

# MOVING THE CALIFORNIA ENGLISH LEARNER ROADMAP FORWARD: THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION



A Sacramento County Office of Education Case Study and Lessons Learned Throughout the State of California



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Funded by the California Department of Education, Educator Workforce Investment Grant



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**EL RISE! ENGLISH LEARNER ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION FOR SYSTEMIC EXCELLENCE**

EL RISE! is a collaboration between Californians Together, SEAL (Sobrato Early Academic Language) and Loyola Marymount University's Center for Equity for English Learners, funded through an Educator Workforce Investment Grant from the California Department of Education to support statewide implementation of the visionary and comprehensive 2017 CA English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education policy. The goals of EL RISE! are:

- *Strengthen the capacity of County Offices of Education to support LEAs in planning, professional learning, and continuous improvement processes to centralize and meet the needs of their English learners in alignment with the EL Roadmap;*
- *Increase educators' knowledge of the EL Roadmap and research-based practices for English learners, and understanding of the implications for multiple roles and levels of the system*
- *Build skills and strategies for implementing Roadmap-aligned evidence-based practices*
- *Facilitate the development of shared vision and priorities for local plans and implementation of the EL Roadmap leading to greater coherence*
- *Support the design, improvement and sustainability of strong research-based language acquisition programs and services for English learners, including dual language programs*
- *Develop local policies and LEA system mechanisms focused on English learner needs and aligned to the EL Roadmap*



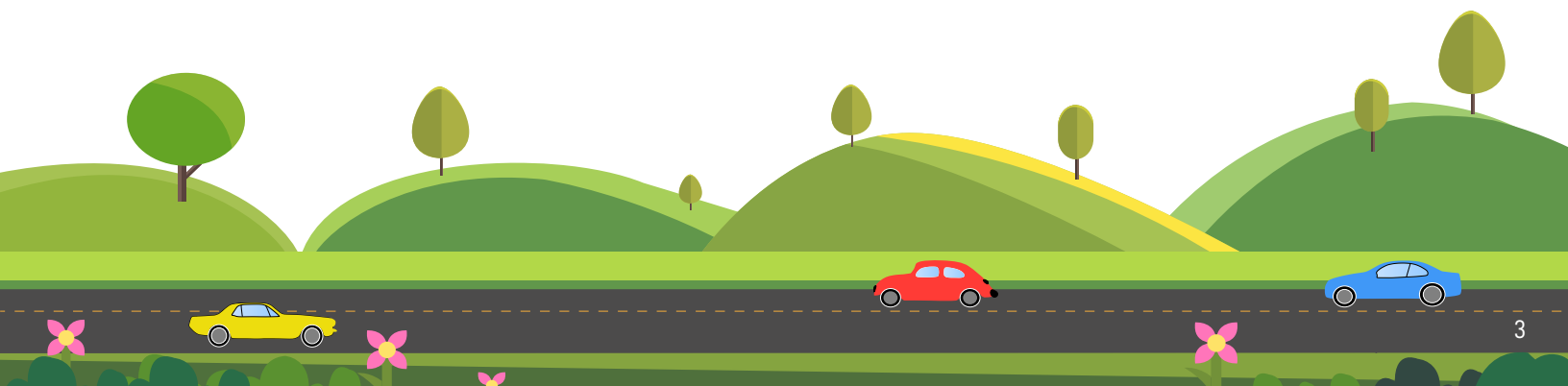
**CALIFORNIANS TOGETHER was the Lead Agency for EL RISE!**

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# MOVING THE ENGLISH LEARNER ROADMAP FORWARD: THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION

## INTRODUCTION

In July 2017, the California State Board of Education unanimously adopted a new English Learner Roadmap, providing a comprehensive and aspirational policy to guide California educators in delivering programs and services to the 1.1 million English learners in the state—superseding Proposition 227, an “English Only” policy that had been voted into place through a statewide ballot initiative two decades earlier.

### The EL Roadmap set a new vision and mission for California schools:

#### VISION

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

#### MISSION

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

The English Learner Roadmap policy also articulated four interrelated Principles to “guide all levels of the system toward a coherent and aligned set of practices, services, relationships, and approaches to teaching and learning that together create a powerful, effective 21st-century education for English learners. Underlying this systemic application of the Principles is the foundational understanding that simultaneously developing English learners’ linguistic and academic capacities is a shared responsibility of all educators and that all levels of the schooling system have a role to play in ensuring the access and achievement of the 1.1 million English learners who attend our schools.”

### The four research-based Principles are:

- 1 Assets-Oriented and Needs-Responsive Schools
- 2 Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access
- 3 System Conditions to Support Effectiveness
- 4 Alignment and Articulation Within and Across Systems

Three years after that historic passage of the EL Roadmap, in recognition of the need to increase awareness of this new policy and build capacity to implement the four guiding Principles, the legislature allocated Educator Workforce Investment Grant funds to build capacity throughout California’s school system to give life to the English Learner Roadmap. One of those grants was awarded to the EL RISE! partnership (Californians Together, the Center for Equity for English Learners at Loyola Marymount University, and SEAL).



# ELRISE! STANDS FOR ENGLISH LEARNER ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION FOR SYSTEMIC EXCELLENCE!

**The EL RISE! approach focused heavily on building the capacity of the state's County Offices of Education (COEs) as the mechanism to provide ongoing support to districts and other Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to drive continuous improvement within California's education system.** In addition to creating a network of 20 COEs to provide professional learning and to share resources and information across the state, EL RISE! selected four Anchor County Offices of Education representing the southern, northern, and Central Valley regions of the state. The expectation was that—in addition to hosting a wide range of professional development opportunities related to the EL Roadmap Principles—these Anchors would partner with an Anchor LEA in their region to comprehensively address all aspects of the EL Roadmap through sustained efforts. They would further commit to working across the departments and divisions of their own county office and building shared direction and coherence in infusing the EL Roadmap into their work with LEAs and educators throughout their regions. The result would be examples and models of comprehensive implementation of the EL Roadmap policy. As the commitment letters read, these Anchor COEs would *“build our capacity to serve the LEAs in our region as well as serve as a collaborating partner in demonstrating tools and processes for comprehensive implementation of the CA EL Roadmap through Roadmap-aligned continuous improvement processes including district policies, professional learning plans, resource allocation, LCAPs, and professional development for school leaders and teachers.”*

Four County Offices of Education were chosen as Anchor COEs (Los Angeles County Office of Education, Sacramento County Office of Education, Tulare County Office of Education, and Yolo County Office of Education), agreeing to:

- *Establish a team of staff across divisions/departments to work with Californians Together to establish a shared understanding and vision of the CA EL Roadmap and implications for the Systems of Support and the work with LEAs;*

- *Select one to two “Anchor” LEAs for intensive and comprehensive planning and support in EL Roadmap implementation—and work with that LEA in partnership to utilize tools and processes for continuous improvement;*
- *Host a series of ongoing professional development/learning opportunities for school leaders and teachers addressing locally determined high-priority aspects of the EL Roadmap;*
- *Recruit participants and provide facilities for these professional development opportunities—thus supporting EL Roadmap focused professional learning communities throughout the county utilizing tools and resources provided by the EL RISE! partners; and*
- *Share learnings with others across the state through the network created by EL RISE! through the grant.*

This publication tells the story of one of those Anchor COEs, the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE), and its three-year journey that would deepen understanding and ownership for addressing and embracing English learners throughout the departments and functions of the COE, break down siloes and build relationships and coherence across staff and departments, and provide targeted and much needed high-quality professional learning for educators county-wide (preschool through high school) on effective approaches for English learner access and success. The story of SCOE illuminates what a county office of education looks like as it embraces the role of leading and supporting implementation of a major comprehensive English learner policy. The SCOE story is followed by lessons learned across the network of 20 County Offices of Education that were engaged in the EL RISE! Educator Workforce Investment Grant (EWIG) effort to build capacity and breathe life into the vision and Principles of the EL Roadmap policy.



## THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION CASE STUDY

**The Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) is located in Central California in the Sacramento Valley and serves over 247,000 students countywide in 13 school districts.** With almost 650 regular employees and 950 temporary and consultant staff, SCOE is one of the larger county offices of education in the state. The students it serves are diverse (the city of Sacramento was named as one of the most diverse cities in the nation), and 78 different language groups are enrolled in the schools. Approximately half are Spanish speakers. Almost one-third of the students are currently English learners or are redesignated English learners—but they are not distributed evenly throughout the schools and districts of the county. Six districts are the most impacted.

Within SCOE, one designated staff position (the Curriculum Specialist for EL Programs and Accountability) is responsible for English learner programs and services. However, many individual staff throughout SCOE departments have some expertise related to EL issues. Graciela Garcia-Torres (herself a former EL) came to SCOE to serve as that EL Curriculum Specialist with years under her belt as a district and site-level administrator in schools and districts with many ELs. She considered it part of her role to be apprised of new policies, research, trends, and challenges in English learner education. So in 2016, Graciela applied for and was designated by then State Superintendent of Instruction Tom Torlakson to serve as an Alternate on the State Task Force to inform a new English Learner policy for the state. Attending each of the Task Force meetings throughout 2016- 2017, Graciela grew increasingly excited by the potential of what was shaping up to be the aspirational, visionary English Learner Roadmap policy. She was among those who testified for its passage before the State Board of Education in July 2017, where they unanimously adopted the new Roadmap as state policy, superseding the English Only Proposition 227 policy that had been in place for two decades.

When the California legislature allocated funds for an Educator Workforce Investment Grant (EWIG) to build capacity through the state for the implementation of this new EL Roadmap, Graciela Garcia-Torres was poised and ready to find ways for SCOE to be involved. The opportunity came when the EWIG-funded EL RISE! announced their focus on building the capacity of County Offices of Education to raise awareness and engage educators in enacting the four Principles of the EL Roadmap. While 20 COEs were invited to become part of a network, there was the potential for four to become Anchor COEs for statewide implementation. Anchor COEs would commit to widespread application of the EL Roadmap within and across their COE departments, as well as to create opportunities for complete implementation throughout the LEAs in their region. And they were expected to partner with an Anchor LEA to focus on implementing the English Learner Roadmap across sites and roles. The idea was to produce models and resources that demonstrate what it looks like and means to give life to the comprehensive and aspirational EL Roadmap policy in California.

# Becoming an Anchor COE: Taking the Leap

Graciela approached her supervisor, Becky Sullivan (Curriculum and Instruction Director), to discuss applying to become an Anchor COE in the EL RISE! grant, and together they engaged others in considering the idea. It was well-received. The timing seemed right for SCOE.

Connie Lee (Director of Strategic Projects) champions SCOE's diversity and equity initiative and over many years with SCOE, has developed broad experience with many projects and grants. In her leadership role, Connie is closely focused on the Superintendent's strategic priorities. She recalls hearing about the possibility of becoming an Anchor with EL RISE!.

*"I thought it was a pivotal moment for SCOE to take on something important like this. It's a time of changing demographics for our county. And SCOE was already involved in evaluating our system through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We saw that our community was welcoming more and more ELs—they are a growing population in Sacramento—but the capacity isn't there in our schools to really embrace them. It just seemed that we couldn't wait anymore to focus on this. Professionally and personally, our team was already committed to be reflective, to improve, to take some leadership in this area. So when the opportunity was put in front of us to be an Anchor COE for EL Roadmap implementation, we had to take the leap."*

For Graciela, it was the right time for other reasons. *"I had been feeling strongly the need to build EL capacity internally in the county office. This was a moment and a way to do that. The EL Roadmap presented us with a new state policy, so the issue of EL capacity was timely and relevant. And it wasn't just my voice as the EL person asking for attention to my issue. This was a research-based document, a state policy, our collective responsibility as a county office of education to bring it to the field. EL RISE! gave us the opportunity and helped to really play a role in giving the EL Roadmap vision a life across our work."*

And Nancy Herota, Deputy Superintendent commented *"SCOE is focused on providing equitable opportunities for all students and educators. English learners are a significant student group that SCOE supports, not only at the county level, but regionally as well. Therefore, participating in opportunities to bring resources to our area is a way of responding to the needs of our county and region. SCOE was one of the initial COEs to roll out the EL Roadmap in 2018. When the opportunity to be part of the statewide implementation of the EL Roadmap arose, SCOE was well-positioned to take a leadership role as an anchor county."*

## SCOE'S TIMELINE



Each Anchor COE in EL RISE! is committed to infusing the English Learner Roadmap in and throughout their work with LEAs in the region and taking to heart the policy's charge to apply the vision and Principles to all levels of the system—including the county offices themselves.

The first year of the grant at SCOE was focused on those twin responsibilities of 1) getting the EL RISE! professional learning opportunities up and running to build capacity throughout Sacramento County, and 2) establishing the internal mechanisms within SCOE to lead the work by creating shared understanding and meaning-making about the EL Roadmap itself. This involved clarifying the roles and responsibilities of being an Anchor COE and developing the approach and strategy that would lead to coherent and comprehensive implementation of the EL Roadmap within SCOE's work.

## The Internal COE Work: Establishing Roles and Structures

The EL RISE! grant could have easily been relegated to the purview of the EL Curriculum Specialist and lost in the shuffle of all that goes on in an active county office of education. Oh dear... *another* grant? Goodness, not *another* initiative! These reactions could have doused all hopes for the EL RISE! grant as the Covid pandemic swept the state at the very start of the grant period. However, three structural ingredients and strategic decisions were crucial to positioning and supporting the effort as a shared and central focus within SCOE:

- A three-member EL RISE! **Leadership Team** was established, including both the EL Specialist and high-level leadership of the COE, as the mechanism where decisions and strategy would be determined, to ensure communication and vertical coherence from staff to the Superintendent level.
- A **Core Team** of three staff specialists including the EL Specialist and others shared the grant-supported "staffing" position and role of planning, outreach, registration, support for participants, running Communities of Practice—supported by an administrative position.
- The decision to establish a **Cross-Departmental** EL RISE! structure to engage staff, build capacity and connection across all departments, and simultaneously support the EL Roadmap application at the department level while building coherence and connection across SCOE.

The combined Leadership and Core teams guided a cross-departmental strategy that ended up as a key element impacting the depth and success of work over the next three years to build shared understanding and ownership for the EL Roadmap. This structure provided for both horizontal and vertical connections within SCOE—which was necessary for creating a cohesive, coherent direction. With access to the Superintendent through the Leadership Team, the entire effort, including the engagement across departments in the county office, was made possible by the support and leadership of Deputy Superintendent Nancy Herota and the Superintendent David W. Gordon.

## The Leadership and Core Teams

The Leadership Team included Graciela Garcia-Torres as EL specialist, Becky Sullivan as Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and Connie Lee (Director of Strategic Projects). The Core Team included Graciela (with her deep expertise in EL issues as well as expertise working with administrators), Kou Vang (Curriculum Specialist), who brought expertise in elementary level education, and Charley Gilmore (Curriculum Specialist) with expertise in secondary. They were chosen both for the mix of knowledge but also based on personal interest. As Kou described, *"I was an English learner myself, and this issue of ELs had been a shared passion and vision between myself and Graciela. Graciela had warned me ahead of time that if we got the Anchor COE role, I would be a critical player as her partner. So I was ready."* Charley had no prior knowledge of the EL Roadmap when he was recruited for the Core Team. However, he welcomed the opportunity to be more cross-disciplinary and collaborative, to stretch beyond a focus on civic engagement and history/social science curriculum. Many of the teachers he worked with in the field were facing challenges about how to work with newcomers, and he was looking forward to learning new methods to share with them.



## The Core Team Shares EL RISE! Staffing Responsibility

The appointment of this dynamic trio as the Core Team was also a strategic staffing decision. The EL RISE! grant provided funding for a staff position to coordinate and support EL RISE! activities, facilitate communication across the partnership between LEAs-COE-EL RISE! agencies, and ensure effective focus and capacity building for EL Roadmap implementation in the county.

### The roles and responsibilities included:

- Attending EL RISE! Planning sessions, Institutes, and Strand Modules in the county
- Actively recruiting and supporting the participation and engagement of educators in EL RISE! professional learning and planning opportunities
- Assisting with the organization, registration, logistics of the EL RISE! Institutes, Strand Modules and Planning sessions
- Working with LEA administrators/coordinators on implementation of EL RISE! local efforts
- Facilitating follow-up Communities of Practice learning networks that follow participation in Institutes for collaborative support and reflection on implementation
- Supporting the use of data and progress monitoring systems to provide transparency into English learner/dual language achievement
- Participating in regularly scheduled EL RISE/ Californians Together team meetings
- Participating in convenings of the EL RISE Network
- Participating in LEA EL Roadmap planning meetings
- Conducting regular EL communication with EL RISE Project Manager
- Providing data gathering support for grant evaluation
- Coordinating participation of COE staff across divisions for annual EL RISE! sessions focusing on aligning COE work with the EL Roadmap

Rather than use the funds for a single person, the decision was made to split it three ways, establishing shared responsibility across different expertise and providing for collaborative planning. Kou (with her EL and elementary expertise), Charlie (with his secondary

content area expertise in social studies/history), and Graciela (with her focus on administrators, leadership and dual language) would share the position.

Kou reflected on why building the mix of expertise into the staff position ended up so powerful: *"Each of us had always focused on different levels of the system. We knew that real implementation of best practices for ELs and of the EL Roadmap wouldn't change if we only worked with teachers. We also recognized that it was crucial to set a strong foundation in elementary, but that ELs throughout our secondary schools also needed attention. So the charge was to engage administrators as well as teachers, and all levels from preschool through to graduation. We knew that from our experiences—but it was also clearly laid out in the EL Roadmap. So our staffing of the effort needed to reflect this."*

## Building Coherence and Common Understanding Through the Cross Department Team

As an Anchor COE, an expectation was that SCOE would focus internally to build a shared awareness of the EL Roadmap and consider how it would apply to work across the county office. An annual shared learning, planning, and reflection session was built into the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement. At SCOE, this work took on a central, powerful role over the three years of the grant. It began with the creation and convening of a Cross-Department EL RISE! team, meeting for the first time in September 2020 to launch Year One of the grant. According to Graciela, the hope was that there would arise a *"sense of common charge and vision about what we have to give to our English learners. I want leaders and staff across SCOE to see themselves as part of this vision, to take the initiative, and feel ownership. And I want to see more and more EL focus and awareness in their work, that they feel a sense of urgency and awareness of their own role and agency in embracing our English learners."*

In selecting who to invite to the cross-department convening, the Leadership Team discussed what was important. Graciela recalls: *"We saw this group as leaders of various functions/departments that all have something to do with ELs. They all "touch" English learners, and they need to determine the role of their department beyond simply supporting recruitment and*

*participation in the EL RISE! professional development offerings. What more might they want to do in supporting the implementation of the EL Roadmap? What else might they want EL RISE! to do? What do they want their department to do to contribute toward that assets-based vision in the EL Roadmap of intellectually rich instruction and meaningful access?"* The invitation that went out read: "Our charge as a team will be to develop a shared understanding of the implications of the EL Roadmap for COE work and to set priorities for the work with LEAs on implementing the EL Roadmap, and to meet annually to reflect and revise those priorities."

Eighteen staff representing multiple departments (Early Learning, Curriculum and Instruction, Foster and Homeless Youth, Research and Evaluation, School of Education, Social and Emotional Learning, Planning and Improvement/LCAP, Equity, College and Career, Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), Special Education, Expanded Learning, College and Career, and the County Schools) heeded the call.

**Their first meeting was facilitated by EL RISE! with an agenda that included the following:**

- Digging into the intention and content of the English Learner Roadmap vision and Principles and discussing which aspects of the Roadmap most resonated for SCOE staff.

- Reviewing the status and relevant statistics about English learners in the county.
- Co-constructing a journey map of SCOE's work and focus on English learners over the years to this point—and discussing "Where are we now as a County Office of Education with regard to our focus on ELs?"
- Using the indicators in the *County Office of Education English Learner Roadmap Reflection Tool*, small groups discussed strengths, identified questions for inquiry, and selected priorities for initial focus.
- Identifying what was needed to move forward with this plan and keep intentions on the table.

By the end of that meeting, several unifying themes had emerged. The group could clearly see the application of the EL Roadmap Principles to their work and wanted to explicitly identify, call out, and act upon the EL dimensions of SCOE work within each department. They understood how integrating the EL Roadmap across SCOE's infrastructure would improve alignment within and across departments and they viewed this work as an opportunity to build shared responsibility for ELs throughout the county.

Laurie Olsen, who facilitated the meeting, noted: "They were clearly not a group that we'd have to figure out how to get to "buy into" the idea of focusing on ELs. The interest and commitment were clearly there already. They were definitely ready to go, and many had specific aspects of expertise to contribute. But from the review of EL data in the county, it was evident that they were just starting to piece together a shared understanding of who the ELs were and what their experiences in schools were throughout the county. And the EL Roadmap's Principles were giving them a glimpse of a new lens they could use for approaching the work that needed to be done."

What had been planned by EL RISE! as an annual reflection and planning session for the Anchor COE morphed at SCOE into a regularly scheduled meeting—a relied-upon mechanism and essential element to keep a focus on ELs across the COE for three years and knit coherence across that work. The group (which came to be called the EL RISE! Cross-Department Team) decided to meet three times a year—with work to be done within departments in between.

**"It was a time of changing demographics for our county. It just seemed that we couldn't wait anymore to focus on this. When the opportunity was put in front of us to be an Anchor COE for EL Roadmap implementation, we had to take the leap."**

**– Connie Lee**

Cross-department convenings and the notion of de-siloing were not new concepts to SCOE. It had been part of Superintendent David Gordon's vision to de-siloize the work of SCOE for a while. The EL RISE!/ EL Roadmap grant became the opportunity and the focus for cross-departmental work that would enact that vision of how a COE should work. In his own words, Gordon explained, *"Often in education, we work in silos, but it's in the cross-thinking that we build stronger knowledge especially when we are enhancing capacity to support vulnerable populations."* The EL RISE! Cross-Department Team became that vehicle to act upon Gordon's vision and to build relationships and connections and coherence across the COE.

Staff from across the county office felt the value of these convenings. They were not just meetings—but rather, a combination of engaging in shared learning, book study (of the EL Roadmap), planning, and relationship building. Lindsay Paoli, representing AVID in the cross-departmental structure, described: *"The discussions and learning and work we did in the EL RISE! Cross-department meetings helped us understand the work to be done in our own personal understanding of ELs, where and how we might need to grow ourselves, as well as how it fit together with everything else SCOE was doing. For me as a leader in AVID, it reminded me to focus on ELs, it created a kind of clearer accountability for ensuring they are addressed in our work... the whole process also opened up opportunities for collaboration, so now instead of walking into a school just with my AVID lens and role, I know there's another SCOE team or effort going on also, and we know what each other are working on and trying to accomplish. It's a structure that just really works. We have different job objectives, but our direction is the same."*

The content and comprehensive reach of the EL Roadmap policy itself served to provide a sense of connection for staff across SCOE. As Graciela remarked: *"It is essential to work toward having a common understanding about what we want for our ELs and to be clear about where and how they show up in all of the work of the county office. What the EL Roadmap adds to this is a vision and set of Principles that tie it all together...tie US all together in a state direction and declaration that applies to all of us. And that's powerful. It's not just about asking someone with EL expertise to add 1 or 2 PPT slides to something going*



*on in another department. Because of the EL Roadmap, we cannot marginalize or silo ELs any longer. It makes clear that ELs throughout our system are impacted by everyone's work. The EL Roadmap policy is clear—this is across our systems, this is across P-graduation, this is every educator's responsibility."*

Charley Gilmore echoed this sentiment: *"Because our work across SCOE is so specific and disparate, in a way, there isn't really the felt need in the day-to-day to come together. But the beauty of the EL Roadmap is that the policy and Principles encompass all of us. It holds us together in a vision of a single system working in alignment for our ELs."*

And Cathy Morrison, from her position in Planning and Improvement, added: *"The Cross-Departmental meetings were a dedicated space to listen and learn—an opportunity to pause my daily focus on the LCAP and accountability work and just listen to what my colleagues in SCOE were doing. I learned about SEL, and I learned about CAL-SOAP, the Student Opportunity and Access Program. And I started seeing the connections in a new way. I am so much better informed about who we are at SCOE, and I see how the pieces fit together. It's about OUR schools, OUR county. A shared responsibility. And this opened up new ideas and possibilities for working together."*

The placement of dedicated time for the cross-departmental meetings on the SCOE calendar

underscored both the commitment to work long-term and made it possible for staff to plan around the dates to ensure participation. The cross-departmental work evolved as super important to connect people in multiple roles and levels of the work around the basic idea that ELs should be at the front of ALL of the county office work. Even with the disruption of a pandemic and the necessity of meeting on Zoom, the EL RISE! Cross-Departmental Team sessions provided a needed space to talk about ELs. After every meeting, the EL RISE! Core Team debriefed, asking, *“What kind of guidance, support, and check-ins do people need to keep things moving?”* They offered “office hours” for drop-in support for staff throughout SCOE to bounce ideas off, brainstorm, plan together, and share perspectives and expertise. And indeed, the practice of turning to the EL expertise in the COE (already occurring due to relationships with Graciela in her role as EL Specialist) increased. Follow-up emails from the Core Team regularly thanked people for being part of the effort, underscored highlights from the meetings, reminded folks of the tasks at hand, and provided news of what was transpiring across SCOE. And each session began with some review (for new colleagues, for reminders) and ended with ways to move things deeper.

Debbie Morris (SELPA) remarked on the critical role of the Core Team: “Kudos to the team! It’s like herding cats in the midst of a crazy time with the pandemic, online, Zooms. I really appreciated the kind and gentle and persistent push to keep us engaged. And to keep ELs on our radar. Graciela’s EL expertise was always available to us. And the Core Team followed and supported what we were doing in our departments.”

The process of meeting together was augmented by the use of the The English Learner Roadmap Reflection Toolkit for County Offices of Education (a product from EL RISE!), through which staff reflected on the Indicators of COE practices that enact the EL Roadmap Principles and collectively selected priorities. This direct application of the EL Roadmap to COE work and functions—and the flexibility to determine where to start—provided a first-hand experience with how they might support educators in the field to tackle the comprehensive Roadmap policy.

## Capacity Building and Professional Learning for the County

The EWIG grant to EL RISE! was for capacity building and professional learning (webinars, institutes, workshops, strands) for multiple roles (teachers, administrators, families, counselors, etc.). From the array of professional learning opportunities available through the EL RISE! partnership, each COE was to select offerings matched to local needs. After years of working with local educators and district leaders on EL issues, Graciela was aware of some areas of great need. As Graciela declared, *“I wanted them all!”* The decision about selecting EL RISE! professional developing offerings in the first year was based on input from many stakeholders. The goals in that first year were to strengthen ELD at both elementary and secondary levels, to find ways to ensure administrators’ understanding of EL issues and the EL Roadmap’s implications for school programs and practices, to support the start-up and expansion of Dual Language programs, and to help districts develop local EL-responsive policies.

### The offerings in Year One included:

- Elementary Grades ELD for Teachers and Administrators Institute (4 sessions)
- English Learner Roadmap Administrators Strand (first two of five modules)
- Meeting the Needs of Newcomers Institute
- The English Learner Roadmap Elementary Teacher Strand
- Integrated and Designated ELD for Secondary Schools
- Elementary Dual Language Pedagogy Institute for Administrators
- English Learner Roadmap Aligned LCAP Institute
- Local Planning for EL Roadmap Implementation

Covid hit. Schools closed their doors and scrambled to move to online instruction. Both the venue and process of schooling were disrupted. English Learners were among the students hit the hardest by these changes. It was unclear whether educators would or even could manage to invest time and energy in professional learning in the midst of all of this. Charley

Gilmore recalls, *"The grant started, and the pandemic hit—almost simultaneously. So getting people from the schools in the county to come to professional learning was a challenge. The entire system was stressed. Schools were struggling to staff classrooms, to support people impacted by Covid. Could they/would they take on a few more hours to focus on ELs? But the amazing thing is that the answer was YES."*

The sense of urgency and need was so great and so genuinely felt throughout the county that indeed, teachers signed up to learn strategies for connecting to and engaging their ELs. And they stayed through multiple sessions, through the hours. And there was increasing participation throughout the pandemic. Principals carved out time to be part of the Administrators' modules; teachers showed up on Zoom after a long, full day of teaching.

The approach to delivering professional learning had to pivot as well. Online and hybrid sessions replaced in-person professional development sessions. And the content had to shift as well – supporting teachers in delivering effective instruction through online and hybrid platforms. The relevance, then, of the professional development to the very challenges teachers and administrators were facing increased attendance. In all, 24 sessions were delivered, serving 592 educators in the county.

One of the benefits that SCOE staff identified of the EL RISE! partnership was bringing not only EL expertise but also dedicated attention and expertise to the challenge of how to pivot to a new approach to professional learning in a Covid context. Almost immediately, EL RISE! redesigned the delivery to be online, with tech support to make it as accessible and interactive as possible. The creation of microsites to hold materials, the shifting to a series of shorter sessions to accommodate the exhaustion of educators, and the stress of adding more hours of a day to being on Zoom, etc. And, EL RISE! created new offerings specifically for teachers on strategies for instructing and supporting their EL students in the hybrid context.

Graciela remembers that first year. *"We had planned so carefully to provide professional development that met the need in the county. But then, we didn't know what to do to support teachers when the pandemic hit. We learned so much from EL RISE! about going virtual, and*

*had EL RISE! there with ready-made offerings that were relevant to the conditions teachers were facing in their new distance-teaching classrooms. It meant we could keep things moving forward."*

All SCOE staff were invited to participate in relevant EL RISE! professional learning sessions – for their own personal development, to be connected to what educators in the county were receiving, to learn strategies that were research-based and effective for ELs that could be woven into their own work. The professional learning found its way into SCOE's work with educators, as staff discovered new strategies to add to their repertoire to share with teachers and administrators and became familiar with new research to deepen their own thinking and to apply to EL services. Lindsay Paoli remarks on the impact on their AVID work: *"Our team participated in EL RISE! professional learning and saw immediate connections. Strategies that made sense in our AVID context. Information that helped us think about how to better support ELs in AVID."*

**The combined Leadership and Core teams guided a cross-departmental strategy that ended up as a key element impacting the depth and success of work over the next three years to build shared understanding and ownership for the EL Roadmap.**

**By the second year, the shock of the pandemic had worn off a bit and a rhythm of regular meetings and shared meaning-making about the EL Roadmap and implications for SCOE work was developing within the Cross-Department Team. The EL RISE! professional development offerings gained momentum.**

## Professional Learning

Educators across the county were starting to come up for air and adjust to the world of hybrid schooling. Word was spreading about the “high quality” professional learning opportunities being made available from EL RISE! through SCOE. Comments such as “High quality,” “Well done,” and “Just in time” came from participants in their feedback after sessions, and registration increased. Over 80% found the materials and strategies “beneficial” or “extremely beneficial,” which was evidence that the professional learning—geared toward the challenges people in the field were actually facing—was having an impact.

As Charley commented: *“The fact that every session for teachers centered on actual strategies to use was really appreciated by the teachers. They could put them into practice, and they did! They would come back and talk about having tried strategies from previous sessions. One school created an implementation inquiry cycle around the use of the strategies. I began and continue to use those strategies in my own instructional coaching and lesson planning support. So the professional learning wasn’t just an event people came to... it had legs, it had a life beyond the actual sessions.”*

**As a result of this feedback, all of the professional learning offerings from Year One were repeated in Year Two with some additional new ones addressing:**

### YEAR TWO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFERINGS:

- EL Roadmap Administrators Strand Modules I–V
- Administrators Community of Practice: Leading Implementation of the EL Roadmap
- Developing EL Master Plans—an Institute
- Serving English Learners with Disabilities
- EL Roadmap for Elementary School Families
- Serving Long Term English Learners
- Creating conditions for Dual Language Learners to thrive in early learning (PK/TK)
- Meeting the Needs of Newcomers in the Classroom
- Integrated and Designated ELD for Elementary Teachers as Language Coaches
- EL Roadmap Elementary Teacher Strand Modules I–V
- EL Roadmap 101 Family Webinar Trainer of Trainers

The Leadership and Core Teams felt it was important that educators throughout the county understand that implementation of the EL Roadmap was a SCOE commitment, not just some professional learning (PL) opportunities made available by an external entity. So the presence and “ownership” of the effort by SCOE staff needed to be made visible to the field. The Core Team divided up responsibility. Kou attended all elementary level professional learning, Charley attended all secondary level professional learning, and Graciela went to all the professional development sessions for administrators. They were not just present. They played an active role in opening the sessions, welcoming participants, and closing the sessions—as well as running follow-up Communities of Practice to support implementation.

Kou commented on this strategy: *“We attended all of the PL with the facilitators. We opened each session with a welcome from SCOE, participated throughout the PL, and we closed the sessions. We were intentional in making it clear that we are all together in supporting ELs and teachers.”*

## Continuing the Work Towards Internal Clarity and Coherence

In September 2021, 19 representatives across departments in SCOE met to look back on the first year, recount what they had done, reflect on progress made, and set intentions for Year Two, which involved revisiting the Principles of the EL Roadmap. Principle 3 (Systems Conditions for Effective Implementation) raised the issue of the role that an explicit vision and mission statement can play in building direction and sustained coherent work in implementing EL-responsive practices. Would/should SCOE develop a formal statement centralizing the needs of English learners and aligning them to the EL Roadmap?

The actual EL Roadmap policy and Guidance document was clear that the intent of the policy was to guide local policy and planning and that *"implementing the EL Roadmap will require... county offices of education to support and build the capacity of local educators through well-leveraged resources for improvement and a clear focus on strengthening practices and outcomes for English learners."*

In the County Offices of Education Toolkit for EL Roadmap Implementation, two of the "indicators" for Principle #3 included:

- We provide and support leadership that works toward assets-based, accessible, and rigorous education for English learners.
- Our COE policy and messaging provide clear goals and assets-based commitments to English learners.

In small groups, the Cross-Departmental Team considered an overall SCOE goal, vision, or statement of intent regarding the education and success of English learners, and the implementation of an EL Roadmap aligned vision. Why might this be important? Useful? Used? How would it support SCOE's work and the work of LEAs? What shared values, goals, and declarations might be important to be made explicit? What keywords, values, or elements seem most important to communicate?

A lively dialogue resulted, with the vast majority of staff stating they felt it would strengthen their work at SCOE to have such a statement. They brainstormed key elements of such a statement, important phrases, and elements. Based on this, a draft statement emerged.

### SCOE MISSION

Provide leadership, build partnerships, and implement innovative programs and policies that ensure opportunity and access to empowering educational experiences for each and every learner.

### CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL MISSION

Together, we, the Cross-Departmental Team, share the responsibility to meet the needs of English learners through implementing the EL Roadmap by: uplifting and honoring the languages and cultures of all students, designing high-quality professional learning that builds educator capacity, supporting LEA's efforts to improve the outcomes of EIs, and promoting impactful and transformational LEA systems.

### ELR MISSION

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

However, because the SCOE Board was deep in its own process at the time of developing a strengthened mission and vision statement, it didn't seem the right time for the Cross-Departmental group to propose an EL Roadmap aligned statement—choosing to wait to create something also aligned to the SCOE Board's statement. But they could move forward with departmental goals and priorities, and the Curriculum and Instruction department elected as part of their own EL Roadmap implementation to develop a statement of purpose for their own work that might be useful to others as a model throughout the COE.

## The Curriculum and Instruction Statement of Purpose

Kou, Charley, and Graciela developed a draft statement of purpose for the Curriculum and Instruction division based on the words, phrases, and values that had been generated in a Curriculum and Instruction meeting after studying the part of the *An Administrators Toolkit for Leading Implementation of the English Learner Roadmap* (Volume IV) section on the importance of vision statements and reviewing the EL Roadmap.

They shared it first with their EL RISE! Leadership Team, and then took it to the Curriculum and Instruction Content Team for feedback and response. The process was intended to strengthen the statement, to work toward a more clearly articulated sense of shared direction, and to model for other departments what it might look like to generate their own statements of purpose aligned with the EL Roadmap but more specific to their work.

They drew from Principle 1 of the EL Roadmap's emphasis on assets-based embracing of the language and cultures and students. They found in Principle 2 the clear mandate to integrate language development across the content and to provide the instructional supports that ELs need for participation and access. They recognized in Principle 3 the responsibility to invest in professional learning. And they drew from their own hearts and commitments to zero in on what matters.

Charley Gilmore spoke of the power of having developed and adopted the statement. *"It clarifies things for us. It's more specific than a mission because it includes actions—actions within our power to make happen. It draws from the Principles of the ELR, and the comprehensiveness of those Principles really helped us think about what we are moving toward. Curriculum and Instruction is organized around academic disciplines—the math folks, the history/social studies folks, the ELA folks. But we wanted to be clear that in our work with teachers, that we are keeping students as the focus, not just the content. So our Statement of Purpose was powerful because it makes ELs explicit for ourselves and the teachers we work with in the county."*

## Departmental Action to Support English Learners: the PDSA Cycles

SCOE was no stranger to improvement science, and the staff had been engaged in continuous improvement trainings. It was proposed that they incorporate "Plan, Do, Study, Act" (PDSA) cycles in the work to implement the EL Roadmap. Becky Sullivan, reflecting the thinking of the Leadership Team, recalls, *"We knew that the EL Roadmap had to be specific to the work of each department, and beyond the deep dive into the policy document itself, we wanted it to be made relevant to each role and department. We needed to make it operational. Get it off the shelf and know what's inside the policy—but then to apply it. The EL Roadmap gets at the systems level, so everyone can find themselves in the four Principles. So the question: 'Where do we see ourselves in this?' was a way to start. The Reflection Tool for COEs was super helpful in that process. The PDSA cycle was a way to go deeper."*

The PDSA cycle begins with the "Plan," ideating what changes are wanted and the ideas for how to bring about that change. The next phase is "Do," testing out an idea that might bring about the desired change, collecting

## CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We uplift and honor the languages and cultures of all students as we purposefully plan and deliver professional learning that builds educators' capacity to intentionally implement integrated and designated ELD across content areas.



data, and documenting the impact. The third phase is "Study," a period of analyzing data and reflecting on what was learned. The final phase is "Act," which is responding to what has been learned and determining what current practices will be abandoned, what will be adapted, and what might be adopted.

In this application of PDSA, the desired change writ large was to implement the vision and Principles of the EL Roadmap. However, each department needed to define the change in relation to their own work and functions. This step was supported by examining the indicators in the The English Learner Roadmap Reflection Toolkit for County Offices of Education and engaging in discussion as departmental teams. But trying to find the right data to be able to refine the understanding of what EL outcomes they wanted to realize wasn't so easy. Most people found that the data they had and could easily access needed to be more specific. Either ELs weren't called out at all within general outcome and participation data, or the data on ELs were too broad. But they started with what they had. For the next year, the department PDSAs engaged COE staff in a much deeper awareness of their ELs and began to change some practices. Examples of the directions these PDSAs took include the following.

**AVID:** The AVID team sought both to increase the intentionality with which ELs are included and served in AVID but also to incorporate more focused EL supportive strategies into the already powerful AVID panoply of core strategies. Lindsay Paoli reported: *"We get to be in classrooms a lot with AVID, so we decided to add an EL lens to our classroom observations and to begin looking for and noticing the strategies that would support stronger EL participation, comprehension, and success. First, we had to be clear about who the ELs are in the classrooms. Right there, it was a step forward. Noticing them. And then, we decided to focus on academic language stems, word banks, and how to build support for ELs into Socratic seminar by moving them to small groups first, building in language practice. So it actually strengthened what we were doing."*

**LCAP, Planning and Improvement:** The combined LCAP support and Planning and Improvement departments selected two aspects of the EL Roadmap for their focus. The first was to model assets-based language in how SCOE staff engage in dialogue with



LEAs and to bring that lens to looking at proposed improvement strategies. The second was to focus on disaggregating the metrics in the LCAP to ensure that LEAs are looking into the details of the EL experience. Cathy Morrison came to SCOE to lead the LCAP review process, with prior experience in an LEA with Title I and Title III and targeted funding resources for English Learners. As Cathy explains, *"State and federal monitoring is compliance-focused, not aspirational, often not focused on research-based practices or vision."*

The SCOE focus on the EL Roadmap was new to her. *"Now,"* she says, *"I see the EL Roadmap as absolutely core to LCAPs. It's about systems alignment. The LCAP should be the vision and lodestar for a district, the mechanism for addressing needs and setting direction for improvements—and aligning LEA LCAPs to the Roadmap seems essential."* The first piece of data that her department looked at in the EL RISE! PDSA cycle was their LCAP review documents. They found that while every LCAP had some EL metric, they weren't disaggregating the data to look more closely at the different populations of ELs. So the PDSA plan includes focusing on this issue for the coming year. Cathy partnered with Graciela to plan and run an English Learner LCAP workshop for LEAs in the region, guiding them to look more closely at their EL data.

**SELPA:** The EL Roadmap vision and Principles led to identifying reclassification as a major issue for dually identified students. The question raised was, *"How could we approach a reclassification process that acknowledges what dually identified students can do?"*

Debbie Morris explained: *"It was the EL Roadmap and the participation in the Cross-Departmental meetings and sessions with Graciela that sparked my conversations with our schools in the county, and it's starting to resonate now. Just asking the questions has power to create the conversations, to focus our schools on their ELs."*

**Early Learning:** The Early Learning team saw immediate alignment philosophically between early childhood education and the EL Roadmap Principles. Julie Montali, leading the team's PDSA work, came to SCOE with prior work in early learning in Fresno and Twin Rivers on dual language learners expressed that alignment: *"The Roadmap and the field of early education encourage and support home language, foster connecting with families and seeing young children as parts of their family culture. To me, the EL Roadmap is such a wonderful framework for early learning and K-12. It's comprehensive. It's not piecemeal. It embraces who children and families are and what they need from our schools, preschool, and up. Such a powerful tool. It made perfect sense to me."* Julie brought the Departmental Indicators (from the English Learner Roadmap Reflection Tool for County Offices of Education) to the other staff in her Early Learning department, and they started digging into looking at what they were already doing for DLLs. *"Historically, there has been such a split between early learning and the K-12 work; it was exciting to look at the Roadmap as a way to connect us across systems."* For this team, the PDSA process didn't so much change what they were doing but reaffirmed their practices and helped make the connection to the K-12 system.

**College and Career Readiness:** College and Career Readiness at SCOE embraces several programs, including CAL SOAP (Student Opportunity and Access Program). At first, Guadalupe Delgado, who had been working for 16 years at SCOE and now Directs CAL SOAP, didn't see how it fit into the EL RISE! English Learner Roadmap work. She engaged her team in thinking about the EL Roadmap's Principles and how they might get a better picture of what was happening for ELs within their work. They decided they needed to be more intentional. Instead of asking schools to *"pick a cohort for individual college and career advising,"* now they would be purposeful in selecting English learners

among the cohort. Guadalupe shared that *"the SCOE EL RISE! Cross-Department group helped me be brave in bringing this up to schools in the region. There is a bit of a disincentive in the college readiness work to avoid selecting students who might have challenges because of the success measures."* The department set as its first PDSA goal to make sure students receiving intensive services from Cal SOAP were diverse, including EL students. This required meetings with counselors at the schools who were doing the advising—and presenting an assets-based view of ELs.

**Expanded Learning:** The issues of ELs are central to the Expanded Learning Department (before and after school, intersession, Saturday schools, holidays, etc.)—actually a formal priority in their state and federal funding. And the staff of their programs are very diverse, often representing the communities of ELs, speaking the languages, etc. For the Expanded Learning Team, Principle #1 of the EL Roadmap (Assets-Based, Student-Responsive) aligns directly with their quality standards related to diversity, access, and equity. *"We are about supporting the lived experiences, the cultures, and languages of the kids who come to our programs,"* explains Mark. This year, as a result of the PDSA cycle conversations, the team decided to focus our EL Roadmap work on doing a needs assessment with our programs about the kind of professional learning and support site coordinators need to meet EL needs.



## SCOE Partnership with Elk Grove Unified School District—the Anchor LEA

To model comprehensive implementation of the EL Roadmap, the charge to EL RISE! Anchor COEs included partnering with an Anchor LEA—focusing on local district planning and providing aligned professional learning for multiple roles in a shared focus on EL Roadmap implementation. SCOE selected Elk Grove Unified School District, one of the most EL-impacted districts in the county. Elk Grove is the fifth largest district in California, serving almost 63,000 students in 66 schools. One-third of the district's enrolled students are "Ever ELs," and close to 120 languages are spoken. Elk Grove was known in the county for its systemic commitment to high-level practices, and the EL department had worked with Graciela and SCOE on multiple English learner-related efforts leading up to EL RISE!

In stepping up to serve as an Anchor LEA, EGUSD made several key decisions. The first was to focus on two of the nine feeder regions in the district - piloting efforts there, and then spreading from those first adopters to other regions. And the second decision was to focus on Designated ELD and broaden that into Integrated ELD and a focus on high-quality instruction by the third year of the grant.

The entire EL Services team attended an Introduction to the EL Roadmap provided by SCOE. They left inspired and ready to use the Teacher Toolkits to select priority areas for focus. A focus on Principle 1 established that basic understanding that there are different types of English learners, with a variety of types of needs requiring different responses. A review of data and dialogue with site personnel led to two particular populations emerging as a focus: newcomers and Long Term English Learners. The pandemic impacted all of this, but EGUSD proceeded with the professional development, attending multiple SCOE provided EL RISE! offerings for administrators, teachers and district staff (for LCAP and Master Plan development) in that first year.

According to Lucy Bollinger, then EL Director in EGUSD, *"People were excited to be an Anchor District. With Covid, so much got stripped back to the basics. In a way, good EL practices became even more important than ever. And people who attended the EL RISE! sessions were overwhelmingly positive. It reinvigorated them and offered concrete strategies."* The EL RISE! professional development augmented and infused a unified district (all-staff) focus on high quality instruction embedded English learner-specific approaches within it. For example, under the broad focus of "Student Talk" was included equal opportunities, scaffolding, and language support for ELs. The professional learning was not just for the willing, it was for everyone—building toward a shared understanding of what high quality instruction means.

EGUSD updated their district's EL vision and Strategic Plan (aligning it with the EL Roadmap), and wrote EL Roadmap implementation into their LCAP. By the third year of EL RISE!, EGUSD stepped up to engage in an EL Summer Institute—with teachers co-teaching in the morning supported by SEAL (EL RISE! Partner) Coaches, and debriefing and engaging in collaborative planning and learning in the afternoons. Speaking of the role of the EL Roadmap in this process, Bollinger remarked: *"The fact that the EL Roadmap is state policy, and is happening across the state, is what it took for leadership attention. We link everything we do now to the EL Roadmap. The Administrators Toolkits are resources for all administrators in our district. And so, teachers hear our administrators using the same language they are hearing in their teacher professional development. In the past, it was concerns about being compliant that got attention. That was a bare minimum. Now the EL Roadmap shines the light on what we can do."*

**By the third year, the cross-departmental reality of SCOE's work toward implementing the EL Roadmap was well ingrained.** Within departments the EL Roadmap principles helped focus work more intentionally on English learner students, and a common language emerged within the county office to talk about the needs and challenges across the region. Shared ownership and commitment emerged. While the EL RISE! grant was still the frame and mechanism for the work, the fuel was increasingly SCOE's emerging collective sense this was and would continue to be their work.

## A Clear Shared Focus on English Learners

The Cross-Department mechanisms continued to fuel deeper work within departments, increased communication across SCOE, and gave birth to more collaboration and connection in addressing the needs of English Learners. Crystal, lead for the County Schools, commented that the *"SCOE Cross-Department EL RISE! became a guiding post. Helping to break silos and build a collective energy to uplift our Multilingual scholars. It's powerful to feel and to see us all together in a room, passionate, committed."* And Mai Xi Lee, from the somewhat new Social Emotional Learning department at SCOE, echoed: *"It's been great to have a place and way to hear what staff are thinking about ELs and the EL Roadmap across SCOE. Ours have been generative conversations, and it's building a real sense of community. We are all there to support ELs regardless of our role and position. So we are building connectivity and relationships—not walking our individual siloed paths. There is collaboration and a sense of purpose. We are in this, together."*

Connie Lee attributes the strength of the cross-departmental space not only to have a place and time to come together but also to experience the comprehensive construct of the actual EL Roadmap policy itself. *"It makes clear that ELs are all of ours. When you read the Roadmap, you see that every department has a role that includes ELs, so every department needs to be committed to understanding and serving ELs. We, of course, have designated positions for ELs, for ELA/ELD—but this is about more than curriculum and instruction. And the EL Roadmap makes that clear—it drives that understanding that it's everyone's responsibility, throughout the working of our school system. The policy is comprehensive. ELs are in all of our schools, part of every aspect of our schools. It's not just something for Curriculum and Instruction to take care of. It's not just something for the EL folks to solve. It's all of us. It's all hands on deck. We took that seriously!"*

While much of the work of building internal coherence occurred through the shared learning and dialogue in the cross-department meetings, staff also began to turn to each other to engage in collaboration across departments—a development that hadn't been either planned or expected. Julie Montali (Early Learning Education). *"The sense of shared endeavor is wonderful. And the connections we make between our work is leading to partnerships. Being in a collaborative space is essential – especially, I think, for the important bridge to be built across early learning and K-12 because it enhances the developmental perspective. Early learning is foundational for all of our departments at SCOE. Everyone should understand the developmental continuum of EL/DLL development and how our SCOE responses and supports address that. The bridge is being built."*

Mark: *"I have to applaud our SCOE. It used to be a focus on our own funding, our own silos, our own work. But the bricks are coming down. We are noticing each other when we're out at school sites – oh, what are you doing here? How can we collaborate? We are getting information about what each other is doing, and then we follow it up and reach out for each other's expertise. It's a mind-shift change. It's okay to knock on each other's door and ask questions, raise the potential of doing shared work at a site. It's coming in the message from above; the administration is challenging us to de-silo."*



## Hosting the Statewide Principals Convening

As the final grant year was coming to a close, SCOE hosted with EL RISE! a convening of Principals from the Anchor LEAs across the state who had been leading implementation of the EL Roadmap. The purpose was to cull wisdom, share stories, explore successes, and craft lessons learned. The group of 60 site Principals and representatives from their partner COEs discussed what it meant to change classroom practices, build shared ownership and vision across a school site, facilitate staff in making connections to English learners and their families, design, and institute new programs and services for English learners, and leverage the resources needed for meaningful implementation of the four Principles of the EL Roadmap. Emerging from two years of the pandemic and coming together for the first time with other educational leaders committed to the English Learner Roadmap was powerful for the participants. Connie

Lee described the impact of that gathering: *"To see the systemic and collective impact of our work across the state. To realize it's not just SCOE trying to make this happen; it's not just our schools in our county. This is happening across the state! It was a beautiful moment. That's when I really felt that we are part of a bigger picture, of a movement across the state. And I was proud that SCOE was hosting."*

## The Grant Ends with Reflection and New Commitment

In the final formal EL RISE! gathering of the Cross-Departmental Team, SCOE staff reflected with pride at what they had accomplished, noted the work yet to be done, reflected on lessons learned, and found themselves talking about how to continue the work and the internal SCOE structures that supported coherent and aligned implementation across departments. The reflections and lessons included:

## EL Expertise and Positions are Essential

Across roles and departments, staff spoke about how essential the EL expert role was, and particularly of the brilliance, reach, and generosity of Graciela Garcia Torres in that role. Graciela remarked about her work ethic: *"I need to be part of as many departments as possible because they ALL serve our multilingual students. We need to become intentional about embracing the languages and cultures of our students and becoming a schooling system that embraces their assets. So this has to infuse every department!"*

Recognizing how essential that expertise is led to a decision to expand the EL expertise by hiring an additional EL position. Julie Montali spoke words echoed by many others: *"Hiring and expanding staff dedicated to EL, which is now happening, is critical. This became increasingly clear through the EL RISE! work on the EL Roadmap. We saw not just the value, but also the need. We all need and will benefit from EL expertise. Partnering with one person, no matter how talented, cannot stretch that far."*

## Bilingualism is Important, and Building Dual-Language Programs is a Potential Priority

The EL Roadmap and the EdGE Initiative are explicit about the importance of opportunities to develop proficiency in two or more languages. Looking together at data on dual language programs in Sacramento County, however, the Cross-Departmental group mulled over why there were only 13 DL programs out of 384 schools. The group read together several articles from the *Administrators Toolkit for Leading EL Roadmap Implementation* about the importance of affirming home language, supporting bilingualism, and the power of multilingual and dual language programs. But despite the tremendous success of a Seal of Biliteracy effort led by SCOE in partnership with LEAs, the demand for programs and the incidence of requests to SCOE for support in starting and expanding dual language programs remain low.

While the Cross-Departmental Team considered what their role might be in promoting more attention to dual language development and programs, it was marked as a lower priority for now. The English Learner Roadmap is

a comprehensive policy, requiring decisions about what to address and when. But the tabling of an active focus on expanding dual language programs did not mean bilingualism was off the table. At the Spring 2023 Seal of Biliteracy celebration, county Superintendent Dave Gordon spoke of the importance and value of biliteracy, telling the assembled students and their proud families, *"We live in a rich multicultural society. Respect for diversity makes us stronger as a community, as a state, and as a country."* He went on to say, *"Being multilingual gives young people a deeper insight and understanding of their own heritage and the heritage of others."* SCOE staff handed out over 1,700 awards to graduating seniors who represented proficiency in English plus 22 other languages, including American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Armenian, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Dari, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Latin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. The staff at SCOE embraces these achievements but focusing on supporting districts in building the programs and pathways enabling more students to achieve that biliteracy skill is a task on the horizon to be prioritized by SCOE down the road.

## A Shared Focus on Assets-Based Services for ELs has Personal Meaning for Many Staff – and Bringing Them to the Table Enriches the Work

Like the culturally and linguistically diverse region it serves, SCOE is diverse in its staff—staff who themselves bring life experiences as immigrants, as English learners, and as bilingual and bicultural beings. To be engaged in an organization-wide focus on realizing the vision of assets-oriented, student-responsive schooling with meaningful access for English learners is both a professional commitment and a personal matter for many of those staff. They have brought to the table firsthand experiences and understanding that deepen empathy, awareness, and commitment in others. And they are finding that recognition among their co-workers of these additional aspects of their own identity and expertise strengthens their sense of partnership and collaboration in the work they're doing. Because this aspect has been such a powerful force within SCOE's work, the voices of several participants are included on page 23.

*"As an English Learner who grew up in SF Chinatown, this focus on English learners and the EL Roadmap is in my heart. Being part of EL RISE! and partnering with everyone in SCOE around this issue has been so affirming. The needs and experiences of ELs often are masked or lost behind just a focus on their English language proficiency and how much English they are acquiring – but the cultural struggle is real. Giving attention to the cultural tension our students experience is so important. The EL Roadmap is validating, and it's been a long time coming. It's a comprehensive policy from the state that reaches for the moon, is designed to break barriers, and is written to insist that it is everyone's responsibility throughout our school system. There is so much to do to get there - and at SCOE, we are on the road to doing it."*

*– Connie Lee*

*"I was an EL, but just didn't think of it as anything to bring into my life at SCOE. It wasn't until I was invited to the EL RISE! Cross-Departmental meetings that we had ever talked about ELs together. EL RISE! has been the most successful SCOE collaboration, where everyone really does come together. The fact that we were invited to the table and were really wanted there. When Graciela invites you, you go. Because you know there is a reason. I resisted at first, not wanting to sit in a room and have everyone talking about how awful ELs are doing. I was an EL. They would have been talking about me. But I trusted Graciela. I trusted Kou. And the EL Roadmap is so assets oriented. The whole process connected the second-language people within SCOE. People really wanted to know what our experiences were, our own stories, our connection to this issue."*

*– Guadalupe Delgado*

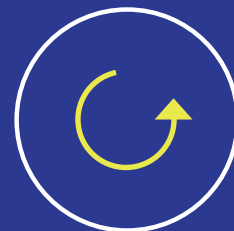
*"For me, I do this work because it is who I am. It's there in my name, "Graciela Garcia Torres." There's no mistaking my identity. And it's there in my life experience and my heart. But for others who work here, who perhaps have kept that part of their identity and life separate from their professional life, this process of elevating the assets-based focus around language and culture and of elevating the sense of urgency about embracing our ELs within our collective work across SCOE has created a climate where those staff have been able to be more truly in their own skin in this professional world. To feel the pride that, "Yes, we ARE those kids," "Yes, these ARE our children." I hear them using their home and heritage language in this professional space. I feel their passion for the work. It is part of what energizes change, and it IS, in some ways, the change. It is another aspect of realizing the vision of the EL Roadmap and who we are as a state."*

*"For me, personally, I want children to have a different experience from what I did. I was the Director of English Learner Programs in the same district where I had been a newcomer as a child, and the heartbreak is that things haven't changed much since then. This work has deep meaning to me. It has to be about the language and cultures of our students. It's not just data about achievement and reclassification. The message ELs get as kids showing up at school is that this is coming to America, and you must speak English. No sense of value of who we are or what we bring.*

*With the EL Roadmap, you can't pretend this is just about overcoming a deficiency and learning English. We can no longer ask kids to show up and leave their language and culture behind. We are a diverse nation.*

*Embrace it! Sacramento is showcased as one of the most diverse cities in the nation—so it had better show up in OUR work, OUR conversations, OUR systems."*

*– Graciela Garcia-Torres*



## Leadership is Crucial!

The top leadership of SCOE were, of course, involved in making the decision to apply to be an Anchor COE for EL Roadmap implementation. Top leadership is always involved in deciding on new initiatives and grants. But many staff commented on the importance of the leadership's clarity and depth of commitment and investment in this particular EL Roadmap effort. The sense of leadership priority was made evident in the amount of time scheduled and sanctioned for staff participation across SCOE, in expressions of support, and in the actual presence of leadership on the EL RISE! Leadership Team in setting strategic direction for implementation, and the presence of Cabinet members, the Deputy Superintendent, and the Superintendent.

In the final EL RISE! Reflection and Planning session of the third year, looking back over the life of the grant, over and over again, staff mentioned the essential influence of strong leadership that made ELs and the work to build coherence and capacity across SCOE a priority. And in interviews with 17 staff members who had been part of the cross-departmental work, almost everyone mentioned the significance of the EL RISE! team meeting when the Superintendent not only came to welcome everyone but sat down and stayed through the meeting. It was an extraordinary dedication of time and "listening," signaling how important the work is. It had been the first in-person meeting of the group since the Covid pandemic hit.

Superintendent David Gordon came to the cross-departmental meeting not just to give a welcome and opening remark but to participate. *"He was there with us. Genuinely with us. Sharing, asking questions, in conversation. Paying attention—and communicating so clearly with his actions that day that "this is important."* That commitment and the expectation from top leadership that all of us would do and embrace this work was so powerful. He made clear that this was SCOE's organizational commitment. *"That was so important for us all to hear, to witness, to feel."*

## The Commitment to Personal Learning is Important

County offices of education are service providers. They are the source of expertise and guidance. Every staff person was hired for their position because of their expertise. In the case of this grant, however,

they had the opportunity to also focus on their growth and learning in order to strengthen what they provide to the field. The learning took place in several ways. Each cross-departmental meeting had elements of learning and new meaning-making about the EL Roadmap Principles and about English learners. Staff were invited to attend the EL RISE! professional development offerings as partners to the participants from throughout the county but also for the sake of their own learning and to add to their toolkits of EL supportive strategies. And the collaborations between departments provided a vehicle for hearing from, drawing upon, and learning with colleagues with different bodies of knowledge, including expertise on English learners. Numerous staff spoke of the power of these opportunities and their own personal growth that resulted from the grant. In reflecting on the impacts of the three years and considering which aspects of the work they hoped would continue, this commitment to personal learning was squarely on the list. Charley Gilmore: *"On a personal level, the connections with and learning from the EL RISE! folks has been great. How much more I know now! My capacity has been built so much! And I bring that into my work with teachers throughout the county."* And Nancy Herota, Deputy Superintendent added. *"I am proud of our SCOE staff for embracing the opportunity to build the capacity to understand multilingual learners at a deeper level. Their engagement in the Cross-Departmental Team to deepen their knowledge and incorporate this learning within the context of their work, speaks to their dedication and commitment to honor and respect the diverse communities we serve. This collaboration maximizes our collective impact in the county, both regionally and throughout the state."*

## The Work Will Continue

At the last reflection/planning day of the third year, chief on the agenda was to address the concern about how to keep momentum in the movement toward implementing the EL Roadmap as a coherent SCOE-wide effort post the grant. The Leadership Team set aside time to discuss a plan for sustainability and to raise with the EL RISE! Cross-Department Team what it would take to continue to nurture the shared commitment to keep ELs at the forefront of their work. **Notes from that discussion included the following suggestions:**



- Continuing regular meetings of the cross-department group by scheduling into the calendar for the year ahead.
- Braiding funding together and arranging for funding of staff positions that would build in collaborative work to break silos.
- Completing the "vision" statements for each department to ensure clear articulation of purpose related to English learners.
- Continuing the task of curriculum specialists to intentionally infuse what they had learned from EL RISE! strategies into SCOE's work with educators/ LEAs in the region.
- Being explicit and intentional about the EL focus in the work as SCOE builds MOUs with LEAs.
- Figuring out how to build up staffing for the LCAP and Program Improvement work with expertise on ELs.
- Supporting the ideal of every department having an EL goal.
- Creating an ongoing mechanism to continue to communicate the work that is going on across the SCOE related to ELs and the EL Roadmap implementation.

Over and over, it was declared emphatically that the focus on ELs and the cross-departmental work would continue. Not only was there resounding support for keeping the structure beyond the grant, but in a statement about the importance and continuing value of the work, the group explicitly called for continuing to

meet as a whole three times a year. Another indication of the evolving sense of urgency about continuing to build the shared focus on ELs across their work, the group recommended hiring an additional EL person for SCOE.

In reflecting on the end of the grant and the road ahead, Connie Lee declared, *"It's 2023, and ELs are still underserved. There is still so much left to do. This is a long journey for all of us. The EL Roadmap inspired a renewed commitment. EL RISE! has reinforced it by showing us the HOW. We can't stop now."* And Charley Gilmore echoed: *"We will definitely keep the cross-departmental work going to strengthen our EL focus. It's our vehicle to strengthen our work. And we'll keep leaning on each other as resources. In COEs, the structure is usually grant driven or contract based—and that can be a counter pressure to working together across our departments. But nothing says we CAN'T reach across, and the existence of the regularly scheduled cross-departmental meetings, and our positive experience of it with EL RISE! really set a model for us of how we can work together smarter and stronger. The grant is ending, but our work is not!"*

REACH OF PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH SCOE EL RISE!			
	Year 1 (2020-21)	Year 2 (2021-22)	Year 3 (2022-23)
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>Administrators</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>Support Staff &amp; Others</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>80</b>

## IN SUMMARY, OVER THE THREE YEARS AS AN ANCHOR COE IN EL ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION, SCOE HAS:

- Infused the EL Roadmap in our work across departments and into our System of Support.
- Trained over 2,000 educators (preschool to high school staff, administrators, superintendents, board members, and parents).
- Held more than 130 professional development sessions building awareness and capacity to implement the EL Roadmap.
- Engaged 15 SCOE departments in an ongoing SCOE Cross-Departmental- Team for EL Roadmap implementation and in a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle of Improvement.
- Partnered with local Elk Grove Unified School District as an anchor LEA to co-implement the EL Roadmap.
- Shared our tools, lessons, challenges, and perspectives as part of an EL RISE! network with 19 other COEs engaged in EL Roadmap implementation across the state.



## LESSONS FROM ACROSS THE NETWORK OF 20 COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION IN EL RISE!

**EL RISE!'s implementation of the EWIG grant focused on building the capacity of county offices of education to lead and support local and regional implementation of the EL Roadmap.** A network of 20 county offices of education across the state participated in hosting EL RISE! professional development offerings aligned to the four Principles of the EL Roadmap, and signed up to engage in a Trainer of Trainers to replicate the five module Administrator Leadership training. They met regularly in a statewide network to share experiences and resources, identify needs, problem-solve how to deliver professional development in the midst of a pandemic and support each other's work. At the close of the three-year initiative, the group reflected on what had been learned and what might be important to elevate in the years ahead as COEs continue in their role of supporting implementation of the EL Roadmap. The following summary of their wisdom is provided.

### **The EL Roadmap is comprehensive; it requires commitment to implement deeply.**

The English Learner Roadmap is a comprehensive policy—touching almost all aspects of schooling. And it is aspirational, describing a Principles-based approach to providing education that engages all levels and roles of the system, and embraces all aspects of learning. Implementing the Roadmap requires building capacity and creating (or strengthening) multiple systems. This means for a COE that the tasks and the focus on the EL Roadmap have to occur over a long time frame and be approached with broad reach. Cathy Morrison of SCOE remarked that this makes it different from many grant initiatives: *"If you want to implement the EL Roadmap, you have to commit to it. This isn't a do one thing and check the box kind of change. It's not a do-it-for-a-year-and-be-done kind of thing. So for a COE, regular meetings are crucial to keep it on the table. And you have to build in real deliverables and accountability for keeping it moving and deepening the work."*

## A network of peers is essential support.

COE Leads in the EL RISE! network spoke of the importance of being in networks and creating networks. Within many COEs, particularly the smaller ones, there is just one designated person responsible for English learner programs and services—and usually, much of that role is driven by responsibilities related to federal and state funding, accountability, and programs. It can be a lonely position. The EL Roadmap did not come with built-in funding to expand the capacity of COEs to support implementation, so the task of supporting implementation was added to the existing workload of EL Coordinators. For them, a network of their peers offered critical access to new materials, resources, ideas, and support. But even in larger COEs with more EL staffing, networking with others served as an important source of support. The state's Bilingual Coordinators Network builds this kind of support into the system. Still, the opportunity for additional time together to focus specifically on the task of creating awareness and capacity throughout their counties about the comprehensive EL Roadmap was mentioned as crucial.

The importance of networks was also identified as a crucial aspect of EL RISE!. By creating regional networks, COE Leads spoke of the power of districts being able to learn from each other and to inspire each other. Reminding each other of that power was key. Because the EL Roadmap is such a different kind of policy from what LEAs have faced with other EL policies, the networks support learning about what it means to implement the Principles from others in similar positions was found to make a difference in uptake.

## County Offices, working in partnership with external EL experts, is a powerful combination.

County offices of education have a specific role in California's system of education. They are a formal arm of the state's education system that reaches the regional and local levels—providing support for the implementation of state policy and direction. This locates them at a crucial intersect between LEAs and the state. Furthermore, in a local control era, COEs have become important sources of expertise and support for local policy and practice. Through this

positionality, COEs have a well-developed understanding of the local context and established relationships with the districts in their region. COE staff know the leadership of districts, intersections with schools and district offices on a myriad of educational issues and come to understand the communities being served by the schools in the county. These relationships form the bedrock for new capacity building and for the dissemination and support for the implementation of new policies.

In the EL RISE! grant, COEs were positioned, therefore, to know (and listen and hear) what kind of capacity building was wanted and needed by their districts. They could ask EL RISE! for and select the topics and the delivery approach that would work for their districts and educators. Furthermore, COEs could provide essential follow-up. They are a fixed part of the system and region, in place long after any specific professional development has come and gone. They are positioned to be able to follow up on implementation and provide ongoing networks and communities of practice. They seldom, however, have the bandwidth or specific expertise to invest in creating new research-based professional learning. As one COE Lead expressed, *"We know our communities—and we can be there for the follow-up. We are part of the system. There to stay. Those relationships plus the deep knowledge of communities means we have ways to make professional learning "stick." But we needed our external EL RISE! partners to provide research-based high quality professional learning. Doing this in partnership meant that the professional development wasn't disconnected from our relationships with our districts or our presence. We were there in the room for the professional development. Having the experts there to deliver the content was important. But we are there with our districts to process the learning, to follow it up."*

External providers of EL professional development on their own can design and provide excellent professional learning, but when it's done, they leave. Implementation is a far longer process than a professional learning series, and the presence of a partner on the ground in the region to support that longer process makes a huge difference. Speaking as the EL Lead for SCOE, Graciela explained: *"The partnership with EL RISE! was essential. It gave us research-based, well-designed, credible things to OFFER to the field. It wasn't just here's a new policy and some aspirational, beautiful Principles. We*

## Toolkits and available playbooks from EL RISE! partner LMU Center for Equity for English Learners

- The English Learner Master Plan Playbook (LMU-CEEL)
- The LCAP Toolkit: Using research-based tools to promote equity for English Learners (LMU-CEEL)
- The English Learner Roadmap Toolkit for Institutes of Higher Education (LMU-CEEL)

## Toolkits and available playbooks from EL RISE! partner Californians Together

- California EL Roadmap Implementation Guide and Toolkit for Administrators, Volume 1: Leading Implementation
- California EL Roadmap Implementation Guide and Toolkit for Administrators, Volume 2: Creating Assets-Oriented & Student Responsive Schools
- California EL Roadmap Implementation Guide and Toolkit for Administrators, Volume 3: Ensuring the Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access for English Learners
- California EL Roadmap Implementation Guide and Toolkit for Administrators, Volume 4: System Conditions for Implementation
- California EL Roadmap Implementation Guide and Toolkit for Administrators, Volume 5: Aligning and Articulating Practices Across the System
- California English Learner Roadmap: An Elementary School Teacher Toolkit
- California English Learner Roadmap: A Middle School Teacher Toolkit
- California English Learner Roadmap: A High School Teacher Toolkit
- California English Learner Roadmap: A Reflection Tool for County Offices of Education

*had, through the EL RISE! professional development offerings, something to provide. And we had, through EL RISE!, tools and resources to give them. We (SCOE) brought the understanding of the needs in our county. We had the relationships with educators. We had the ability to provide continuing support. But it was EL RISE! that provided the capacity-building expertise and materials and resources."*

The relationship with external EL experts and professional development partners was particularly significant for the smaller COEs. Sonia Trujillo of Contra Costa COE expressed this. *"We need partners with expertise and offerings. We are small, so to have a pool of experts to work with us—experts who could design offerings and bring us resources and materials and deliver—and then to support us with TOTs and build our capacity to replicate the training, it's huge!"*

## The provision of Toolkits and materials greatly enhances implementation and helps make the EL roadmap operational.

The English Learner Roadmap is written as a vision, mission, and set of Principles (each with a list of "elements"). The task of making meaning of those Principles and operationalizing them for implementation is required to give life to the policy. The COE Leads spoke about this as an essential part of their role in working with LEAs and educators throughout their region. A key element of the EL RISE! approach to supporting implementation of the EL Roadmap was the creation and use of a variety of Toolkits and materials and the provision of microsites and materials that facilitate COE replication of EL RISE! professional development offerings. The full repertoire of materials can be used by COEs throughout their work to make concrete what it means to implement the four ELR Principles. When asked about what was useful and what works by way of building COE capacity to support EL Roadmap implementation, the quality and range of materials and toolkits was high on the list. COE Leads were able to use these toolkits, PowerPoints, videos, and resource materials developed for EL RISE! offerings in a multitude of ways in their technical assistance work with LEAs and in their own professional development offerings.

## Alignment of professional learning across roles enhances implementation.

As a comprehensive policy, the EL Roadmap addresses the importance of multiple roles in implementing effective education for English learners. COE Leads spoke of the importance of having professional learning available for these various roles, with a shared focus and aligned set of messages but addressing the particular functions of each position. Where a miscellaneous array of professional learning offerings was provided, there was less actual implementation than where a COE provided and actively recruited multiple roles to offerings on the same focus. For example, an Administrators Institute on understanding quality ELD could accompany a strand of Teacher institutes on planning and implementing ELD. And, in the Anchor LEAs—where multiple offerings were made available and attended by a critical mass of various roles—implementation of the EL Roadmap was more noticeable. An aligned, multilayered approach targeted different roles and different levels of the system. As one COE Lead declared: *“This strategy with multiple kinds of offerings for various roles focusing on a central issue allowed us to build common language and vision of what needs to be in place across the system. A similar message was being heard by multiple audiences across the system. This also meant that there was a way to enter this issue—this shared venture—through one’s own role...to see THEIR place in the whole picture.”*

## The central focus on administrators was key to implementation and sustainability.

EL RISE! made as a centerpiece of the approach, a five-module Administrators series on leading implementation of the EL Roadmap. In signing up to be part of the EL RISE! network of COEs, the COE Leads were able to participate in a Training of Trainers approach to learning to replicate the Administrators training. In reflecting on the three-year grant in retrospect, many spoke of the importance of creating the focus and space for administrators. They said that building the capacity of administrators to lead an EL-focused reform was crucial for sustainability. Many site and district administrators have not had much

professional development on English learner educators in general, and the specifics of the EL Roadmap were, of course, new to them.

So preparing administrators with background knowledge about English learners, with ways to understand and reflect on the EL programs and instruction in their own schools, with tools for engaging their staff in understanding the EL Roadmap, and with resources aimed at their role in leading equity-focused school improvement, was embraced by the educational leadership in their districts. COE Leads identified these as what are too often the missing pieces of the puzzle.

## The EL Roadmap vision and Principles are a powerful framework, but without investment in capacity learning, and without accountability, it only goes so far.

Overall, the COE Leads embraced the EL Roadmap vision and Principles as an important and celebrated inclusive framework—and also spoke of the necessity for it to have the gravitas and credibility of state policy in order to have a chance of being implemented. The fact that it has the status of policy gets the attention of many people to whom guidance, research, or new program models don’t seem to matter. And the way the policy is written (principles-based, vision-based) invites a very different kind of conversation. In roles that often focus more on compliance and regulations, the COE Leads found in the EL Roadmap a new vehicle for engaging educators in thinking about what could and should be in place for English learners. The aspirational aspects—and particularly the assets-orientation of the EL Roadmap—opened up different kinds of conversations and “buy-ins.” As Graciela Garcia-Torres explained: *“The ELR speaks to hope, to dreams. For a lot of people, the ELR opens the door to understanding what this English learner focus is all really about. It’s beyond just reclassification rates and the ELPI. It’s about what it means to be an English learner, and what education needs to be for them. So the conversations we can have with educators are deeper because of the EL Roadmap. But this also requires some professional learning, new dialogues, and ways to have the conversations. And then what the ELR does is create a new language, a new way to think about ELs.”*



Lilia Tsui, from Contra Costa COE, spoke of introducing the EL Roadmap in her county: *"The EL Roadmap is not just what should be in place; it's about the **why** and the whole mindset. That's what makes the EL Roadmap so remarkable as a policy. And to many people, it's a new way of thinking. It is a policy that offers both the **WHY** and the **how**. It's far beyond just compliance or a checklist of what should be done. It's an aspiration to what schools should be."*

Once the EL Roadmap vision and Principles are made clear, and there is awareness and understanding about the Principles, there is a need for investment in professional learning. Without having professional learning to offer, without the mechanisms of building capacity, the EL Roadmap remains just a statement on paper. COE Leads were excited by the infusion of new professional learning speaking to actual implementation—the teaching strategies, the models for support services, the supports for creating EL Master Plans aligned to the EL Roadmap, and the guidance for building dual language programs. And despite the pandemic, many were surprised at the

number of educators who signed up to get that professional learning. But more is needed—and the Leads spoke of the importance of continued and increased investments in professional learning resources to give life to the EL Roadmap and the schooling that English learners need.

### Back up the EL Roadmap with Accountability

Beyond professional learning investments, the COE Leads identified another vital need. Not everyone is ignited by the call of the vision. As Lisa Winberg from Riverside COE explained, with others nodding in agreement, *"Many people are in this work because they are passionate about it...the EL Roadmap Principles are so aspirational and motivating for them; it's a policy that speaks to assets and to intellectual richness. But outside that circle, the policy isn't adequate on its own, perhaps because some people aren't so focused or aware of ELs. Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents have so much on their plates that some may not be moved by the vision of the EL Roadmap. So even though it is a state policy, the fact that there is no accountability tied to it, that no one is really looking at whether are aligning with it or implementing it, can be a problem."*

To give life to the EL Roadmap for California's 1.1 million English learners, the Leads look to state, county, and local leadership to continue the movement toward enacting the vision of our EL Roadmap.

## EL RISE! COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION PARTNERS & LEAD STAFF

We are grateful to the 20 County Offices of Education that joined in our Educator Workforce Investment Grant to support implementation of the English Learner Roadmap policy throughout the state. Each COE designated a Lead Staff member to participate in the EL RISE! network, to support the recruiting and hosting of EL RISE! professional learning offerings in their county, and to engage together in sharing resources and wisdom.

## ANCHOR COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION

**Los Angeles County Office of Education** (Soomin Chao & Natasha Neumann)

**Tulare County Office of Education** (Samantha Tate & Ryann Derington)

**Sacramento County Office of Education** (Graciela Garcia-Torres)

**Yolo County Office of Education** (Deborah Bruns & Heather Schlaman)

## PARTNERING COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION

**Contra Costa County Office of Education** (Lilla Tsui)

**Kern County Office of Education** (Lisa Vargas)

**Santa Clara County Office of Education** (Yee Wan)

**Santa Cruz County Office of Education** (Sofia Sorensen)

**San Mateo County Office of Education** (Gracie Hough)

**San Diego County Office of Education** (Olympia Kyriakidis & Izela Jacobo)

**Ventura County Office of Education** (Lisa Brown & Leticia Ramos)

**Riverside County Office of Education** (Lisa Winberg)

## PARTICIPATING COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION

**Butte County Office of Education** (Holly Harding)

**Imperial County Office of Education** (Erika Marquecho)

**King County Office of Education** (Jessica Womack)

**Merced County Office of Education** (Amy Mejia)

**Orange County Office of Education** (Trish Walsh)

**San Joaquin County Office of Education** (Karin Linn-Nieves)

**Solano County Office of Education** (Amy Robinson)

**Stanislaus County Office of Education** (Brenda Insurriaga)



# ELRISE!

ENGLISH LEARNER ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION  
FOR SYSTEMIC EXCELLENCE

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