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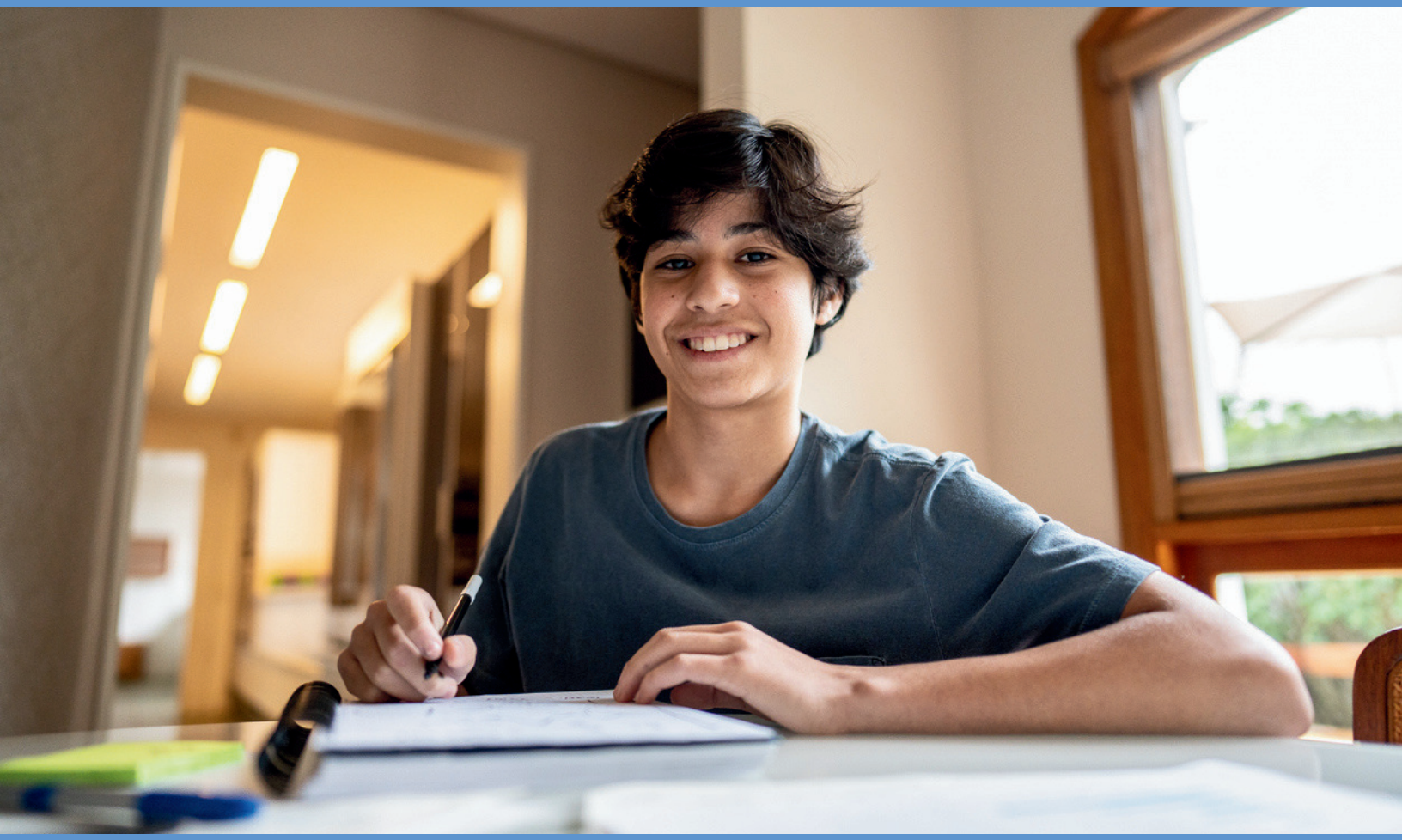
Addressing the Needs of Long-Term English Learners

A Response to the 2024 California Schools Dashboard



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The California School Dashboard (Dashboard), a key part of the state's accountability system, displays the performance levels of county offices of education (COEs), school districts, schools, and student groups on state and local indicators to help identify strengths and areas for improvement.

With the November 2024 release of the 2024 Dashboard, Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) are now included as a new student group. This change was made possible thanks to language included in Assembly Bill 141 in 2023. This means that education leaders and community members can now view how LTELs in districts and schools are performing across a variety of indicators, including those for academic achievement, college/career readiness, English learner progress, chronic absenteeism, graduation rate, science achievement, and suspension rate.

Definition of LTELs

While Assembly Bill 141 established a definition of LTELs to be used specifically for measuring their performance on the Dashboard, the longstanding LTEL definition still remains. Below is a breakdown of both definitions and how they are being used.[1]

Reports Used	LTEL Definition
DataQuest, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), and English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC)	An English learner in grades 6-12 who has attended United States schools for six or more years, has remained at the same level of English proficiency for two or more years as determined by the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) or has regressed to a lower level of English language proficiency, and for students in grades 6-9 inclusive, scores below basic or far below basic on the English language arts standards-based achievement test. *Per Education Code 313.1*.
Dashboard	An English learner who has not attained English language proficiency within seven years of initial classification. *Per Education Code 52052*.

[1] www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/lteldef.asp

While the Dashboard definition is used to identify successes and challenges for schools and school districts on the Dashboard, we encourage education leaders to continue to use the longstanding and research-based definition from Education Code 313.1, which incorporates stalled progress towards English language proficiency in addition to years in school.

Summary of Dashboard LTEL Results

According to the 2024 Dashboard, 201 school districts and 14 COEs were identified for Differentiated Assistance (DA) based on their performance for LTEL outcomes. These school districts and COEs enroll 72,511 LTEL students, representing over one in three (34 percent) of LTELs across California. Visit link for table of school districts and COEs identified for DA: https://caltog.co/41lURJ2.

In order to be identified for DA, a school district or COE performance for a student group must meet the criteria for two or more indicators. The table below summarizes the criteria associated with DA based on LTEL performance and the number of school districts and COEs that met the criteria.

Criteria	School Districts or County Offices of Education (COEs) in DA Identified
Priority 4: Student Achievement. Red on both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math tests, or; Red on ELA or Math tests and orange on the other test, or; Red on the English Learner Progress Indicator	197 school districts 12 County Offices of Education
Priority 5: Student Engagement. Red on Graduation rate indicator, or; Red on Chronic Absence Indicator	83 school districts 12 County Offices of Education
Priority 6: School Climate. Red on Suspension Rate Indicator	127 school district 2 County Offices of Education
Priority 8: Outcomes on a Broad Course of Study. Red on College/Career Indicator	44 school districts 9 County Offices of Education

As seen in the table on the previous page, 98 percent of school districts identified for DA based on LTEL performance were identified in part based on their performance on Student Achievement (Priority 4). The second most common indicator met by DA school districts based on LTEL performance is School Climate (Priority 6), which was met by 63 percent of school districts identified for DA.

Dually Identified LTEL Students

Another significant finding from the Dashboard is the intersection of LTEL status and other student characteristics, particularly the 32 percent of LTELs who are also students with disabilities. This is notably higher than the general population of English learners (17 percent) and all students (13 percent) in California. Within the state's total of 765,169 students with disabilities, 73,508 are LTELs. The proportion of LTELs with disabilities varies by district and county, with some districts reporting as high as 39 percent, while others as low as 17 percent.

This dual identification raises essential questions for districts:

- What are the specific learning disabilities affecting dually identified LTELs?
- For students identified with a specific learning disability (SLD), what systems are in place to determine which disability triggered the designation? [2]
- How have these students been identified, when were they identified, and are they receiving the appropriate interventions for both language acquisition and disability support?
- What opportunities are there for districts to improve and strengthen identification processes to ensure that LTELs with disabilities receive appropriate language and disability support?

By addressing these questions, districts can better support this particularly vulnerable group of students. District language acquisition and special education teams should work collaboratively to ensure LTELs with disabilities receive the comprehensive support they need. Using resources like the *California Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities*, teams can deepen their understanding of best practices and strategies tailored to this dual population. Figure 3.3 in Chapter 3 provides a comparison chart of language differences versus disabilities that teams can use to explore student assets and design support that leverages their unique abilities and resources.

Next Steps for School Districts

As school districts respond to address LTEL students based on the 2024 Dashboard results, there are several opportunities to consider.

[2] Specific Learning Disability (SLD). dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory processing disorder, language processing disorder, nonverbal learning disabilities and visual perceptual disabilities

2024-27 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) Revisions. In the three-Year LCAP in 2024, districts had to address LTELs as a significant student group by outlining their LTEL language acquisition programs and professional development for teachers of LTELs. As districts prepare their annual LCAP updates in 2025, the following are various resources, technical assistance opportunities, and suggestions to help address the needs of LTELs.

Additionally, we recommend that districts review the following language and steps while drafting the LCAP update:

- **If flagged on the Dashboard as a low-performing student group, prioritize support for LTELs** (meaning they are red on an indicator). Given that LTEL Dashboard data was not available to school districts when drafting their 2024-27 LCAP in 2024, they could not address LTELs as one of the lowest performing student groups. However, now that the 2024 Dashboard includes LTEL data across various indicators, we recommend that school districts address LTELs as one of the lowest performing student groups in the annual LCAP annual update, if they are red on any indicator.

- **Support students who are at risk of becoming LTELs.** While students at risk of becoming LTELs are not included as a distinct student group in the Dashboard, we recommend addressing the needs of these students, particularly in the elementary grades, as this is the key to preventing students from becoming LTELs. Each year, the California Department of Education posts the numbers of students at risk of becoming LTELs in DataQuest.

- **Continue to Use Data from the Education Code 313.1 Definition.** While the Dashboard results are based on the seven-year definition (Education Code 52052), school districts should complement the Dashboard's definition with the longstanding definition of six or more years with lack of progress (Education Code 313.1) in identifying and targeting support for LTELs. We believe that the longstanding definition is still the most accurate measure of LTELs who need support.

- **Ensuring Access to Rigorous Programs and Services for LTELs.** As districts engage with the 2024 Dashboard results, it is essential to ensure that LTELs have access to rigorous academic pathways and enrichment opportunities. This includes evaluating access to A-G approved English Language Arts (ELA), Honors and Advanced Placement, and English Language Development (ELD) courses, which are fundamental for developing both language proficiency and academic readiness. Districts should review enrollment data to ensure LTELs are represented in these courses and to identify any barriers to their full participation.

- Additionally, **districts must assess participation in dual enrollment and the Seal of Biliteracy**, both of which offer valuable opportunities for LTELs to earn college

credits and gain recognition for their bilingual skills. Ensuring equitable access to these programs is key to supporting LTELs in their college and career preparation.

- **Conduct an LTEL Needs Assessment Rooted in the Student Experience.** To fully understand and enhance opportunities for LTELs, districts should conduct an LTEL Needs Assessment. This data dive will enable districts to assess not only the academic needs of LTELs but also their access to advanced coursework and enrichment programs. A critical aspect of this assessment is elevating student voice—actively engaging LTELs in the process through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other feedback mechanisms. By listening directly to students, districts can gain a deeper understanding of their unique challenges, strengths, and aspirations, which may not be fully captured by quantitative data alone. Student voice can reveal barriers to success, highlight gaps in support, and identify areas for improvement in educational practices, curriculum, and resource allocation. Incorporating both qualitative data from students and quantitative data such as test scores and enrollment trends will provide a more comprehensive picture of LTELs' experiences and needs. By centering student input, districts can ensure that actions are more responsive and tailored to the specific needs of LTELs, ultimately enhancing their opportunities to thrive. See the resource page for more details on needs assessments and gathering data.

- **Align Differentiated Assistance to California EL Roadmap Policy**. If your district is identified for DA based on LTEL performance, we recommend ensuring that assistance efforts are aligned to the California EL Roadmap Policy. There are resources available through the Educator Workforce Investment Grant for districts seeking training on issues such as LTELs. To learn more about opportunities for professional learning, see the EL RISE! for EPiCC Catalog here: https://caltog.co/4gn7yHw.

Finally, leveraging resources such as the *Renewing Our Promise* report will help guide districts in refining their strategies to enhance access and support for LTELs, ultimately ensuring these students are positioned for long-term success.

Conclusion

The inclusion of LTELs in the Dashboard provides a critical opportunity for school districts to address the needs of students and implement early interventions to prevent others from becoming LTELs. With 47 percent of ELs in grades 6-12 classified as LTELs (211,218 students) during the 2023-24 school year, we want to seize the moment and work towards achieving the goal outlined in the the *State of English Learners in California Public Schools* of reducing by half the proportion of ELs who are LTELs in grades 6-12 to 25 percent. This goal is ambitious, but it can be achieved if we continue to work together and support local district improvement aligned to the EL Roadmap policy.

Resources

Californians Together Resources

- Californians Together Long-Term English Learners Landing Page - https://caltog.co/LTELs
- EL RISE! for EPiCC Catalog - https://caltog.co/4gn7yHw
- Renewing Our Promise: Research and Recommendations to Support California's Long-Term English Learners (June 2021) - https://caltog.co/3PesyDg
- Meeting the Unique Needs of Long Term English Learners: A Guide for Educators (March 2014) - https://caltog.co/49xuL7R
- Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's Long Term English Learners (August 2010) - https://caltog.co/4bvIlrR
- Multiple Approaches to Eliciting Student Voice - http://bit.ly/3PuhnIs

California Department of Education Resources

- Long-Term English Learner (LTEL) Students Landing Page - https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/lteldef.asp
- LTEL Community of Practice (CoP) - https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ml/ltelcop.asp
- LTEL and At-Risk Data Files - https://caltog.co/3ZDgMKq
- The California English Learner Roadmap - https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ml/roadmap.asp

Additional Resources

- California Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities
  - Figure 3.3 Comparison of Language Differences Versus Disabilities - https://caltog.co/4haJUyI
- Riverside County Office of Education 2024/25 LTEL Needs Assessment and Action Planning (Lisa Winberg, Administrator of Assessment Accountability and Continuous Improvement) - https://caltog.co/4gOe4bc

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