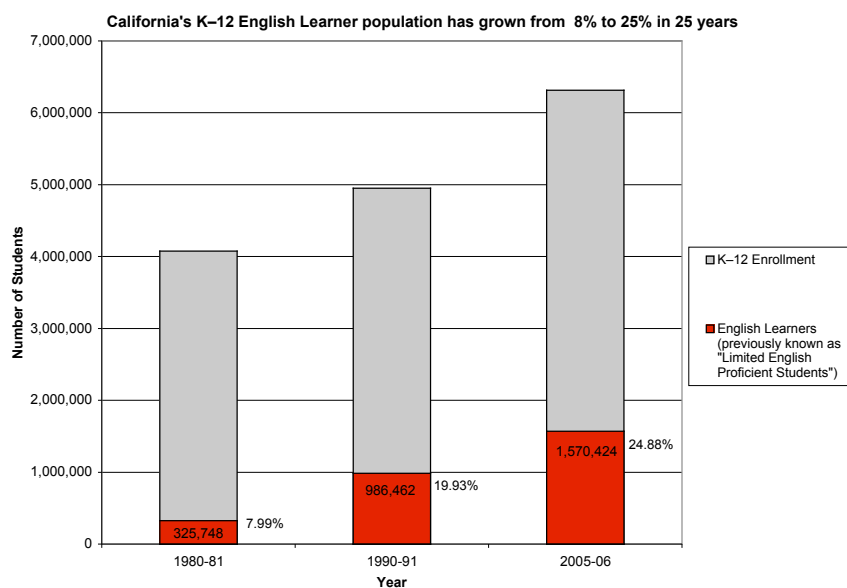
Although almost 100 languages are spoken in the homes of California students, approximately 85% of California's EL students are Spanish speaking. That uniformity in regard to primary language, however, masks important variations in the family background, English language abilities, and academic readiness these students bring to their school experience. All of these influence EL students' performance on state tests, which are given in English. Nevertheless, the EL–API offers the best information available for all regular public schools in California concerning this important student population and their achievement.

The new EL–API data make it clear that elementary schools vary widely in their ability to get their English learner students to meet the state's academic content standards in English language arts and mathematics. This is true even among schools that are relatively similar in terms of student ethnicity, parent education level, socio-economic level, and concentration of EL students.

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[1] 2004–05 national and state data from NCELA (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition) funded by OELA (Office of English Language Acquisition), www.ncela.gwa.edu/stats

A collaborative research team from EdSource, Stanford University, and the American Institutes of Research (AIR), aided by consultation with WestEd, took a look at the first EL–API scores for elementary schools in the 25th to 35th percentile band of California's School Characteristics Index (SCI).

These schools, all of which have large proportions of low income and Spanish EL students, showed a 303-point difference on their EL–API scores out of 800 possible points.

2005 English Learner Base Academic Performance Index (API) vs. School Characteristics Index (SCI)

25th-35th Percentile

Number of Schools with EL API: 485

EL API Scores
Max: 811
Median: 663
Min: 508

2005 EL Base Academic Performance Index (API)

School Characterstics Index (SCI)

Schools with most challenges

Schools with fewest challenges
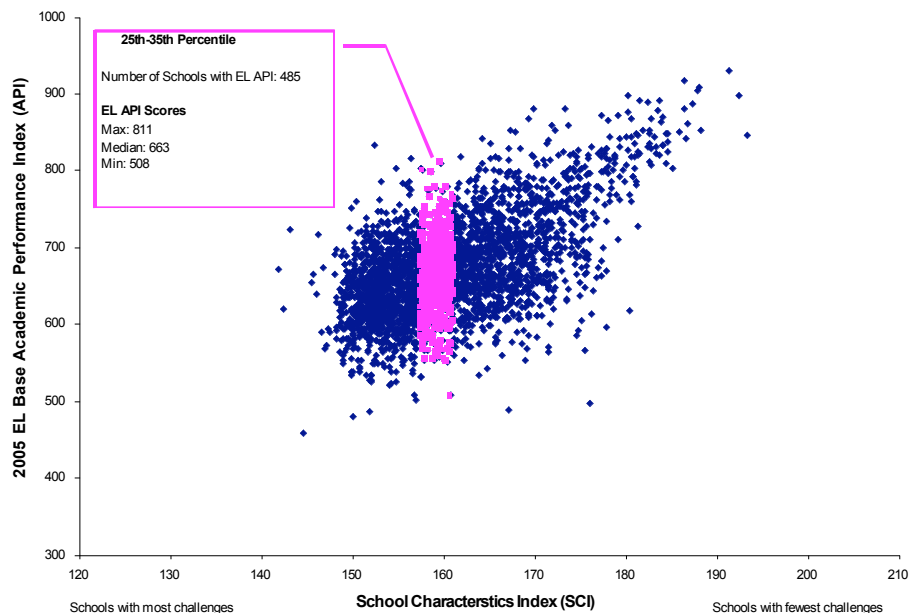
Why do these differences in achievement occur among California elementary schools serving similarly high proportions of low-income and EL students? Are the explanations similar or different from those found in a previous study by EdSource and its collaborative research partners of this same set of schools in relation to their schoolwide API? What, if any, specific instructional practices aimed at EL students might also be having an effect?

In an effort to answer these questions, the research team assembled in the fall of 2006 to design and execute an extended analysis of data on these schools originally compiled for the *Similar Students, Different Results* study published by EdSource in October 2005.

This report summarizes what we found, and constitutes the first analysis of its kind of California elementary school practices and their relationship to the school's English Learner Academic Performance Index.

Background and Context: The Similar Students, Different Results Original Study

The findings in this report on EL student achievement are from an extended analysis of the large data file created in 2005 by EdSource and its collaborative research partners from Stanford University, UC Berkeley, and AIR based on a large scale survey we conducted of California elementary schools. The Initial Findings from this survey— called *Similar Students, Different Results* — were released in October of 2005, and were

drawn from multiple regression analyses to examine relationships between school practices and policies and the school-wide Academic Performance Index (API).[2]

The 25th – 35th percentile band width of California's Schools Characteristics Index includes 550 elementary schools that are similar in terms of school challenge related to parent education level, percent of students on Free and Reduced Price Lunch, ethnic diversity, percent English Learners, and other factors.[3] The elementary schools in this band varied by 279 points on their schoolwide Academic Performance Index scores.

Our research team randomly selected and obtained the participation of 257 elementary schools from the 550 in this band. We obtained completed comprehensive surveys from all 257 principals and 80% or more of the K-5 classroom teachers in the overwhelming majority of these 257 California elementary schools – a remarkable response rate. The 257 schools in our original study sample varied by 252 points on their school-wide API. One thing that set this study apart from others was that the sample included low, middle, and high performing schools, which enabled an examination of the school practices that differentiate low from high performing schools.

New Analysis (2007): EL Student Outcomes and School Practices

This report is the result of our extended analysis of school level principal and teacher survey responses in relation to their new school level English Learner API scores. The EL–API score was based upon spring 2005 California Standards Tests and includes EL students enrolled in California schools for one year or more, as well as former EL students redesignated as fully English proficient (RFEP). Our survey responses were also collected in the spring of 2005.

We also analyzed our findings using mean scale scores for EL students on both the math and English language arts California Standards Tests, and by percent proficient on each of the CSTs (California's accountability performance standard for the federal No Child Left Behind system), with essentially the same results. A secondary set of outcome measures based on English language proficiency was also included in the analysis.

The EL-API was calculated and released by California for the first time in the spring of 2006. It is an aggregate index of test scores for students beginning in Grade 2, including students designated as English learners and former ELs who were redesignated as RFEP. Thus, this analysis substantially avoids earlier problems with disaggregated data on performance of ELs whereby students who had successfully developed English proficiency were excluded from the category.

Possible Instructional Settings for ELs:

Based in part on the provisions of Proposition 227, the state of California has defined the instructional settings in which English learners can be instructed.

Structured English Immersion (Also referred to as Sheltered English Immersion): Classes where EL students who have not yet met local district criteria for having achieved a "good working knowledge" (or "reasonable fluency") of English are enrolled in an English language acquisition process for young children in which nearly all classroom instruction is in English but with a curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language.

Alternative Course of Study: Classes where EL students are taught English and other subjects through bilingual education techniques or other generally recognized methodologies permitted under limited circumstances in California.

English Language Mainstream Classroom - Students Meeting Criteria: Classes where English learners who have met local district criteria for having achieved a "good working knowledge" of English are enrolled and provided with additional and appropriate services.

English Language Mainstream Classroom - Parental Request: State regulations permit a parent or guardian of an English Learner to request, at any time during the school year, that a child placed in Structured English Immersion be transferred to an English Language Mainstream Classroom and provided with additional and appropriate services.

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[2] Go to www.edsource.org/pub_abs_simstu05.cfm for a copy of that Initial Report of Findings plus all collateral information.

[3] SCI variables for 2005 included student mobility, student ethnicity, school socioeconomic status (measured by parental education level or student participation in free/reduced-price lunch), teachers who are fully credentialed, teachers who hold emergency credentials, students who are English learners, average class size, and whether a school operated a multi-track, year-round education program.

The policy context for this large-scale survey and study includes California's standards-based curriculum, assessment, and accountability systems. Many experts consider this state's K-12 academic content standards, adopted in the late 1990s, to be among the nation's most challenging. School API is primarily based on student test scores on the California Standards Tests, which measure how well students at each school are mastering grade-level academic standards. Given this context, in the original *Similar Students, Different Results* study we used each school's school-wide 2005 API score as the primary performance outcome, although we also looked at performance on the English language arts and math CSTs.

It is important to note that in addition to the larger policy context of standards-based reforms, English learner instruction has its own unique policy context. In California, heated debates about bilingual instruction in the mid-1990s led to the passage of Proposition 227, a statewide ballot initiative intended to curtail the use of bilingual instruction for EL students. As a result—although parents wanting such an instructional setting may request it—only 8% of the state's English learner students are currently taught in an alternative course of study using bilingual education techniques (compared to 29% before the proposition's passage). The overwhelming majority of ELs are taught in regular classroom settings with a variety of instructional modifications and strategies intended to provide meaningful access to the core curriculum as well as to accelerate their English language development.[4] The debates over English language instruction have continued in California, most notably in the summer of 2006 when the State Board of Education developed new criteria for evaluating the next round of textbook materials for English language arts and English language development.

Most of the available reports and recommendations on best instructional practices for English Learner students, the majority of whom in California are low income and Spanish speaking, are based upon case studies and research reviews. This study differs in several ways:

> **STATE POLICY ROLE IN CURRICULUM CHOICE IN CALIFORNIA**
>
> According to California's constitution, "the State Board of Education shall adopt textbooks for use in grades one through eight throughout the state."
>
> The State Board (SBE) currently approves curriculum program materials on a staggered schedule, every six years for reading/language arts/English language development; math; science; and history/social studies.
>
> For each subject area, the SBE determines and announces the specific criteria it will use to evaluate curriculum program materials submitted for consideration by the different publishers. One criterion in recent years has been the extent and manner in which the proposed curriculum texts and supporting materials align with California's grade-by-grade academic content standards. Curriculum program materials from different publishers may also differ in the extent to which specific content areas are covered, the number and type of classroom diagnostic tests they provide, the manner in which they address the needs of English Learners, the amount and kind of direction and training they provide for teachers, and more.
>
> After determining which curriculum packages it will adopt for a specific subject area, California's SBE provides school districts with a menu of approved or state adopted texts and instructional materials in that subject for each grade level. Guided by this list, local school boards and district superintendents then use their own criteria to determine which of the approved materials might best meet their needs. The state expects districts to choose from the list of state-adopted materials and provides categorical funds for that purpose. Districts can request a waiver from the state if they can make a case that non-adopted materials might better serve the academic needs of their students. District choices around subject area curriculum programs are important and complex, and generally take into consideration many local factors.

- The sample of districts, schools, teachers, and principals is unusually large and representative of the overall population of schools with very strong response rates;

- It examines the effects of a broad range of standards-based district, school, and classroom practices and policies on the academic achievement of the school's English learner students;

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[4] A comprehensive, legislatively-mandated evaluation of Proposition 227 is available at: http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/227Reportb.pdf

- It also examines a small set of survey questions on specific EL instructional practices against those same student outcomes; and

- It analyzes a variety of student outcome measures used for state and federal accountability purposes and for measuring both academic and English language proficiency.

Methodology and Sample

For this extended analysis of school practices and EL student outcomes, the research team restricted the original sample of 257 schools by eliminating those with less than 15% EL student population and with no EL-API score, which left 237 schools.[5] Within this slightly restricted sample we had completed survey results from 237 principals and 4,700 teachers (for most of the schools, 80% or more of K-5 classroom teachers).[6] For the restricted sample of elementary schools the median school had 42% EL students, and schools ranged from 17% to 80%.[7] The 2005 school EL-API scores in this sample ranged from a low of 555 to a high of 811, with a median of 667.

The original sample of schools was randomly drawn from the 25th to 35th percentile band of the state's 2003–04 School Characteristics Index. Among these schools the student demographic challenge factors are substantial, but not the most severe in California. Limiting the school sample to this narrow SCI band helped control for important student demographic variables; however, in the analysis the research team also controlled separately for parent education (percent of students with a parent with a high school degree/ some college, and with a college degree); school size; student ethnicity (percent African American, Asian, and Hispanic); student poverty (percent enrolled in Free/Reduced Price Meals program); percent of students new to the school; student language background (percent English Learners); and percent enrolled in migrant education.

For this new analysis, the research team also controlled for the concentration of EL students in the school using indicators for low (less than 33%); mid-range (33% to 50%); and high concentrations (greater than 50%).[8] Additionally, we controlled for the stability of the school's EL population by using a measure of the percentage of a school's EL students that are newly enrolled. For this purpose we controlled for the ratio of initial CELDT to EL test takers in grades 2-5. The initial CELDT, the California English Language Development Test, is administered to all students whose home language is not English when they enter a California school in order to identify English learners versus initially fluent English proficient (IFEP) students.

The main focus and objective of this new analysis was to determine what correlations might exist between various broad effective-schools practices and the academic achievement of the English learner students in our sample of schools. To that end, the primary outcome variable we used was California's school level EL-API score. As noted above, this score is calculated using test results of both English learners and former EL students re-designated as fully English proficient (RFEP).

In addition to the EL-API, we conducted regression analyses using the mean scale score at each school for EL and RFEP populations on the English Language Arts and Math California Standards Tests in grades 2-5 to see if the results differed from our findings when using the EL–API.

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[5] In order to assure that findings were not unduly influenced by a small number of schools serving atypical EL populations, all analyses were replicated using a more highly restricted sample of 176 schools serving predominately Spanish-speaking EL student populations. Details are provided in the technical appendix.

[6] For any given analysis in this report, the number of schools could vary somewhat based on available data.

[7] A more in-depth discussion of the school characteristics of the sample used in this study and how it compares to that used in the *Similar Students* study as well as to the population of California schools can be found in Appendix B (available online).

[8] In the prior study, the control for EL percentage used a continuous version of this variable.

Finally, we also wanted to explore the correlation between school practices and EL students' progress in learning English and in attaining English proficiency. For this purpose, we added two additional outcome variables developed by California in response to federal requirements under Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The two types of Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for EL students both use year-to-year score results from the CELDT, matched at the individual student level. AMAO 1 measures the percentage of ELs at a school making progress in learning English as a second language, and AMAO 2 measures the percentage of ELs that have attained English proficiency. For federal reporting purposes, AMAOs are only calculated for school districts, but the California Department of Education also calculates and provides school level results for informational purposes. We used these school level results in our study.

AMAO – Annual Measurable Achievement Objective
(Percent of a School's ELs Making Annual Progress in Learning English)

In response to federal accountability rules, California has established English language development progress and proficiency goals for school districts called Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). Based on the CELDT test, these measures represent the only clear benchmarks available in California for this purpose. The state provides school-level AMAO data that were used for this analysis.

AMAO 1 calculates the percentage of English learners making annual progress on the CELDT.

There are three ways for ELs to meet the annual growth target on CELDT depending upon what level they were the previous year. Students who began at the Beginning, Early Intermediate, and Intermediate levels are expected to gain one proficiency level. Those originally at the Early Advanced or Advanced level overall, but with some subskills below the intermediate level, are expected to achieve the English proficient level on CELDT (defined as early advanced or advanced overall with all subskills intermediate or above). Those at the English proficient level are expected to maintain that level.

AMAO 2 calculates the percentage of ELs attaining English proficiency on the CELDT.

AMAO 2 defines the cohort of EL students who can reasonably be expected to reach the English proficient level on CELDT at the time of the annual assessment. Both an EL student's level the prior year and the length of time they have been enrolled in school are considered.

Focus of the Study's Teacher and Principal Surveys

The principal and teacher surveys developed by the research team were based upon broad practices that appear repeatedly in research on effective schools, district effectiveness, and standards-based reform. We translated these broad concepts of effectiveness into concrete, actionable practices and policies related to California's contemporary standards-based school reform environment. The questions on the surveys were neutrally phrased and were designed to uncover what practices and policies were in place at the school and how intensely they had been implemented. While under development, the survey questions were extensively vetted by state policymakers, other researchers, and district and school educators. We field tested the principal and teacher surveys in eleven low-, middle-, and high-performing elementary schools across the state—de-briefing principals and teachers afterward—and revised the surveys based upon their feedback.

The principal survey had 46 multi-part questions and the teacher survey had 63 multi-part questions, with the total number of items per survey between 350 and 400. Respondents were asked about their professional credentials, experience, and language backgrounds. The survey questions addressed classroom, school level, and district practices and policies conceptually grouped into seven broad domains.[9] Each of these broad domains consisted of a dozen or more smaller conceptual groupings of questions we called sub-domains. Although some sub-domains had only one question, the majority included several related questions. These broad school practices domains were as follows.

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[9] See the Technical Appendix regarding methodology for a full description of this process.

Prioritizing Student Achievement (Using Measurable and Monitored Objectives).
This domain examined the importance both the school and district placed on setting clear, high, and measurable expectations for student achievement. Both teachers and principals were asked about the extent to which their school and district communicated high expectations and took responsibility for student achievement. Further, they reported the degree of priority given by teachers, the principal, and the district to meeting API and AYP targets for subgroups of students (such as by race/ethnicity, income level, and EL status).

Implementing a Coherent, Standards-based Curriculum and Instructional Program.
This domain contained those sub-domains that most clearly indicated that a school's curriculum and instruction are coherent and aligned with state standards, including:

- The amount of time spent on mathematics and language arts instruction, and the extent to which they are protected from interruption and integrated with other subjects.

- The proportion of teachers in a school who regularly use the same curriculum packages, and which ones they used.

- The extent to which teachers reported alignment and consistency in curriculum and instruction, planning and materials.

- Teacher, principal, and district use of state standards to guide curriculum and instruction.

- The use of a standards-based report card.

- The extent to which the district had addressed the needs of English learners.

Principals were also asked about the extent to which clear district expectations guided curriculum coherence; whether they saw themselves as knowledgeable about standards and curriculum; and whether the school had implemented a new program for EL students in the last four years.

Using Assessment Data to Improve Student Achievement and Instruction.
Under the general topic of data and assessment, questions addressed the types of assessment data teachers and principals received, as well as how they used these data. We categorized the types of data as follows:

- CST (California Standards Tests) and CAT/6 assessment data, the state's standardized tests administered each spring.

- CELDT (California English Language Development Test), an annual assessment of English learners' English language proficiency.

- Curriculum program assessments.

- District-developed assessments.

- Other commercial assessments.

- Assessments created by individual teachers in a school.

Based primarily on item content—but also on the results of our factor analyses—the sub-domains were organized differently for teachers than for principals. Teachers' responses were organized around the frequency with which they reviewed assessment data generally, and the extent to which they used the specific data types to monitor student performance and inform their instruction.

The analysis of principals' responses reflected different questions, including their use of specific types of assessments and the extent to which they used each type to monitor achievement, address student progress, inform school-wide instructional strategies, and monitor and evaluate the practices and performance of teachers. Principals were also asked about the influence of district expectations for improving student achievement, and about incentives and activities specifically targeted at raising CST and CAT/6 scores.

Both principals and teachers also responded to a set of questions regarding the extent to which they addressed student achievement by subgroup.

Ensuring Availability of Instructional Resources.
Given the absence of school-level financial data in California, the study was limited in its examination of school level resources. Data regarding the credentials and experience of educators was combined with teacher reports related to adequate classroom materials and facilities maintenance, and principals' perceptions of a number of different types of resources, including:

- The skills, knowledge, and attitudes of the teaching staff at the school.

- The school's access to qualified support personnel, supplemental financial resources, and supplemental instructional time for students.

- The extent to which the district provides support for facilities and instructional materials.

- The amount of regular instructional time, including full-day kindergarten and extended school day or year.

Enforcing High Expectations for Student Behavior.
The examination of this domain was limited to questions regarding the school's establishment and enforcement of policies related to student behavior. Both principals and teachers reported on the extent to which the school created an orderly and positive environment for student learning, including such areas as attendance policies, enforcement of rules, and respect for cultural differences.

Encouraging Teacher Collaboration and Providing Professional Development
This domain examined several different areas related to the professional environment in the school, and looked at a wide range of activities by teachers, principals, and districts.

The first area was teacher collaboration and professionalism. The sub-domains examined include:

- The extent to which teachers felt they had influence over schoolwide decisions.

- The extent to which teachers and principals reported opportunities for teacher collaboration around curriculum and instruction, including for EL students.

- The extent to which teachers and principals perceived that teacher professionalism was supported and encouraged within the school and by the district, and the extent to which they experienced a continuous learning environment.

A second strand in this domain related to the development of educator capacity through professional development, with sub-domains focused on:

- The adequacy, influence, and value of a large number of different teacher professional development opportunities, including training linked to standards generally, specific curriculum programs, instructional strategies, the use of data to inform instruction, and non-instructional issues.

- The frequency of teacher participation in coaching and modeling activities.

- The extent to which principals gave their district credit for providing teacher professional development opportunities.

- Principals perceptions on the extent to which their district provided them with professional development, and the value they ascribed to their experiences.

Finally, several other sub-domains explored included:

- The principal's perceptions about the district's success in building and maintaining a strong teaching staff.

- The principal's capacity to evaluate teacher performance.

- The principal's perceptions regarding his or her ability to hire and remove teachers, including district and school factors that influence that ability.

Involving and Supporting Parents

This domain included sub-domains that looked both at the school's active engagement with parents and its support of parents and families. Teachers were asked about their practices involving parents in students' education; the district's success in building the community's confidence in the school; and the principal's relationship with parents. Principal questions were more comprehensive, including:

- The extent to which the school involves parents in students' education through mechanisms such as parent-teacher conferences, school-wide events, and translators for non-English speaking parents.

- The extent to which the school worked to engage parents in schoolwide decisions and activities.

- The extent to which the school provides support services to parents and families, including such things as ESL classes, health services, and assistance programs.

Survey Questions Specific to English Learners

In addition, our surveys to teachers and principals asked several questions related to specific practices and policies for the instruction of English learner students. The majority of these specific questions were not analyzed as part of the original *Similar Students, Different Results* study, in large part because at the time there was no publicly available academic achievement variable exclusive to EL students.

The teacher surveys included a separate section answered only by teachers who reported having EL students in their classrooms. Those specific EL questions included:

- Among your EL students, how many of your students are in the following CELDT levels?

- Does your school provide explicit instruction in English Language Development to EL students?

- How is explicit ELD instruction delivered to your students?

- How much daily instructional time is specifically allotted for explicit ELD?

- Who teaches your EL students their explicit ELD instruction?

- In addition to the explicit ELD, how much supplemental instruction do EL students receive to move them to the next English proficiency level?

- How are EL students taught mathematics?

- In addition to CELDT, what types of assessment do you use for EL students?

- How frequently do you meet with teachers to do the following related to EL students?

- How have the following types of instructional assistance [for ELs] influenced your teaching practices?

In addition, teachers were asked about the manner in which they received and used CELDT data. They were also asked if they had a BCLAD/CLAD certification, and about their comfort conversing in a language other than English. None of these teacher questions were included in the previous analysis.

The CLAD (cross-cultural language, and academic development) certificate and Bilingual-CLAD (or BCLAD) certificate authorize California teachers to deliver instruction to English learners. Specifically, the CLAD authorizes teachers to implement ELD instruction and use SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) techniques and the BCLAD further authorizes content instruction in the student's primary language.

Principal questions analyzed for the first time here include how they received and used CELDT data, and their district's use of these data. They were also asked about the extent to which CELDT results influenced

their school-wide instructional priorities, and whether they had instituted a new program for EL students in the last four years.

EL specific questions analyzed as part of the original study, and analyzed again separately for this extended analysis using the EL-API, included principals' perceptions regarding their school's access to an EL specialist, their teaching staff's ability to speak the home language of EL students, and the professional development support provided by their district.

CELDT: The California English Language Development Test

The CELDT is California's state test of English language proficiency. By design, CELDT is a test of English proficiency, not a test of academic proficiency. While local reclassification criteria vary, the CELDT is used statewide as a measure of English-language proficiency. The California Standards Test in English language arts is used statewide as a measure of EL students' academic proficiency in reading and language arts.

Schools must first administer the CELDT to students whose home language is not English within 30 calendar days of their initial enrollment in a California public school. This first administration of the CELDT—known as Initial CELDT—is used to determine if a linguistic minority student is initially fluent English proficient (I-FEP) or an English learner. After that, ELs must take the Annual CELDT each year during the summer/fall assessment window (July 1-October 31) until they have met all of the linguistic and academic criteria their district has defined as necessary for them to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (R-FEP).

CELDT has changed since it was introduced in 2001 in order to strengthen the test, reduce administrative burden, and address NCLB Title III requirements.

In kindergarten and first grade, the CELDT assesses listening and speaking skills. The test for students in grades two through 12 covers three skill areas: listening/speaking, reading, and writing. Students receive an overall proficiency level score and scores for each of the skill areas.

There are separate CELDT tests for each of four grade spans (kindergarten through grade two, grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12). Each grade span test includes content tailored to the appropriate grade levels and aligned with the English language development (ELD) standards. California's ELD standards are designed to increasingly reflect at higher ELD proficiency levels the skills and knowledge found in the state's English language arts standards.

Student performance is measured using five proficiency levels: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. State guidelines recommend that districts consider students for reclassification when they are at the English proficient level on the CELDT (scoring early advanced or better overall and at least intermediate on all subskill areas). However, the CDE also stresses that CELDT scores are not the sole criterion for reclassification. When districts make reclassification decisions, they should also consider student results on ELA CST, teacher evaluation, and parent consultation.

In our study, we use school-level summaries of students' CELDT scores, referred to as Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs -- see definition on page 6). Because the CELDT is designed to be reliable enough to support instructional program decision making for individual students, it is sufficiently reliable to serve as the basis for school-level indices such as the AMAOs. However, technical limitations make the CELDT less than ideal for our study's purposes. For example, the test format and subscales differ across grade spans; successive CELDT performance levels do not likely represent equal increments of English language proficiency; and the speaking skills component, which is individually administered, is vulnerable to subjectivity and unreliability. Nonetheless, the CELDT is the best available measure of English Language Development in California, and AMAOs are a way to systematically measure ELD progress and English language proficiency over time.

Descriptive Statistics:

What Were the Schools Like in our Sample?
For the analysis of English learners (ELs) this study focused on schools in the *Similar Students* sample with an EL population greater than 15%. This left 237 schools in 138 school districts in our new more restricted EL sample for the purposes of this analysis. Fifty-one of these districts had more than one school in the study. According to 2004-05 data, the median school enrollment was 588 students. Of the 237 schools:

- 35% were situated in elementary school districts and the remaining 65% in unified school districts.

- 8% of the schools operate on a year-round calendar.

- 99% received Title I funding and 35% participated in Program Improvement—meaning that these Title I schools had not met the federal Adequate Yearly Progress benchmark for at least two consecutive years.

The student population attending the restricted EL sample schools was diverse and facing particular challenges. For example, at the median school in our restricted sample of 237 elementary schools, 42% of the student population was designated English learner. Among all sample schools, the percent of English learners ranged from 17% to 80%.

The median percentage of students by ethnicity in the restricted EL sample schools was as follows: 68% Hispanic, 13% white, 4% African American, and 3% Asian. The median value for the combination of American Indian, Filipino, Pacific Islander, and multiethnic students, along with those who did not indicate an ethnicity, was 12%. In most but not all schools, the majority population was Hispanic.

In the median restricted EL sample school, 32% of students had parents who were not high school graduates, 14% were former EL students redesignated as Fluent English Proficient (RFEP), 78% were eligible for free and reduced price meal, and 98% of the teachers were fully credentialed.

As a whole, 88% of the EL and RFEP students were Spanish speakers. The plot below illustrates the relative concentrations of EL students, Spanish-speaking students, and non-Spanish ELs (students from other linguistic backgrounds) in the schools included in this new analysis.

Concentrations of Spanish speaking and non-Spanish speaking students at schools in the study sample in 2004-05
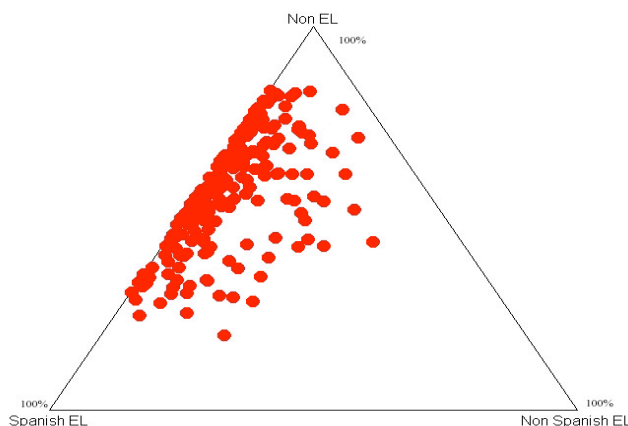
Each dot in this diagram represents a school and is placed in the diagram
based on the percentage of EL, Spanish speaking EL and non-Spanish speaking EL students.

Our analyses are based on survey responses from a total of 4,700 K-5 classroom teachers in the slightly restricted sample of 237 California elementary schools. The vast majority of those teachers, 95% or 4,467, reported that they had EL students in their regular classroom.

What Specific EL Practices Were Reported?

Our teacher and principal surveys focused primarily on a wide range of effective schools practices but included concrete items related to the state's academic standards-based policies. Inside the larger survey of 60 plus questions (over 350 items) were just over a dozen questions related more specifically to school and classroom practices for English Learner students. What follows are descriptive statistics on teacher and principal responses to those specific EL questions.

How Explicit English Language Development (ELD) is Being Delivered at the School

ELD is instruction in English as a second language appropriate to the student's identified language proficiency level. The state's ELD standards address listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ELD instruction is designed to promote second language acquisition according to the age and grade level of the student. All ELs are required to receive ELD by an appropriately authorized (CLAD, BCLAD or equivalent) teacher until the student is reclassified. Districts are to provide ELs with instruction using materials deemed appropriate to enable students at each level of English language proficiency to progress in academic English language skills.

Of the teachers reporting EL students in their regular classrooms, 92% (n=4,127) said they were in schools that provide explicit instruction in English Language Development to EL students.

Teachers who reported that their school provided explicit ELD instruction were asked how that instruction was delivered to their EL students. Asked to check all of the options that applied, 36% of teachers said in the whole class (ELs only) and 36% said by ELD level within the class. An equal percentage (36%) said that instruction was by ELD level but through teaming. A smaller group (19%) of teachers reported that ELD was provided to the EL students in their classes through a pull-out program (e.g. resource teacher).

When asked who taught their EL students their explicit ELD instruction (check all that apply), 81% of teachers replied "myself." A third of the classroom teachers indicated another teacher with an EL credential (CLAD, BCLAD, or similar) taught the explicit ELD instruction to their students, but another 4% reported it was taught by another teacher without an EL credential, and 18% said explicit ELD instruction was provided by an instructional aide. Ten percent of the teachers who reported that their school provided explicit ELD instruction said that it was taught by a resource teacher.

Related to this, principals were asked whether their schools have access to an English Language Learner specialist: 35% of the principals replied yes, dedicated to their school; 49% replied yes, shared through the district; and 35% responded no, not available.

Possible Instructional Services for ELs

The state has defined several different approaches that schools use for reporting how they deliver instructional services to English learners.

English Language Development (ELD): ELD is English language instruction appropriate for the student's identified level of language proficiency. It is designed to promote second language acquisition of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

ELD and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE): SDAIE is an approach used to teach academic courses to EL students in English. It should be designed for non-native speakers of English and should focus on increasing the comprehensibility of the academic courses normally provided to FEP and English-only students in the district.

ELD and SDAIE with Primary Language Support: In addition to ELD and SDAIE, students receive Primary Language Support (L1 support) in at least two academic subject areas. L1 support is instructional support through the student's primary language. It may be used in order to clarify meaning and facilitate student comprehension of academic content area concepts taught mainly through English. It may also include oral language development in the student's primary language.

ELD and Academic Subjects Through the Primary Language (L1): EL students receiving ELD, plus instruction in at least two academic subjects through their primary language. The curriculum should be equivalent to that provided to FEP and English-only students. These students may also be receiving SDAIE as described above.

The same subset of teachers as above was also asked about the amount of daily instructional time specifically allotted for explicit ELD instruction. The majority, 57%, reported that their school provided 30 minutes of ELD instruction to students (the current state mandate for number of ELD minutes to be provided). Another 31% indicated their school exceeded that mandate, with 20% reporting 45 minutes, 7% reporting 60 minutes, and 4% reporting 75 minutes or more. On the other hand, 2% said their students did not receive explicit ELD instruction and 8% reported that instruction was only provided for 15 minutes a day.

All teachers with EL students were asked how much "supplemental instruction," in addition to explicit ELD instruction, their EL students received to move them to the next English proficiency level. More than a third

(38%) reported none, and a nearly equal proportion of teachers (37%) reported 30 minutes. The remaining responses were about equally split between 60 minutes (9% of teachers) and 90 minutes or more (10% of teachers).

How elementary math and English language arts is being taught to EL students

Teachers were asked how their EL students were taught mathematics, and asked to indicate all the approaches that applied. The majority (74%) of the responding teachers said students received math instruction in a mainstream classroom and 47% said math instruction was provided using ESL or immersion techniques (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English, or SDAIE). With the option to "check all that apply," nearly a third also reported that EL students received some primary language assistance either from the teacher (19%), an instructional aide (12%), or a resource teacher (1%); and 10% reported that they used mathematics materials designed for El students. Only 8% of teachers reported that their EL students received math instruction in their native language and math materials in the students' primary language.

In our sample, 67% of schools predominantly used Houghton Mifflin's *A Legacy of Literacy* as their primary English language arts curriculum program, while 27% worked primarily with *Open Court* by McGraw-Hill. These curriculum programs include an ELD component. Unfortunately, a separate survey question designed to find out what supplemental ELD programs schools might be using did not yield viable information.

How CELDT data are used by schools in our sample

Principals were asked both about the CELDT assessment data they receive and how they use it. Virtually all (98%) responded that they receive the data individually for all students and most (77%) also receive a summary across grade levels. In terms of their use of the data, almost all (95%) said they use it to evaluate the progress of students and communicate with parents, and nearly as many use it to identify struggling students (87%) and develop strategies for moving them toward English-language proficiency (78%). Fewer principals, but still a substantial majority (71%) said they use CELDT data to examine schoolwide instructional practices. About a quarter of principals, on the other hand, said they use CELDT data to compare grades within their school (26%) or identify teachers who need instructional improvement (23%).

In a separate question, 49% of principals reported that CELDT results influenced their school-wide instructional priorities to a great extent, and another 44% said that was the case to a moderate extent.

Principals were markedly less likely to report that their district used CELDT assessment data. The highest uses of CELDT data reported for districts were to examine trends in a school's performance (71%), evaluate curriculum programs (65%), and set school-wide goals for student achievement (57%). Just over half of principals (54%) said their district also used the scores to compare their school to similar schools.

Teachers were also asked what types of assessments, other than CELDT, they used for EL students. The assessments named most often were SABE (Spanish Assessment of Basic Education), which was selected by 33% of teachers; school level ELD diagnostic assessment (29%); and program specific ELD diagnostic assessment (19%). The less frequent responses included school level academic assessment using techniques designed for EL students (12%), school level academic assessments in students' primary language (8%), and other assessments (7%). A substantial percentage, 27%, did not respond to this question, indicating that they did not use any other diagnostic test for their EL students other than CELDT.

What kind of support teachers have and want for working with EL students

Teachers were asked how frequently they met with other teachers to engage in various activities related to EL instruction. Most teachers met at least a few times a year to discuss the academic needs (84%) and determine the best instructional approaches (79%) for their EL students. A much smaller percent (42%) consulted with an EL specialist, while about 40% of teachers reported they never consult with an EL specialist.

Teachers were also asked if four types of instructional assistance had any influence on their teaching practices around ELs. Nearly half the teachers surveyed indicated they had not received assistance from EL coaches, opportunities to observe other teachers, or feedback on their teaching of ELs (indicated by an N/A response). Somewhat more of the teachers (63%) indicated that successful strategies from other teachers who

are doing well with ELs had influenced them, and more than a third (38%) said that was true to a great or moderate extent.

They were also asked to characterize the support their district provided in professional development focusing on English Learners: 20% responded excellent, 33% good, 36% fair, and 11% said it was poor.

Principals were asked to select their top three priorities for their own additional professional development from a list of 12 choices. Almost half (49%) chose "Training and instructional strategies for EL students." For all principals in our sample this professional development priority ranked second.

When asked the same question and offered 11 different choices, 31% of the teachers in our sample chose "ELD curriculum program" (which ranked 5th among all teachers) and 35% chose "Instructional strategies for English Learners" (which ranked 4th among all teachers).

In the sample of 237 schools used for this extended data analysis, 69% of the K-5 classroom teachers reported that they had a CLAD/BCLAD credential. Thirty five percent of the teachers reported being comfortable conversing in a language other than English and of those, 80% indicated it was Spanish.

Both teachers with and without CLAD/BCLAD certification chose "the language arts curriculum program" as their top professional development priority with "instructional strategies for multiple learning styles" as their second top priority. The "math curriculum program" and "instructional strategies for English Learners" were their 3rd and 4th priorities for professional development. A higher percentage (45%) of teachers with CLAD/BCLAD credentials chose ELD curriculum program and instructional strategies for English Learners as one of their top professional development priorities than did teachers without the CLAD/BCLAD credentials (30%).

Summary of Analytic Findings on School Practices Related to EL Student Outcomes (EL-API and CSTs)

To determine which of the effective school practice domains most strongly differentiates higher from lower performing schools in our sample, we ran multiple regression analyses, using the EL-API as our primary outcome of interest, with statistical controls to "hold constant" student demographics.

Four broad effective schools practices were found in our analysis to have the most significant positive correlation with higher EL–API scores for elementary schools with high proportions of low income and Spanish speaking EL students[10]:

Using Assessment Data to Improve Student Achievement and Instruction

One practice strongly correlated with a higher EL-API among our sample of elementary schools was the extensive use of student assessment data by the district and the principal in an effort to improve instruction and student learning. For example, principals from better performing schools more often reported that they and the district use assessment data from multiple sources — curriculum program and other commercial assessments, district-developed assessments, and the California Standards Tests and the CAT/6 — to evaluate teachers' practices and to identify teachers who need instructional improvement.

Principals who reported frequently and personally using assessment data to address the academic needs of students in their schools led, on average, higher performing schools. They report using these data to develop strategies to help selected students reach goals and to follow up on the progress of selected students. In addition, they review these data both independently and with individual teachers.

These same principals report a clear understanding of their district's expectations for improving student achievement, which may help motivate and support them. The principals report that their districts expect that all schools in the district will improve student achievement and evaluate principals based upon student

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[10] These findings were also analyzed using mean scale scores for EL students on both the math and ELA CSTs, and by percent proficient on each of the tests, with essentially the same results.

achievement. The principals also report that the district provides support for site-level planning related to improving achievement.

In schools where assessment data from the CSTs and the CAT/6 influence schoolwide attention to improving student achievement, the API also tends to be higher. Teachers report receiving CST/CAT-6 test data in a variety of formats: for all students in their grade level; disaggregated by specific skills for all students in their classrooms; and disaggregated by student subgroup for students in their classrooms. Principals report using the CST and CAT/6 data to examine school-wide instructional issues, to develop strategies for moving students from below basic and basic to proficient, to compare grades within the school, to identify struggling students and evaluate their progress, and to inform and communicate with parents.

This new analysis also examined an extra set of questions related to how both principals and teachers used information from the CELDT tests.

Principal responses that results from the CELDT test have a strong influence on their school wide instructional priorities were more likely, on average, to be associated with lower school EL-API as well as a lower mean scale score for both math and English language arts by EL students on the California Standards Tests, and with a lower percentage of EL students scoring proficient on the ELA CST.

Ensuring Availability of Instructional Resources

EL-API performance was higher in schools where principals reported that a higher proportion of their teaching staff had the following qualities:

- demonstrated ability to raise student achievement
- strong content knowledge
- good fit with the school culture
- training in curriculum programs
- ability to map curriculum standards to instruction
- supportive of colleague's learning and improvement
- able to use data from student assessments
- familiar with the school community
- excited about teaching
- familiar with state standards

The schools where more teachers reported having regular or standard certificates for California also had, on average, higher API scores.

Principals who more often reported certain district practices were also more likely to be from high performing schools. They said their districts ensure the school has: up-to-date instructional materials, support to provide supplementary instruction for struggling students, enough instructional materials for all students, and support for facilities management. The same was true for teachers, who tended to confirm these perceptions, reporting that every student in their classroom has a copy of the current version of the textbook in language arts and math and that the principal ensures the teachers have adequate classroom materials. The principals also reported a strong understanding of what their district expected from them in terms of facilities upkeep and management.

Years of educator experience also mattered, but less so than these other items. Teachers with at least five years of full time teaching experience were more likely, on average, to be from schools with higher APIs. Principal years of experience was also correlated with higher school achievement.

Implementing a Coherent, Standards-based Curriculum and Instructional Program

Higher EL-API was correlated with schools in which teachers report most strongly that there is schoolwide instructional consistency within grades — and curricular alignment from grade-to-grade. Examples of practices teachers report using to accomplish this coherence include examining the scope or sequence of curriculum topics and reviewing a grade-level pacing calendar.

Those teachers who reported that their school has identified essential standards and that their classroom instruction is guided by state academic standards were also more likely to be in high performing schools. They report that the school's curriculum materials in math and language arts are aligned with the state's standards and that they frequently map state curriculum standards onto their classroom lesson plans. Teachers at higher performing schools also more often report that their district addresses the instructional needs of English Learners at their school.

Principals who report a strong district role in this domain are also from higher performing elementary schools. These principals say the district has a coherent grade-by-grade curriculum that it uses for all schools and that the district expects the principal to ensure implementation of the curriculum. These principals report that the district has clear expectations for student performance aligned with the district's adopted curriculum and that it evaluates the principal based on the extent to which instruction in the school aligns with the curriculum.

Several questions specific to EL instructional practices also showed some correlation to EL-API.

Higher school EL–API was correlated with principals who affirmed that in the last four years, their school has implemented a new program for EL students.

Also more positively correlated with higher EL-API was response by a school's teachers that explicit English Language Development instruction was delivered to the teacher's EL students through a pull out program (e.g. resource teacher). This same relationship was found for other outcome variables as well, including a higher weighted mean scale score by EL students and a higher percentage of EL students scoring proficient on the English language arts portion of the California Standards Test.

The response by the teachers at a school that their EL students were taught mathematics using ESL or immersion techniques (SDAIE) was also more positively correlated with a higher schoolwide weighted mean scale score for math on the CST.

In addition, as was also found in our original analysis, schools with higher EL–API more often had teachers who agreed strongly that their district addresses the instructional needs of English Learner students at their school.

Prioritizing Student Achievement (Using Measurable and Monitored Objectives)

Elementary schools where teachers and principals answered multiple survey questions in ways that indicated high expectations for students had, on average, higher EL-API scores than similar schools with lower reported expectations. For example, when teachers reported that their school has a vision focused on student learning outcomes, their schools were more likely to be high scoring. The same was true of principal responses on similar questions. And when teachers and principals report that the principal communicates a clear vision for the school, sets high standards for student learning, and makes expectations clear to teachers for meeting academic achievement goals, the school is more likely to be high achieving. Equally important, better school performance seems to be associated with both teachers' and principals' reports that teachers at the school take responsibility for and are committed to improving student achievement.

A shared culture within the school regarding the value of improving student achievement and a sense of shared responsibility for it seems to separate higher performing schools in our sample from those with lower EL–APIs. But beyond "values," both teachers and principals reported that their school has well defined plans for instructional improvement, and that they make meeting the state's API goals and the NCLB

adequate yearly progress goals a priority. Both teachers and principals report that their schools set measurable goals for exceeding the mandated API student subgroup growth targets for improved achievement. Principals at higher performing schools also report on average that their school's statewide rank and similar schools ranking on the API influence school wide instructional priorities, and that they are clear about their district's expectations for meeting API and AYP growth and subgroup targets.

These are the same four effective schools practices the research team found to be most significant in the original *Similar Students* study for the school-wide API.

Others practices are important, but have a weaker direct relationship to the EL–API

The other three effective schools domains covered in our surveys made a contribution to the schools' EL–API scores, but not nearly as significantly as those above. They were:

- The school establishes and enforces policies for student behavior.

- The school actively engages with and supports parents.

- The district and school encourage teacher collaboration and build educator capacity.

As was done in the original *Similar Students* study, we used a series of regression models to show the relative importance of the seven effective schools domains in predicting achievement. Table A shows the results of that analysis for the EL-API (middle column) and, for comparison purposes, also shows the results of the analysis from the original study (right-hand column). For each domain, a regression model was used to predict the variation that would be found in APIs among schools in the sample if they differed **only** with respect to reported practices in that one domain, holding constant all demographics and ignoring all other domains. If that analysis showed a lot of variation in predicted APIs, that was evidence that differences among schools in practices related to the studied domain were strongly related to differences in the schools' APIs.

The numbers in the table show the standard deviations of these predicted API distributions. They are in units of API points, and can be interpreted roughly as the difference between a school at the 30th versus the 70th percentiles with respect to practices in the studied domain, everything else held constant. It is important to emphasize that these numbers cannot be added together. Because practices in different domains are correlated, the net effect of more effective practices across all domains would be considerably less than the sum of the separate predicted domain effects.

Predicted variation in API scores (based on standard deviations) for each domain in order of importance

Domain (#)	Predicted variation in EL–API	Predicted variation in schoolwide API*
Using assessment data (3)	20.4	16.7
Availability of resources (5)	17.9	16.9
Coherent standards-based instruction (1)	17.3	17.6
Prioritizing student achievement (8)	14.7	16.3
High expectations for student behavior (6)	10.3	12.3
Involving and supporting parents (2)	10.1	9.9
Teacher collaboration (4)	9.4	11.0
School Sample (N)	237 (high EL)	257 (original sample)

*Based on Findings published in *Similar Students, Different Results*, 2005

Discussion of Findings Related to EL–API and CST Outcomes

Access to Coherent Standards-Based Academic Curriculum, Monitoring Progress, Availability of Resources, High Expectations

Our analyses suggest that the district-to-school-to-classroom practices and policies taking hold in many California elementary schools correlate with higher EL–API in schools serving large proportions of low-income and Spanish-speaking EL students. Notably, these same four domains of practices also differentiated higher-performing from lower-performing schools in our original *Similar Students, Different Results* study.

For example, a school staff's use of assessments and data to inform efforts to improve student achievement makes an important contribution to EL-API. Under this domain school teachers and principals reported consistently that principals personally and directly use a variety of student assessment data to work with teachers to improve instruction and individual student achievement; that they are themselves evaluated by the district based upon improving student achievement at the school; and that student and school results on the California Standards Tests influence schoolwide instructional priorities. In effect, it appears that EL students benefit more when school staffs focus their instructional practice, frequently measure their progress with EL students in multiple ways, and hold themselves accountable for that progress.

As with all other students, resources matter for EL students. The resources that emerged strongly in our findings included: adequate and appropriate text books for every student, well maintained facilities, and the principal's perception that the school's teaching staff has strong teaching skills, academic content knowledge, enthusiasm about teaching, and the ability to raise student achievement.

Also strongly correlated with a school's EL–API score was its curriculum and instruction being coherent and aligned with state standards. Higher school EL–API was associated with strong teacher responses that the focus of their work was on teaching the state's academic content standards in English language arts and math and tightly aligning the entire school's curriculum around that objective.

For the fourth domain associated with higher school EL–API, "prioritizing student achievement," both teachers and principals in higher performing schools responded more positively that setting measurable student achievement targets, including for student subgroups on the API and AYP, was a high priority.

Taken together, our findings indicate that higher EL academic achievement in California is associated with schools where teachers and principals are working together to create a focused, achievement oriented climate, are holding each other accountable for the work, are supported by district leadership that ensures resources and expects accountability, and are deliberately attending to the school's English learner students as an important part of the effort.

A school's outreach to parents, encouragement of teacher collaboration, and enforcement of positive student behaviors (like attendance and tolerance) have long been recognized as important contributors to the student and professional culture at a school and to community engagement. Our analyses indicate that while important to community and making a contribution to student achievement, these are not the most critical features that differentiate higher- from lower-performing schools with similar students with respect to scores on their EL–API and California Standards Tests in math and English language arts.

The Importance of District and School Site Leadership in Driving Change

Although not established in our regression analyses as a separate domain, the importance of the school district and the principal in leading and managing school improvement comes through clearly in the responses by teachers and principals about these roles and responsibilities. Specifically, it appears that:

Principal leadership in the context of accountability-driven reform is being redefined to focus on effective management of the school improvement process. In general, EL–API scores were higher in schools with principals whose responses indicate that they act as managers of school improvement, driving the reform process, cultivating the school vision, and extensively using student assessment data to focus on school improvement, including evaluation of teacher practice and assistance to struggling students. Their

school improvement efforts also include implementing instructional programs to address the needs of their EL students.

District leadership, accountability, and support appear to influence EL student achievement as well. Principals in schools with higher EL–API responded strongly and affirmatively to statements that their districts: set clear expectations that schools meet API and AYP growth targets, including for subgroups, provide schools with achievement data, and evaluate principal performance and teacher practices based on that data. They also ensure that math and language arts curricula are aligned with state standards; that instruction is focused on achievement; that schools have adequate facilities and textbooks as well as resources for struggling students; and that they address the instructional needs of English language learners at their schools.

Instructional Practices and Outcome Measures for English Learners Only

As previously described, this study analyzed the survey results against a broad range of school outcome variables for EL students. Above we reported the results for the variables related to measures of academic achievement (EL-API and the California Standards Tests). In addition, we duplicated the analysis using the state's official measures of English language proficiency for federal NCLB Title III reporting requirements. AMAO 1 and 2 measure year-to-year progress of ELs learning English and attaining the English proficient level as measured by CELDT.

The surveys asked several questions related to specific practices and policies for the instruction of EL students that were not analyzed as part of the original *Similar Students, Different Results* study. We analyzed the responses against both our academic achievement (EL-API and CSTs) and English proficiency (AMAO) outcomes. For the most part, the specific practices we surveyed did not show a relationship to either type of outcome measure. Two that were a particular surprise in that regard were:

- The presence in a school of more teachers with CLAD/BCLAD certification.

- The number of daily instructional minutes reported by teachers that the school devotes to explicit English language development.

Additional Findings Related to EL Student Outcomes Based on AMAOs

In general, the same broad domains that proved to be correlated with high performance on the EL-API and other CST measures showed a similar relationship to AMAO 1 and AMAO 2.

The analysis using AMAO variables found only these two EL-specific responses that were positively correlated with higher outcomes:

- Strong schoolwide teacher responses indicating that EL students were taught mathematics with primary language assistance from an instructional aide as well as from the teacher.

- School principal responses indicating that a new EL program had been implemented at the school within the past four years.

Negatively and significantly correlated with AMAO 1 and 2 were strong school-level teacher responses that explicit ELD instruction was delivered to EL students by the classroom teacher herself, or by ELD level through teacher teaming. Also negatively correlated were teacher reports that they receive CELDT assessment data and that, besides CELDT, teachers use no other type of ELD assessment for their EL students.

We interpret these results to complement those discussed elsewhere in this report. Namely, having in place an explicit program of instruction for ELs is fundamentally important to their English language development needs, and enhancing EL students' access to and comprehension of core academic subjects such as math may also yield benefits to their academic language development in English.

Discussion of Instructional Practices Specific to English Learners

Very few specific EL instructional practices covered by our surveys showed any significant correlation with a school's EL-API or CST scores among EL students or with the AMAOs.

Teacher certification and the need for professional development

We were surprised that the presence in a school of more teachers with CLAD/BLCAD certification did not have a relationship, in our analysis, to schools' EL–API scores. At the same time, it is important to note that what did correlate with higher school EL–API was a higher proportion of teachers at a school that had a regular California teaching credential and had been teaching at least five years.

The CLAD/BCLAD survey question may have been problematic for several reasons. For example, CLAD and BCLAD were aggregated as a single response. Perhaps having teachers with one of these credentials has a stronger relationship to student outcomes. The CLAD/BCLAD certification may be obtained in many different ways, such as through additional coursework, testing, or as an embedded component within regular credential programs. Furthermore, BCLAD is a bilingual version in which teachers must meet the bar of demonstrating a high level of proficiency in the student's native language, and likely attracts teachers who would like to teach ELs.

We suspect, however, that no relationship to student outcome surfaced because the content and approach of CLAD and BCLAD certification programs varies widely. The training represented by these credentials is not uniform and may also not be sufficient to make a difference in student outcomes. In this regard, it is important to note that a higher percentage of the teachers who reported having these credentials also cited "instructional strategies for EL students" as one of their highest professional development priorities. Further, it may be that having a CLAD or BCLAD certification does not sufficiently prepare a teacher for teaching explicit English Language Development either as a resource teacher or in his or her own classroom. This is also consistent with our finding that teachers reporting that they themselves teach explicit ELD instruction to their students was negatively correlated with a schools' AMAO results based on CELDT.

How EL instruction is organized

Another surprise was that the number of minutes teachers reported devoting to explicit ELD instruction at the school did not correlate with EL–API. Meanwhile the use of a pull-out program, (e.g., with the resource teacher), correlated positively with EL–API, the percent of ELs proficient in English language arts, and the weighted mean scale score on the ELA CST.

One possible explanation for these findings is that the quality of ELD instruction matters more than a given number of minutes. It is reasonable to speculate that when ELD is delivered by a highly qualified specialist in a pull-out program, the classroom teacher is able to better focus his or her energy on teaching the core academic curriculum. In these schools, EL students might be benefiting from having that division of labor and expertise among teachers. That theory is further bolstered by the fact that schools using pull-out programs for ELD are among those with higher EL–API scores, which indicates that the EL students are benefiting from standards-based academic instruction.

Over the years, researchers and advocates for EL students have expressed legitimate concern about the use of pull-out programs as these often resulted in EL students being removed from class when core curriculum was being taught. Our study may indicate that schools using pull out programs with a resource teacher for ELD are doing so without reducing EL students' access to the core curriculum. That may help explain why their students are scoring higher on the ELA section of the CSTs and why they have higher school EL–API scores.

The other teacher survey response highly correlated with EL–API was that EL students are taught mathematics using ESL or immersion techniques (SDAIE). This finding and the one related to the efficacy of pull-out programs might both be indicative of schools that are attending to the instructional needs of their students in ways that give these students better access to the core academic curriculum.

This appears to be consistent with our findings related to principals' use of CELDT data (measuring English language proficiency). While a principal's report that CELDT test results strongly influence schoolwide

instructional priorities is negatively correlated with schoolwide EL–API, the use of California Standards Tests results (academic achievement) for the same purpose is positively correlated.

This surprising result may reflect the greater salience of CELDT data in schools serving students with lower average English proficiency, but it may also reflect an overemphasis on ELD as the primary key to EL students' success at the expense of their equally important engagement with and mastery of the core curriculum. However, we caution against an interpretation of causality, as it is unlikely that paying attention to CELDT scores, in and of itself, would lower API scores.

While there may be multiple interpretations of these findings, they do suggest the importance of paying attention to how school and classroom organization influences student progress in English language development. It also seems clear that CELDT is limited as an assessment instrument that can guide teachers in their ELD instruction, as evidenced by our finding that teachers who did not use any other ELD assessment exhibited less progress with their ELs' English language development. This may be related to some extent to the timing of CELDT testing and data availability. Educators often lament that conducting CELDT tests in the fall is problematic because students' English skills and knowledge often erode over the summer when they are not in school. Also a new third grader, for example, is tested using the test form for that grade before having been taught third grade material. In addition, CELDT results often do not come back to the teacher until early February. These all suggest that it is good practice to monitor students' progress in ELD during the year using other assessments (e.g., those embedded in ELD curriculum programs) to better inform instructional decision-making in a timely way.

Implications of Our Findings For Policy and Practice Related to English Learners in California

In California's elementary schools, a large portion of students come to school needing to learn English. The majority of those students come from families that speak Spanish as their primary language and from homes where parent education levels and literacy levels are often low. State data show that these students face considerable challenges to performing at high levels on the state's tests of academic achievement. The EL-API makes it possible to examine schools' effectiveness in helping these students succeed and also made it possible to extend the analysis previously done for the *Similar Students, Different Results* study to hone in on the school practices that correlate positively with higher performance among EL students.

Across California, schools serving similar types of student populations can vary widely in how well they score on their Academic Performance Index. The 237 elementary schools in the sample that this research team studied (serving 127,335 K-5 students) were drawn from a fairly narrow band in terms of student demographics (percent low income, English learner, ethnic/racial subgroups). Yet their 2005 EL–API scores varied by as much as 256 points.

A school's API score reflects how well its students are performing on the annual California Standards Tests. This one set of tests is limited: it is not the only way for a school to measure how well students are mastering California's rigorous academic content standards or the only valid measure of school effectiveness. But an elementary school's API score does provide the state and the public with a consistent and easy way to grasp information about the progress its students are making toward mastering the important math, reading and writing skills that will enable them to succeed academically in later grades. For this reason and others related to accountability, a school's API score and its EL-API represent important measures of student learning.

The range of API scores in our sample suggest that while the socioeconomic backgrounds of students is one predictor of academic achievement, it is not the sole predictor. What schools do—and what resources they have to do it with—can make a difference. Higher EL–API scores are found most often in our sample in schools that are working hard to implement the four broad, interrelated practices identified in this study:

- Using Assessment Data to Improve Student Achievement and Instruction.
- Ensuring Availability of Instructional and Other Resources

- Implementing a Coherent, Standards-based Curriculum and Instructional Program
- Prioritizing Student Achievement (Using Measurable and Monitored Objectives)

We believe it is good news that when school practices and policies aligned with California's academic standards are intensely implemented—with regard to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and monitoring progress—they contribute to higher school performance for English learner students just as they do for all students. This assumes, of course, that adequate resources are also available at the school, including experienced and credentialed teachers who have appropriate skills, content knowledge and enthusiasm. The implementation of these practices, and the availability of these resources, seem to occur most often when the school district and the principal actively support and oversee the hard work of implementing and evaluating school change.

One implication for state education policy is to stay the course with its reforms and to continue to ensure that curriculum programs and state standards tests are well aligned with the state's academic standards.

Another implication is that if school districts play a strong role initiating school change and facilitating its implementation, then state policymakers should consider providing more support to districts in this role. This might mean providing them with better assessment and other data on their students in easy-to-access formats, and supporting professional development for district administrators and board members on data analysis, implementation of curriculum at the school site level, and best EL instructional practices from comparable districts with higher EL-API scores.

Third, state policymakers should also be aware that California has the highest pupil-to-school-administrator ratio in the country. Finding out what additional support is needed for school principals to do this challenging work is critical for administrative credential programs and professional development. The 237 principals answering our surveys ranked "using assessment data" as their number one professional development priority (54%), but "training and instructional strategies for EL students" was a very close second (47%).

A final implication relates to teacher preparation and professional development. The top priorities for professional development identified by elementary teachers were more training in the English language arts and math programs, in specific strategies for working with English learners, and in explicit English Language Development. Our findings suggest that these could indeed yield significant benefits for EL students.

Knowing what additional services and resources make a difference for English learners is a complex question. While a substantial body of research exists about this, it provides few clear answers.

Our analysis suggests some possibilities related to specific EL instructional practices but these require further exploration to fully understand how and why they appear to be correlated with higher EL–API and California Standards Tests scores. In addition, while there may be multiple interpretations of what these findings mean in regard to instructional approaches for ELs, they do suggest the clear importance of paying attention to school and classroom organization in influencing student progress in English language development.

Conclusion

Our analysis indicates that districts and schools should focus first and foremost on establishing a strong foundation of excellent, coherent schoolwide practices related to the core standards-based curriculum, on assessing and monitoring student academic achievement, and on providing the adequate resources schools need to do this work. These standards-based, effective-schools practices appear to benefit the academic achievement of low income, Spanish speaking English learner students in California as they do other students in the school. Further, thoughtful attention to delivering ELD instruction and evaluating its effectiveness, informed by evidence-based best practices, will continue to be important.