Long-Term English Learners in California

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Executive Summary

In California, about 40% of all K–12 students come from homes in which a language other than English is spoken; most of those students receive English learner services for some period of time until they gain English proficiency. In school year 2022–23, of California's 5.8 million students, nearly 1 in 5 (18%), just over 1 million, were classified as English learners (ELs): students who had entered the school system with a home language other than English and had not yet acquired English proficiency. Among these students, about 330,000 students continued to be classified as EL for 7 or more years. By definition, most of these students were in grades 6 and above. Former ELs who had been reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) numbered another 1 million students.

Ensuring adequate support for English learners is key to the state meeting its mission of providing a world-class education for all students. Toward that end, California's State Board of Education has recently added a long-term English learner (LTEL) category to the California School Dashboard and enacted a requirement that LTEL as a group be included in the planning for programmatic and budget investments that occur with each district's annually updated Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). By state statute, students are deemed LTEL if they are classified as ELs for 6 or more years *and* are not making progress in English acquisition. The testing data to produce this formal designation is lagged at the state level and cannot be produced for individuals quickly enough to inform the annual dashboard. Hence the LTEL classification defined by state statute is different than the one used for the school and district dashboards. Thus, for the purpose of the accountability dashboard in 2024–25 and thereafter, LTELs will be counted as students who have been classified as English learners for 7 or more years.

To inform the deliberations that will follow the state's action, this report describes the population of learners identified in 2022–23 as needing English language acquisition supports in California for 7 or more years (students designated as LTEL7). It describes the characteristics, location, and academic performance of these students designated as LTEL7 compared to their other peers ever classified as EL ("other ever-ELs"); other ever-ELs include ELs for fewer than 7 years or those who had been previously identified as English learners but were reclassified as fully English proficient.

While research indicates it can take 5–7 years to develop English proficiency, classification as an EL for many years may also indicate that students are becoming stuck at lower levels of English proficiency due to lack of appropriate learning supports, which may prohibit them from accessing the full school curriculum. Better understanding of which students are classified as English learners for long periods, and are likely to need additional support, will be key to helping students reach their educational potential.

This report therefore analyzes data for students designated as LTEL7 in 2022–23. It looks across demographic characteristics (gender, home language, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status), grade level and years classified as EL, geographic location, school contexts, and academic performance. Unfortunately, this report cannot look across the types of educational programming (English immersion, dual immersion, bilingual, or others), the quality or adequacy of English Language Development (ELD) instruction or other provided services, or the reclassification criteria used by districts, as these data are not systematically collected across the state.

Findings show that when comparing students designated as LTEL7 to their other peers who were ever-ELs:

- Boys were disproportionately represented among students designated as LTEL7 (56% vs. 51%).
- Socioeconomic disadvantage was more common among students designated as LTEL7 (89% vs. 80%).
- Special education needs were much more prevalent among students designated as LTEL7 (28% vs. 11%).

As the state considers how to best support ELs, it can be useful to examine where students designated as LTEL7 are located and what their school contexts are like. In 2022–23, the majority of students designated as LTEL7 were enrolled in schools in the most populous counties. However, in many small-population, rural counties, there were higher proportions of students designated as LTEL7 among students who were ever-EL.

Analyses of school contexts for students designated LTEL7 found that they were more likely to be in schools with access to fewer resources and facing greater educational challenges. That is, schools with higher concentrations of students designated as LTEL7 also had:

- Higher concentrations of students from low-income families
- Fewer courses taught by fully certified staff
- Higher rates of chronic absenteeism
- Lower rates of high school graduation
- A lower likelihood of attending a school that offered the Seal of Biliteracy compared to their other ever-EL peers

Understanding students' initial English proficiency levels and their academic outcomes provides an insight into how well EL students are being supported in both their progression toward English language proficiency and success on English language arts (ELA) and math content (measured with the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, or CAASPP). Analyses of academic outcomes for students designated as LTEL7 compared to their other peers designated as ever-EL show:

- Substantial differences in the initial level of English acquisition. Sixty-four percent of students designated as LTEL7 started schooling at level 1 (the Beginner level) on the English proficiency assessment as compared to 40% of other ever-ELs.
- Large performance gaps on the grades 6–8 and grade 11 CAASPP state tests in ELA and math, with students designated as LTEL7 performing at lower levels than other ever-ELs. In addition, some students designated as LTEL7 who reached the recommended academic achievement cut point on the CAASPP ELA test were not yet reclassified as fluent English proficient.
- Graduation disparities, with 69% of grade 12 students designated as LTEL7 attaining a high school diploma compared to 86% of their other peers designated as ever-EL.

Findings from this report suggest several considerations for California as the state continues to identify ways to better support English learner students. Policies and practices may focus on the following five recommendations:

1. **Ensuring that all students, including those designated as LTEL7, have access to adequate schooling resources and necessary whole child supports.** The report's finding that nearly 9 out of every 10 students designated as LTEL7 are socioeconomically disadvantaged suggests that, in addition to fewer resources available in school, these students have less access to resources outside of school compared to their more affluent peers. This underscores the importance of investing in additional supports for students designated as LTEL7, such as those provided by community schools that typically offer a wide range of integrated student supports (e.g., health, mental health, and social service supports).

2. **Continuing to address the statewide teacher shortage.** Our analyses found that the schools serving proportionately more students designated as LTEL7 were significantly less likely to have enough qualified teachers to teach their courses. One key policy need is to ensure that fully qualified teachers credentialed to teach the courses are available in all schools. While California has initiated a number of programs to reduce shortages—ranging from service scholarships and loans to Grow Your Own pathways and teacher residencies—additional support for both recruitment and retention may be needed in schools of concentrated poverty as well as rural and remote areas, in which it is typically more challenging to recruit staff.

3. **Better identifying and addressing what EL students need in their early years, given the high proportion who are also eligible for special education services.** Most students designated as LTEL7 began schooling at the lowest levels of English proficiency and many were also eligible for special education services. Key questions should include how to better support students designated as LTEL7 with disabilities and what testing accommodations would be appropriate for purposes of reclassification. Additionally, it will be important to identify the nature of disabilities that students designated as LTEL7 may have—and their relationship to language processing—and at what point in their educational trajectory students are identified as having a disability in the context of their English language learning. A more detailed understanding of these issues may enable students' learning needs to be detected early, learning programs to be designed to address students' specific learning needs, and appropriate resources and supports to be deployed, which may include earlier interventions than those currently utilized.

4. **Collecting more data on how districts support English learners.** There is a lack of statewide data on the district-specific criteria for reclassification as fluent English proficient. This leaves gaps in understanding the different targets that students need to meet and how they need to meet them in order to progress from being designated as LTEL to a fluent English speaker in that district. In addition, the state does not collect information about educational programming and supports for English language development offered at schools. This means policymakers and leaders lack ways to assess whether or how particular approaches or programs benefit different groups of EL students. The ability to understand how students designated as LTEL7 are faring in English immersion, dual immersion, bilingual, or other school EL programs would offer more information about the strategies and approaches that benefit this population of students.

5. **Conducting further research on the experiences of students designated as LTEL7.** Areas for future research include:

   - **Supports Needed for Graduation.** Students designated as LTEL7 are more than twice as likely to drop out of or exit high school without a diploma as other ever-EL or never-EL students. In addition to higher dropout rates, 21% of students designated as LTEL7 are listed as having no known information about their status after 12th grade, which may signal the possibility of moves or other modes of exiting the school system. More research is needed to understand the circumstances of these students with respect to both their family and school contexts so that districts and schools can seek to provide curricula and programming that address their needs and ensure that they are prepared for their college and career pathways.

   - **Academic Opportunities.** Research indicates that students classified as EL may lack the scheduling opportunities in some high schools to register for A–G courses—a minimum required for admission to California's public universities and a requirement for high school graduation in some districts. It would be useful to know the extent to which this is a barrier in high schools, as well as to understand why high schools with more LTEL7 students are less likely to offer the Seal of Biliteracy. It is possible that high schools offering the Seal of Biliteracy have stronger resources in terms of teacher staffing, professional development, coursework options, and other supports for students to develop fluency in two languages and have the capacity to test students using the required assessments. Students designated as LTEL7 may be less exposed to schooling that offers this range of supports and may be missing out on opportunities that could develop the dual language capacities associated with stronger English acquisition and academic outcomes.

   - **Reclassification Processes.** Finally, it would be useful to examine why some EL students who meet state proficiency standards in ELA—a very high bar in California—may still be enrolled in EL programming. It is possible that students who met this standard may have been reclassified shortly after the test results were released, since many districts use the threshold of ELA performance for reclassification. Where that is not the case, it will be important to understand other factors that may be creating lags in reclassifying students after they demonstrate strong performance on the CAASPP. This can have implications in some schools for students' opportunities to access content-based coursework that may use reclassification-based criteria as prerequisites.

The addition of students designated as LTEL7 to the California School Dashboard is a step toward raising these kinds of questions and may serve as a foundation for a greater understanding of the educational experiences of this student group, their needs, and the supports required for their educational success.

Introduction

In school year 2022–23, of California's 5.8 million students, nearly 1 in 5 (18%) were classified as English learners: students who had entered the school system with a home language other than English and had not yet acquired English proficiency. Students who are classified as English learners (ELs) are eligible for specialized instructional support as early as kindergarten to ensure that they simultaneously develop academic English and have full access to a rich curriculum across the disciplines.[1] With such support, most of these English learners acquire English proficiency and are reclassified as fully English proficient (RFEP) within 5 to 7 years[2]—the amount of time that research suggests it takes for a student to learn a new language.[3]

However, some English learner students are not reclassified as English proficient during this time period. These students are classified by the state as long-term English learners (LTELs). Current state law defines LTELs as students (1) having been enrolled in school for 6 or more years (grades 6–12), (2) either remaining at the same language proficiency level for 2 or more consecutive prior years *or* regressing to a lower English language proficiency level than the prior year, and (3) scoring "Standard Not Met" level on the prior year California Assessment of Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts (ELA) achievement test (grades 6–9).[4] These students have long been of interest to policymakers, practitioners, and advocates. One concern is that these students may not be receiving sufficient support to attain English proficiency. In some schools, this lack of English proficiency may also be associated with tracking practices that provide less access to grade-level academic content; in turn, this may create academic gaps and lead to academic struggles in the more advanced academic courses of secondary education.[5] Ultimately, these conditions may limit students' post–high school opportunities.[6]

Changes to California's Accountability System for LTELs

To bring greater attention to this issue, in fall 2024 California will begin to specifically identify this key group of students in its accountability system, introducing the student group on the California School Dashboard. The state will also call attention to LTEL students' needs by requiring local education agencies to report on how they will specifically support LTELs in their Local Control and Accountability Plans, which guide planning and budgeting at the local level.

Due to the lagged timing of merging the various data needed to confirm LTEL classification as defined by statute (which requires that a student both qualify as an EL student for 6 years or more and be failing to make progress), the state is using a simpler definition of a long-term English learner for the school and district accountability dashboards: any student classified as EL for 7 or more years. To provide information that can be compared to future dashboard data, this report uses the same definition and refers to this group as students *designated* as LTEL7. We refer to students as *classified* as LTEL when the official statute-based definition is discussed.

Purpose of This Report

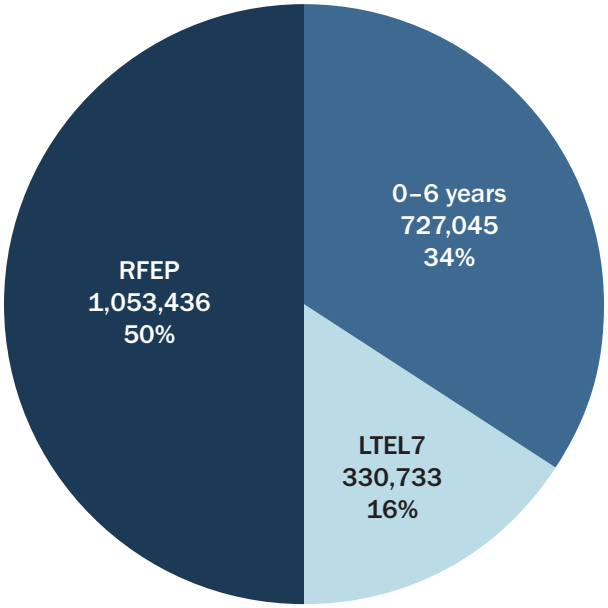
This report aims to answer some of the many questions that may be expected to emerge as attention focuses on students designated as ELs for 7 or more years. Drawing on data sets provided by the California Department of Education as well as publicly available data, the report describes the

characteristics of this student population, their educational experiences, where they are enrolled across California, and the context of their schools. Unless they were retained for some reason, these students are in middle or high school (grades 6–12).

To provide context for this group of students, this report also identifies a group of students who have ever been classified as EL, labeled "ever-ELs." The overall "ever-EL" group includes all students in California's educational system who had ever—at any point in their California educational career through 2022–23—been classified as an EL. Findings compare the characteristics and outcomes of students designated as LTEL7 against all *other* ever-ELs (by excluding those designated as LTEL7). Thus, these other ever-ELs include current ELs who have been so classified for 6 or fewer years as well as students who had previously been classified as EL but are reclassified as fully English proficient.

Among all ever-ELs in 2022–23, more than 330,000 (16%) were designated as LTEL7. (See Figure 1.) By definition, most of these students were in grades 6 and above. More than 34%, or 727,000 students, were ELs classified for between 0 and 6 years. The largest group of ever-ELs were former ELs who had been reclassified as fluent English proficient, numbering more than 1 million. We compare LTEL7 students on many variables to ever-ELs. Where appropriate, this report also includes comparisons to students who had never been classified as ELs ("never-ELs"). It concludes by considering the implications of these findings for policy.

Figure 1. California Enrollment by Ever-EL Status, 2022–23



Notes: The counts are based on the cumulative enrollment counts. RFEP = Reclassified as fully English proficient.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Definitions

Long-term English learner (LTEL): Per California Education Code §313.1, an English learner in grades 6–12 who has attended United States schools for 6 or more years *and* has remained at the same level of English proficiency for 2 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.

Students designated as LTEL7: Enrolled students classified as English learners for 7 or more school years. For this report, this category includes English learners whose initial EL status acquisition date was anytime in the school year.

Ever-EL: A current English learner (EL) or former EL who has been reclassified as fluent English proficient. When this report compares students designated as LTEL7 to this group, the comparison excludes students designated as LTEL7 from this group and refers to this group as "other ever-ELs."

Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP): A student who was previously classified as an English learner but has since met the criteria to reclassify out of EL status. Reclassification is based on four criteria: (1) an assessment of English language proficiency, (2) teacher evaluations, (3) parent consultation, and (4) basic skills relative to English proficient students.

Never-EL: A student who has never been classified as an English learner. This includes both English-only students and those classified as Initial Fluent English Proficient—students with a home language other than English who demonstrated well-developed skills on their initial English language assessment.

Note: "Anytime in the school year" refers to before the end of the school year and captures any student enrolled in the school year on or before June 30, 2017.

Sources: California Department of Education. *Glossary of terms for English learner (EL) reports*; California Department of Education. *Reclassification*; California Department of Education. *California's Accountability System and the Dashboard*.

Policies and Recent Progress for California's ELs

A 2010 report by Californians Together raised an alarm about the large number of students classified as LTEL in the state.[7] Since then, California has taken steps to develop a clear and common statute-based definition of LTEL, as well as of students at risk of becoming LTEL—and then built systems so that schools and districts could accurately identify them. In other efforts to strengthen EL education in the state, California also implemented a new English Language Development Framework, provided additional resources to districts based on their EL population through the Local Control Funding Formula, adopted a new assessment of English proficiency (English Language Proficiency Assessments for California, or ELPAC), and supported a shift to allow expansion of bilingual programs following the passage of Proposition 58.

These changes were followed by the State Board of Education's approval of the California English Learner Roadmap Policy (EL Roadmap). This policy envisions that "English learners fully and meaningfully access and participate in a 21st-century education from early childhood through grade 12 that results in their attaining high levels of English proficiency, mastery of grade-level standards, and opportunities to develop proficiency in multiple languages." The EL Roadmap underscores the benefits of bilingualism for student learning and development and the importance of differentiated pedagogy and supports to accommodate the diversity of ELs in the state. The roadmap provides guidelines to support local educational agencies (LEAs) with the implementation of English learner education through four principles:

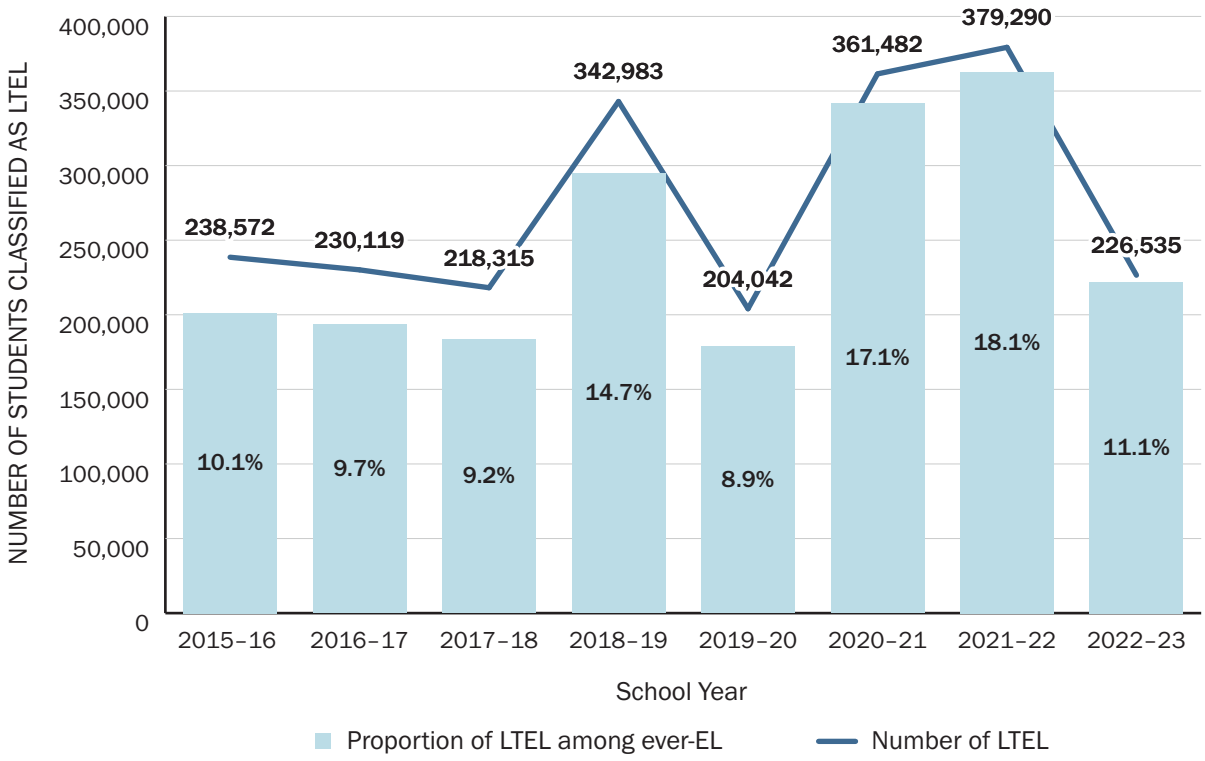
> The EL Roadmap envisions that English learners fully and meaningfully access and participate in a 21st-century education from early childhood through grade 12.

1. Assets-oriented and needs-responsive schools
2. Intellectual quality of instruction and meaningful access
3. System conditions that support effectiveness
4. Alignment and articulation within and across systems

Tracking the impacts of these policies is complicated by the change in state-administered tests as well as disruption in schooling and testing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, there is evidence that these policies are paying off. A recent study following cohorts of ELs who entered school in kindergarten before the pandemic found that ELs' academic achievement by 3rd grade improved over time, reducing the existing achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs. The study also found that more recent cohorts of students are reaching English proficiency in earlier grades than former cohorts.[8]

Moreover, the number of students classified as LTEL and the proportion of all ever-ELs within each year that were classified as LTEL has been decreasing following pandemic-era highs (see Figure 2). These highs in 2020–21 and 2021–22 were likely due in part to the irregular and/or suspended academic achievement testing that would have given students the opportunity to meet reclassification criteria, as well as the generally challenging effects of the pandemic on instruction and student learning.[9] However, between 2021–22 and 2022–23, the overall number of students classified as LTEL dropped from almost 380,000 (and 18% of all ever-ELs) to just over 226,500 students (and about 11% of all ever-ELs).[10]

Figure 2. Annual Number and Percentage of Students Classified as LTEL



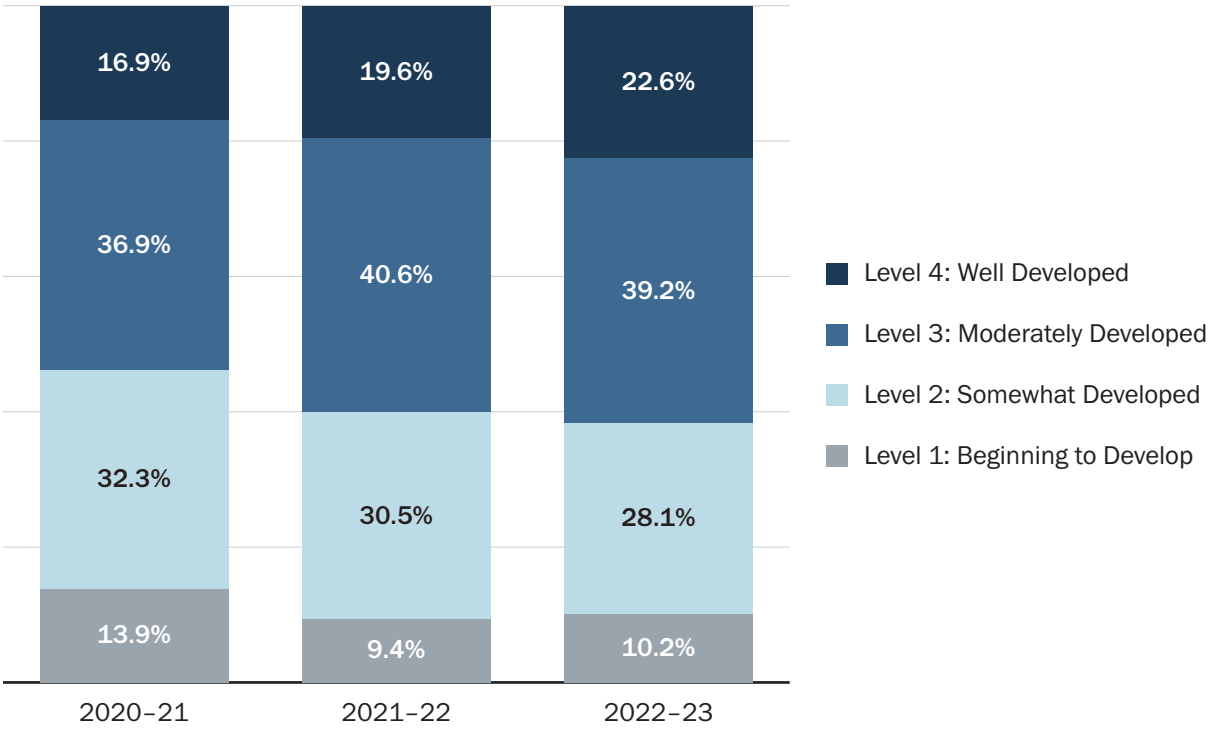
How to read this graph: The bars in this graph represent the proportion of all students enrolled in California in that school year who had ever been an English learner who were now classified as LTEL. For example, in 2015–16, 10.1% of all K–12 students in California schools who had ever been enrolled as English learners were considered to be long-term English learners. The line above the bars represents the total number of students classified as LTEL in that school year.

Notes: (1) Due to factors surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, care should be used when interpreting results for pandemic-era school years such as 2019–20 and 2020–21. In addition to challenges to instruction and learning, most state achievement tests that are required to reclassify students were discontinued or suspended in these years. (2) The 2018–19 LTEL counts reflect a significant 1-year increase from previous years. These changes stem from having only 1 year of data from the newly enacted ELPAC available in the 2017–18 academic year. These data are required for making LTEL determinations. For more information, see CDE's Glossary of terms for English learner (EL) reports.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of California Department of Education data from *Enrollment by ELAS, LTEL, and at-risk by grade* [Data set] (accessed 07/11/2024).

Consistent with these trends, in the years since the pandemic, larger proportions of students who were classified as EL for 6 or more years, and would thus qualify for LTEL status, are meeting the ELPAC "well developed" English language acquisition proficiency benchmark, rising from about 17% in 2020–21 to nearly 23% in 2022–23 (see Figure 3).[11] Of these EL students evaluated in 2022–23, 62% had reached the benchmarks for "moderately" or "well developed" English language proficiency. Many of these students will become qualified for reclassification. Only 10% were classified at the lowest level of proficiency. These students will be classified as LTEL.

Figure 3. Trends in Overall ELPAC Levels Among Students Qualifying for LTEL Status



Notes: (1) Students classified as EL for 6 or more years qualify for LTEL status. (2) Due to factors surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, care should be used when interpreting results for pandemic-era school years, such as 2020–21. Most testing was suspended in 2019–20 and 2020–21, and thus it became more difficult to reclassify EL students, since the statute requires the ELPAC test results as a precondition for reclassification.

Sources: Learning Policy Institute analysis of California Department of Education data from *CDE summative ELPAC results for the State of California* [Data set] (accessed 07/15/2024); California Education Code § 313.1 (2013).

Who Are Students Designated as LTEL7?

This section explores the background characteristics of more than 330,000 students designated as LTEL7 in 2022–23. This includes students who had been classified as ELs for 7 or more years, or since 2016–17 or before.[12] It also describes characteristics of students designated as LTEL7 across grade levels and the number of years they had been classified as ELs.

Characteristics of LTEL7 Students

Gender, Disability Status, and Socioeconomic Status

The demographic characteristics of students designated as LTEL7 compared to their other ever-EL peers show some striking differences. (See Table 1.) In terms of **gender**, the proportion of ever-ELs who were boys was similar to the overall California school population—at around 51%. However, boys were overrepresented among LTEL7 students at 56%.

Table 1. Characteristics of Students Designated LTEL7, Other Ever-EL, and Never-EL, 2022–23

Population	LTEL7	Other Ever-EL (excluding LTEL7)	Never-EL
Population count	330,733	1,780,481	3,885,982
Girls	43.96%	48.61%	49.38%
Boys	56.01%	51.36%	50.49%
Nonbinary	0.03%	0.03%	0.14%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	89.14%	80.30%	49.18%
Not socioeconomically disadvantaged	10.86%	19.70%	50.82%
With disabilities	27.84%	11.43%	13.30%
SES disadvantaged among those with disability	87.72%	83.78%	55.30%
No disabilities	72.16%	88.57%	86.70%
Asian	5.37%	14.34%	8.17%
Black or African American	0.35%	0.51%	8.29%
Filipino	0.71%	1.43%	2.94%
Hispanic or Latino/a	89.50%	76.51%	39.70%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.14%	0.14%	0.66%

Population	LTEL7	Other Ever-EL (excluding LTEL7)	Never-EL
Pacific Islander	0.32%	0.27%	0.52%
Two or more races	0.24%	0.59%	7.11%
White, not Hispanic	2.90%	5.54%	31.28%
Race or ethnicity not reported	0.49%	0.69%	1.34%
Arabic	1.25%	1.39%	0.15%
Armenian	0.31%	0.84%	0.08%
Cantonese	0.53%	1.75%	0.23%
English	0.00%	0.00%	92.09%
Farsi	0.36%	0.97%	0.20%
Hindi	0.19%	0.51%	0.19%
Hmong	0.85%	0.54%	0.03%
Japanese	0.13%	0.57%	0.09%
Korean	0.20%	1.20%	0.22%
Mandarin	0.51%	2.71%	0.62%
Pashto	0.16%	0.43%	0.04%
Filipino or Tagalog	0.68%	1.39%	0.23%
Punjabi	0.45%	1.06%	0.10%
Russian	0.35%	1.20%	0.19%
Spanish	89.99%	76.70%	4.00%
Telugu	0.05%	0.35%	0.14%
Vietnamese	1.10%	2.94%	0.26%
Miscellaneous, non-English	0.69%	1.24%	0.20%
Another language (not listed here)	2.20%	4.20%	0.95%

Note: The population counts are based on the cumulative enrollment counts.

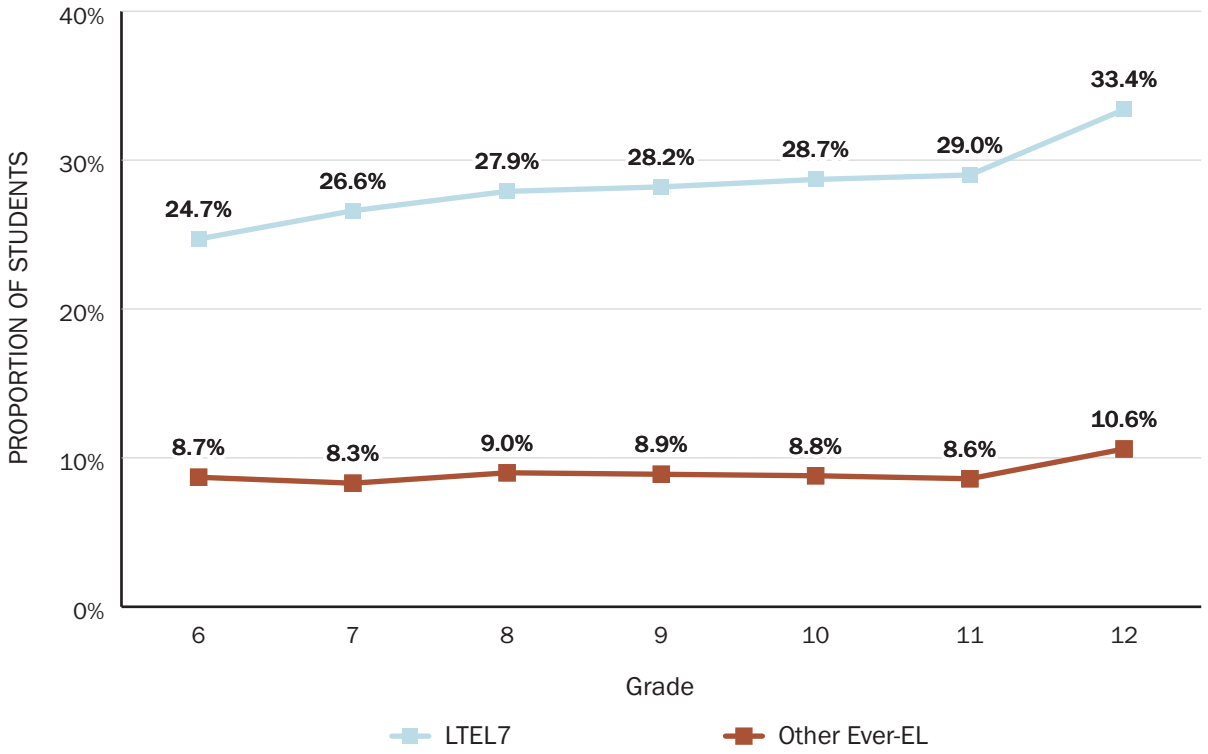
Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Second, while English learners generally were more likely to be **socioeconomically disadvantaged** than the rest of the never-EL California population, rates among students designated as LTEL7 were even higher still.[13] Eighty-nine percent of students designated as LTEL7 were socioeconomically disadvantaged compared to around 80% of other ever-EL students and not quite 50% of never-EL students (see Table 1).

Third, more than 2.5 times as many students designated as LTEL7 had **special education needs** compared to their other ever-EL peers. As also shown in Table 1, around 28% of students designated as LTEL7 were identified as having a special education need, compared to about 11% of all other ever-EL students. This finding is consistent with other research about students labeled as LTEL.[14]

As Figure 4 shows, the prevalence of students who held a special education classification among students designated as LTEL7 incrementally rises between grade 6 and grade 11, from 25% to 29%. This then jumped to over 33% among 12th-grade students designated as LTEL7. In comparison, the proportion of other ever-EL peers who also had special education needs was less than 11%.

Figure 4. Percentage of Students with Special Education Needs: Students Designated as LTEL7 Compared to Other Ever-ELs by Grade Level



Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS program data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Race, Ethnicity, and Home Language

A significant majority—nearly 90%—of students designated as LTEL7 were of Hispanic or Latino/a heritage in 2022–23, compared to 77% of all other ever-EL students (see Table 1). Only 5% of students designated as LTEL7 had Asian heritage compared to 14% of other ever-EL students. However, this is highly correlated with other background characteristics, especially socioeconomic status;[15] ever-EL students who were Asian were far less likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged than ever-EL students of other races and ethnicities.[16]

Similarly, a stark contrast appears when comparing the home languages of students designated as LTEL7 to other ever-EL peers—in particular, those who spoke Spanish at home. Ninety percent of students designated as LTEL7 spoke Spanish at home, whereas Spanish-speaking students represented only 77% of other ever-EL students. (See Table 1.)

Grade Level and Number of Years Designated as EL

To better understand how English learner classifications looked different across grade levels, this section examines the proportion of students in 2022–23 who were actively classified as EL (between 0 and 6 years), formerly an EL but reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP), or designated as LTEL7 within each grade. It then looks more specifically at the group of students designated as LTEL7 at each grade level to understand what proportion had been in the California school system since kindergarten; this helps to identify how many of these students had been part of the same educational system throughout their schooling career. Lastly, it looks within the group of students designated as LTEL7 to see the average number of years they had been classified as EL.

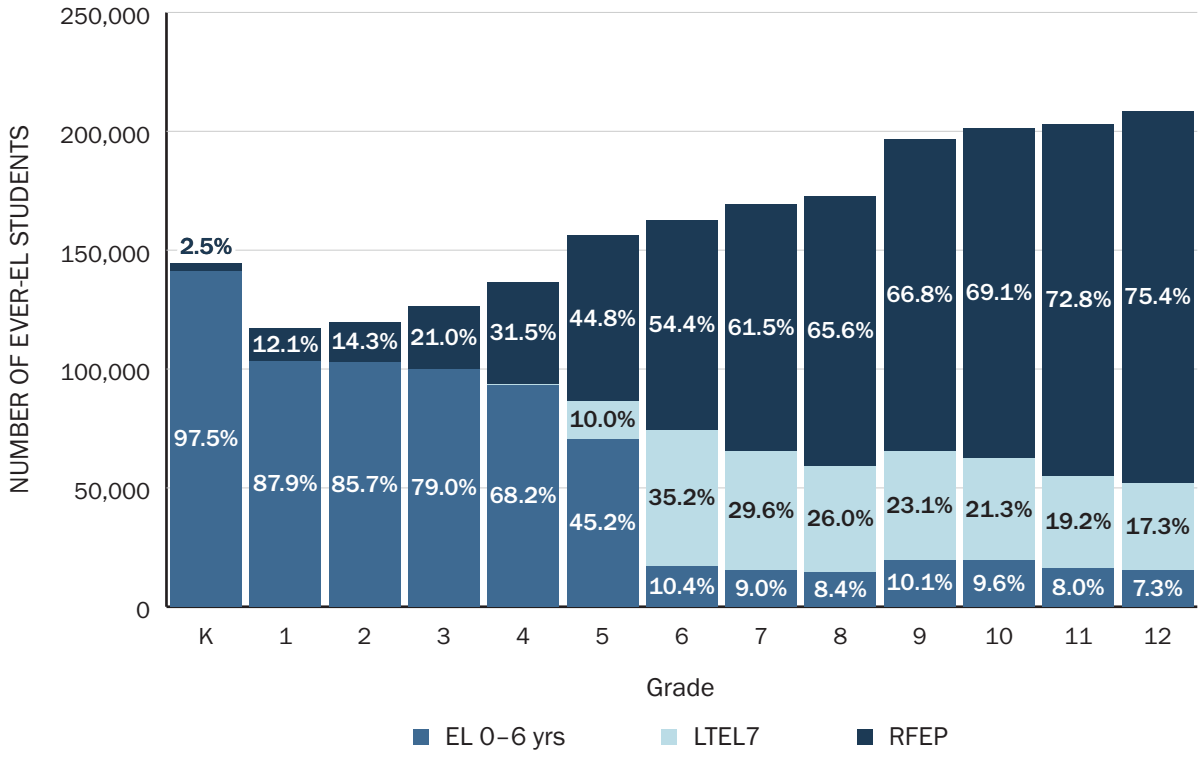
Grade Level

By definition, the earliest students can be designated as LTEL7 is in 6th grade, assuming they began school in California in kindergarten and were not held back. However, in 2022–23, more than 15,000 students classified as EL in 5th grade had been classified as EL for 7 or more years (represented by the 10% of ever-ELs in 5th grade shown in Figure 5).[17]

Figure 5 also shows that in 2022–23, about 35% of ever-ELs in 6th grade had been classified as EL for at least 7 years, while 54% of ever-EL students were reclassified by this time. The remaining were EL students who arrived in the school system after kindergarten and thus had been classified as EL for 6 or fewer years.

Among all ever-EL students, the proportion of students designated as LTEL7 was progressively smaller in every grade after 6th grade, from about 30% of ever-ELs in 7th grade to about 17% of ever-ELs in 12th grade. Between each grade level from 9 to 12, the proportion of students designated as LTEL7 among ever-EL students decreased by 2 percentage points. Among 12th-graders, about 1 in 6 ever-EL students were still designated as LTEL7.

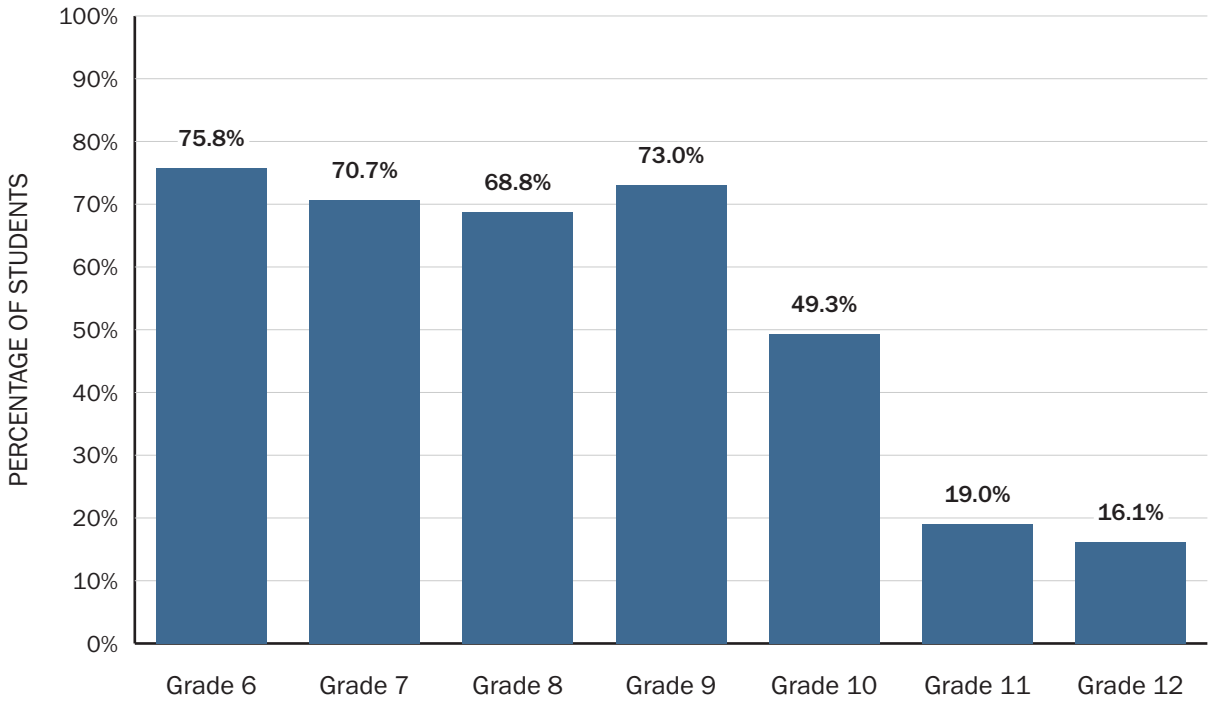
Figure 5. English Learner Acquisition Status by Grade, 2022–23



Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Figure 6 shows the percentage of students designated as LTEL7 in each grade level from 6th through 12th who started their education in California in kindergarten. Among 6th-grade students, 3 in 4 students designated as LTEL7 began their California schooling in kindergarten. Among 10th-grade students, fewer than half of students designated as LTEL7 started their California schooling in kindergarten. Among 12th-grade students, only 16% of students designated as LTEL7 started in kindergarten. Thus, a large portion of students who were designated as LTEL7 during middle grade years had been in the California system from the earliest entry point, but by the later high school years, a large majority of students designated as LTEL7 had started their educational career in California after kindergarten.

Figure 6. Percentage of Students Designated as LTEL7 Who Began in Kindergarten by Grade in School, 2022–23



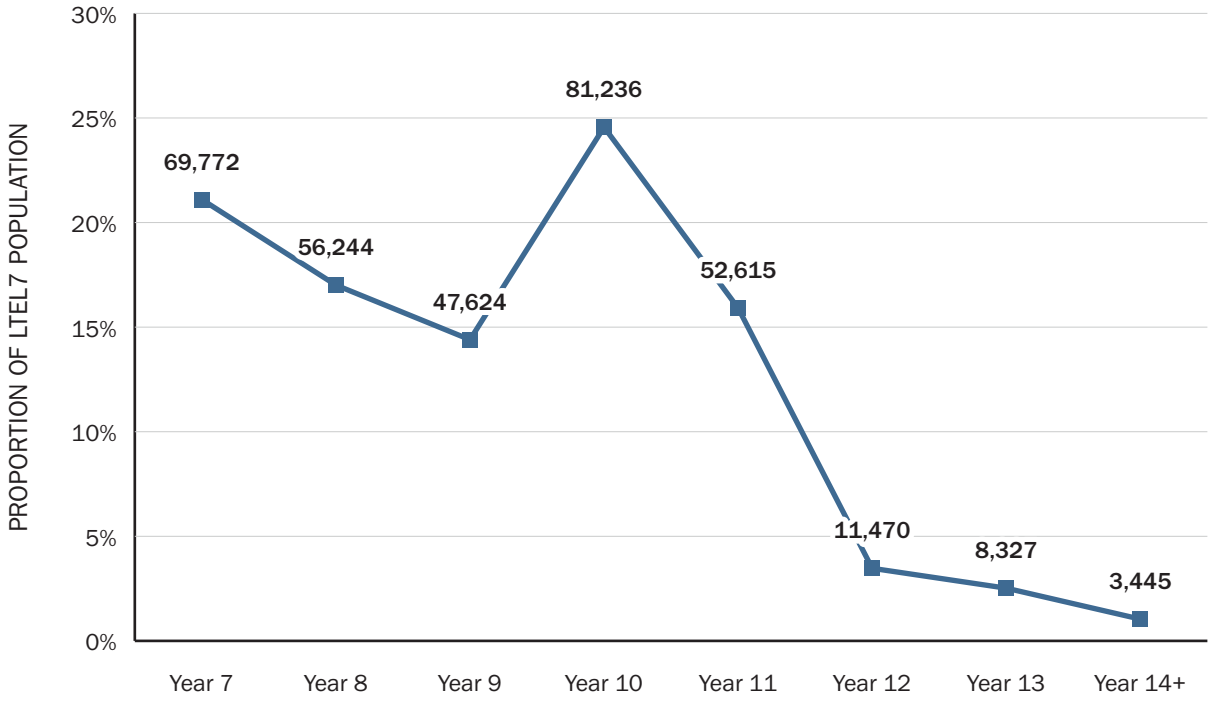
Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Average Years Classified as English Learners

The category "LTEL7" encompasses some students classified as an EL for 7 years, but it can also include students classified for as many as 14 or more years. So, how many years did students designated as LTEL7 in 2022–23 remain classified as an EL? As Figure 7 shows, more than half of the 330,733 students who were designated as LTEL7 were in their 7th, 8th, or 9th year of being classified an EL. Another 25% were experiencing their 10th year as an EL. And more than 20,000 students designated LTEL7 had been classified as an EL for *12 or more years*—almost the entire length of their educational career. This prolonged period classified as EL may be due to several reasons, including grade repetition or, for students with special education status, eligibility to be educated through age 21.

Table 2 shows that, when compared to the proportion of all students designated as LTEL7 (see Table 1), students classified as EL for 12 years or more were slightly less socioeconomically disadvantaged (86% vs. 89% of all students designated LTEL7) and more likely to have special education disabilities (33% vs. 28% of all students designated as LTEL7). There were also slightly higher rates of Spanish home language speakers among students categorized as EL for 12 or more years (93%) compared to all students designated as LTEL7 (90%).

Figure 7. Number of Years Classified as EL Among Students Designated as LTEL7, 2022–23



Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Table 2. Characteristics of Students Classified as EL for 12 or More Years

Population	Number of students	Percentage of group
SES disadvantaged	20,046	86.25%
Not SES disadvantaged	3,196	13.75%
With disabilities	7,695	33.11%
No disabilities	15,547	66.89%
SES disadvantaged with disability	6,465	27.82%
Arabic	156	0.67%
Armenian	42	0.18%
Cantonese	108	0.46%
Farsi	49	0.21%

Population	Number of students	Percentage of group
Hindi	42	0.18%
Hmong	142	0.61%
Japanese	*	0.06%
Korean	35	0.15%
Mandarin	39	0.17%
Pashto	*	0.08%
Filipino or Tagalog	130	0.56%
Punjabi	84	0.36%
Russian	39	0.17%
Spanish	21,696	93.35%
Telugu	*	0.04%
Vietnamese	163	0.70%
Miscellaneous, non-English	79	0.34%
Another language (not listed here)	397	1.71%

* Redacted, cell size <30 students.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Former Newcomer Students and Students With Interrupted Formal Education

As indicated earlier in Figure 6, the majority of students in grades 10–12 designated as LTEL7 were first classified as EL in California later than kindergarten, signaling a move from another state or country or some other disruption to their education. This group includes students who were initially newcomer students to the United States (about 80% of whom are initially classified as EL) and students with interrupted formal education (SIFE).[18] These student groups are diverse, but many can have curricular and resource needs that differ from those of their peers if they are to achieve English proficiency and success in school.[19]

Although data on students who are newcomers to the United States were not available for this report, the state does collect some Title III immigrant data.[20] However, few data are available statewide on students labeled SIFE. More detailed data and research are needed to understand the extent to which students who are newcomers to the United States and SIFE may become designated as LTEL7, and the additional supports needed for their educational success.

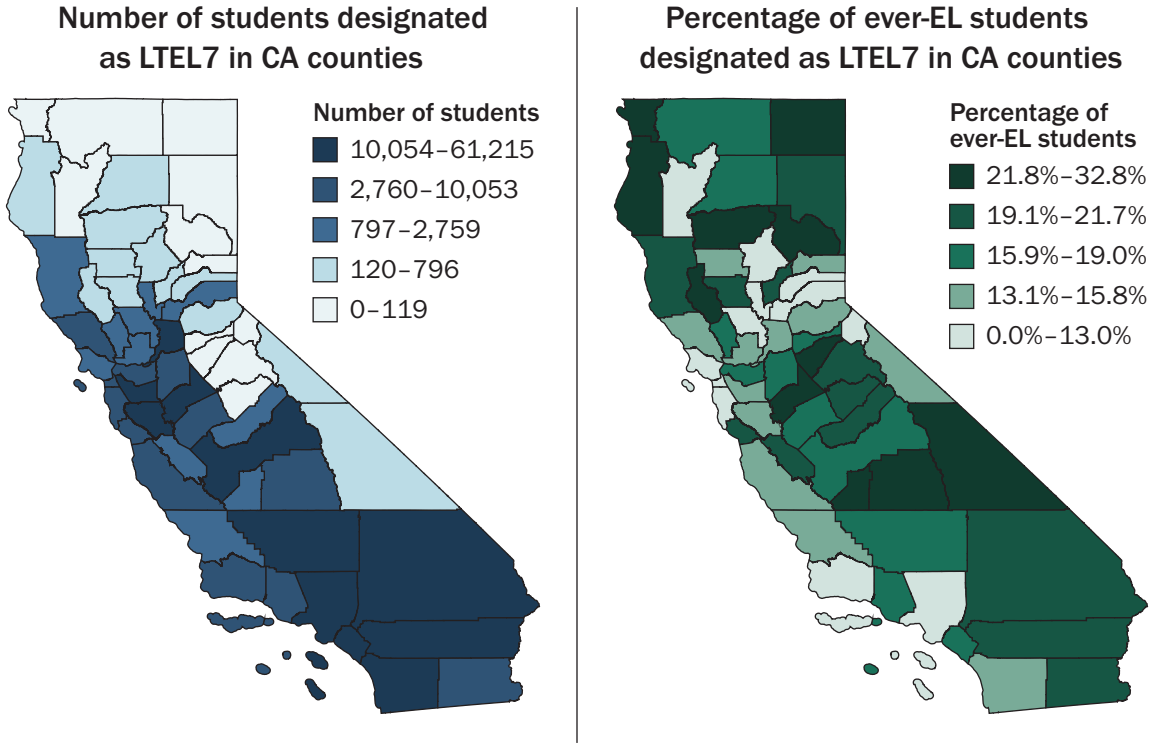
Where Are Students Designated as LTEL7 Located?

This section focuses on the geographic location of students designated as LTEL7 across California and the characteristics of the schools they attended in 2022–23. It also describes the contexts of the schools that students designated as LTEL7 attend—and how the school context varies by the proportion of the student body designated as LTEL7.

Geographic Location

The largest number of students designated as LTEL7 were, as may be expected, located in the more populous southern California counties. These include Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and San Bernardino counties, which account for half (50.0%) of all students designated as LTEL7. However, a more nuanced picture emerges when looking at students designated as LTEL7 as a percentage of ever-EL students within each county; that is, where lower proportions of EL populations were being reclassified as fully English proficient. In particular, many of the less populous and rural California counties had higher percentages of students designated as LTEL7 among their total ever-EL population, even if their overall numbers of students designated as LTEL7 were relatively low. (See Figure 8.) These include counties in the northern part of the state (Del Norte, Modoc, and Plumas counties) and in the central and eastern parts of the state (Inyo, Kings, and Stanislaus counties)—each of which had more than 22% of their ever-EL population designated as LTEL7.

Figure 8. Number and Percentage of Students Designated as LTEL7 by County, 2022–23

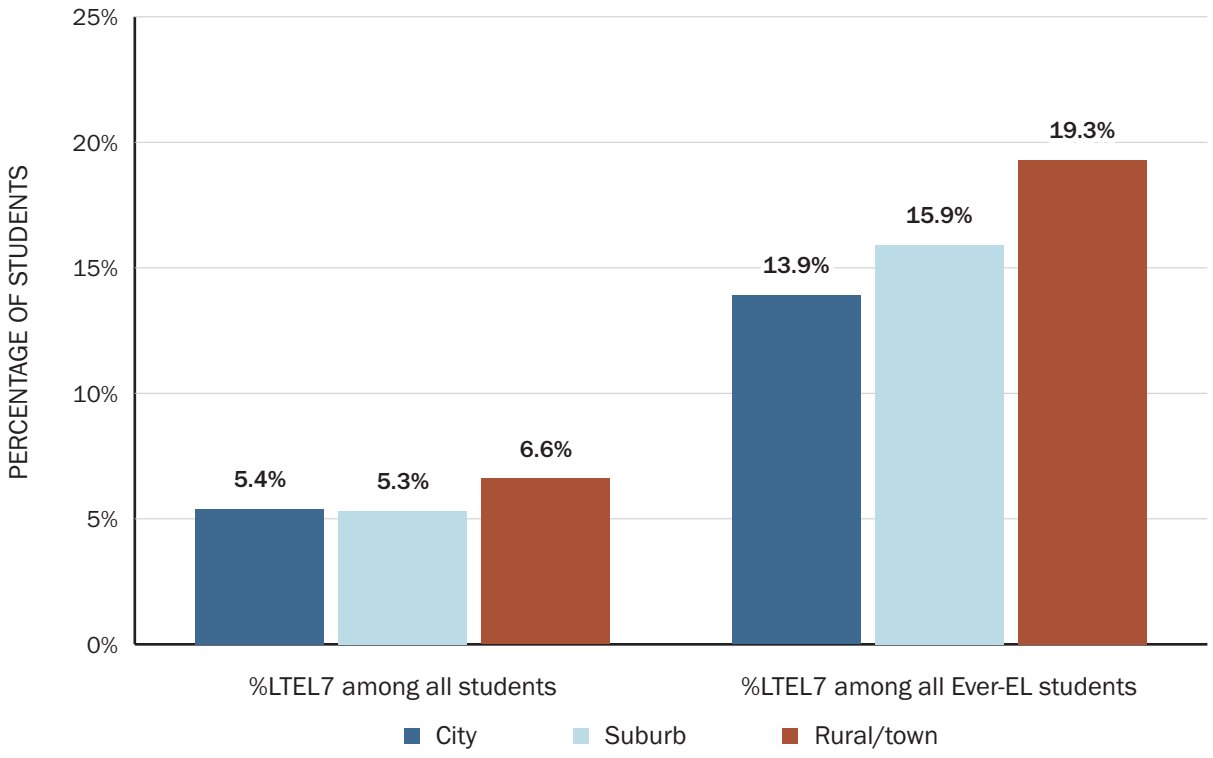


Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Another way of looking at the concentration of students designated as LTEL7 is to compare community locales as defined by the federal census bureau—examining differences across cities, suburbs, and rural areas and townships. This may tell us a little more about the local capacity to support ELs in places with smaller populations or schools. The overall percentage of students designated as LTEL7 among *all* students did not differ substantially across these locales, although there was a slightly greater proportion in rural/township districts at 6.6% (see Figure 9). However, the proportion of *ever-EL* students who are designated as LTEL7 was progressively higher from districts in cities (13.9%) to districts in the suburbs (15.9%) to districts in rural or township locales (19.3%). This means that although the overall number of students designated as LTEL7 may be smaller in rural areas, a lower percentage are reclassified.

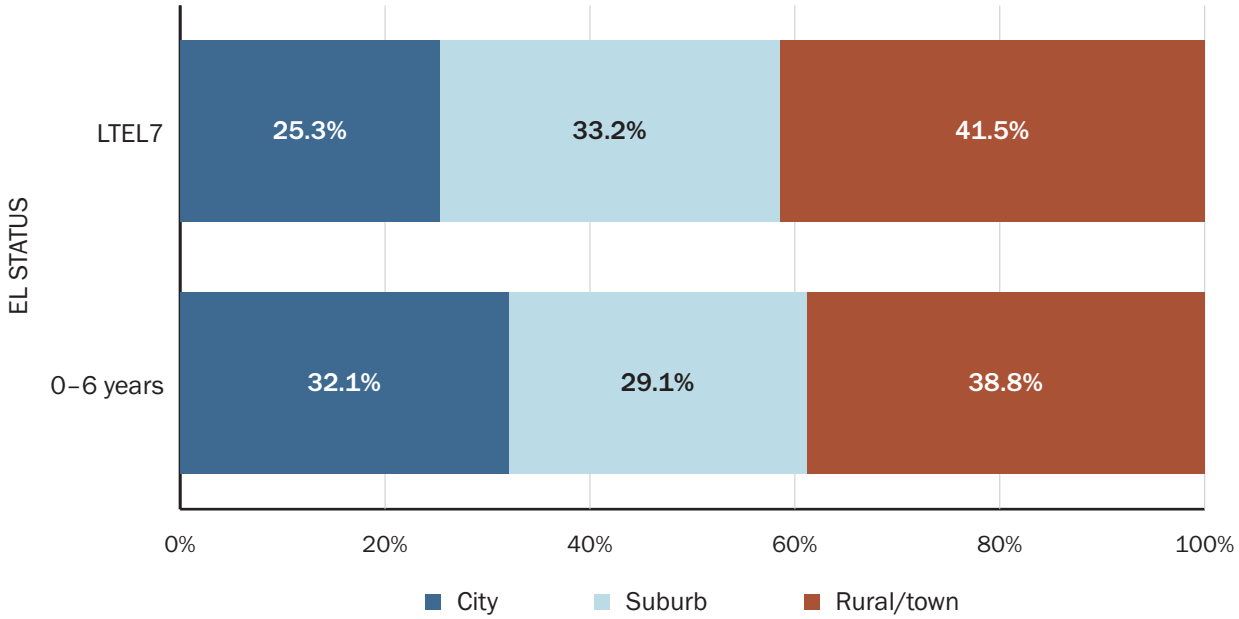
Migrant students who are ELs are also disproportionately located in rural areas, and a disproportionate share of those are identified as LTEL7. (See Figure 10.) Among counties that served more than 50 migrant EL students, 8 had more than one third of their migrant EL students designated as LTEL7: Imperial (44%), Kings (36%), Los Angeles (38%), Orange (40%), Riverside (37%), Sacramento (37%), San Benito (36%), and Santa Clara (37%) counties. Migrant student data are further discussed later in this report. (See Characteristics of Migrant EL Students)

Figure 9. Percentage of Students Designated as LTEL7 by District Locale, 2022–23



Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Figure 10. Locale of Migrant Students Classified as EL



Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS and ELPAC program data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

School Context

What do we know about the characteristics of the schools that students designated as LTEL7 attended, and are those with more such students systematically different from schools with a lower prevalence of students designated as LTEL7? These analyses tested the linear associations between various school context variables and the proportion of the student body designated as LTEL7. The models, described in more detail in the Appendix, take into account (or control for) the total school population, percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals, percentage of students in the school who were ever-ELs, and grade levels served (excluding elementary-only schools given their low prevalence of students designated as LTEL7).

Results show several differences between schools with higher concentrations of students designated as LTEL7 compared to those with lower concentrations (see Table A1). As might be expected, schools with larger shares of their student body composed of students designated as LTEL7 also had more students who were ever-ELs and who were from low-income families. These schools were generally smaller, more likely to be rural, and more likely to be middle schools than high schools.

Controlling for all of these factors, the schools with greater concentrations of LTEL7 students had higher chronic absenteeism rates, lower graduation rates, and lower shares of teachers with full certification in the subjects they were teaching. Similarly, a larger proportion of courses were taught by teachers who were teaching outside of their credentialed field, interns, or staff on special permits or waivers.

The schools with greater concentrations of LTEL7 students had higher chronic absenteeism rates, lower graduation rates, and lower shares of teachers with full certification in the subjects they were teaching.

Analyses also examined whether students were enrolled in schools that awarded seals of biliteracy. Seals of biliteracy are offered to students, and placed on their diploma or transcript, to indicate that they have mastered a high level of proficiency in at least one language in addition to English. The Seal of Biliteracy recognizes that bilingualism is an asset. Schools that award the Seal of Biliteracy must offer appropriate teaching and a range of courses and other supports for students to develop fluency in two or more languages. Data showed that schools awarding seals of biliteracy were more likely to serve a lower proportion of students designated as LTEL7. In fact, 78.3% of students designated as LTEL7 attended schools that awarded the Seal of Biliteracy. This compares to 83.5% of their other ever-EL peers who attended schools that offered a Seal of Biliteracy.[21]

How Well Do Students Designated as LTEL7 Perform Academically?

Students' experiences in middle and high school are intended to prepare them for college and their careers. The outcomes of those educational experiences can be reflected in part by how well students perform on standardized achievement tests. For example, a student who performs better on standardized tests may have greater access to rigorous courses that better prepare them for postsecondary education or their career.[22] For EL students in grades 6–9, these standardized test scores hold even more weight, as their prior year's ELA score is used as a criterion for LTEL classification.[23] Thus, this section of this report describes how students designated as LTEL7 performed on assessments—both when they first entered the California system and during the 2022–23 school year—compared to other ever-EL students.[24] It concludes by describing the graduation statuses of 12th-grade students designated as LTEL7 compared to other 12th-grade students.

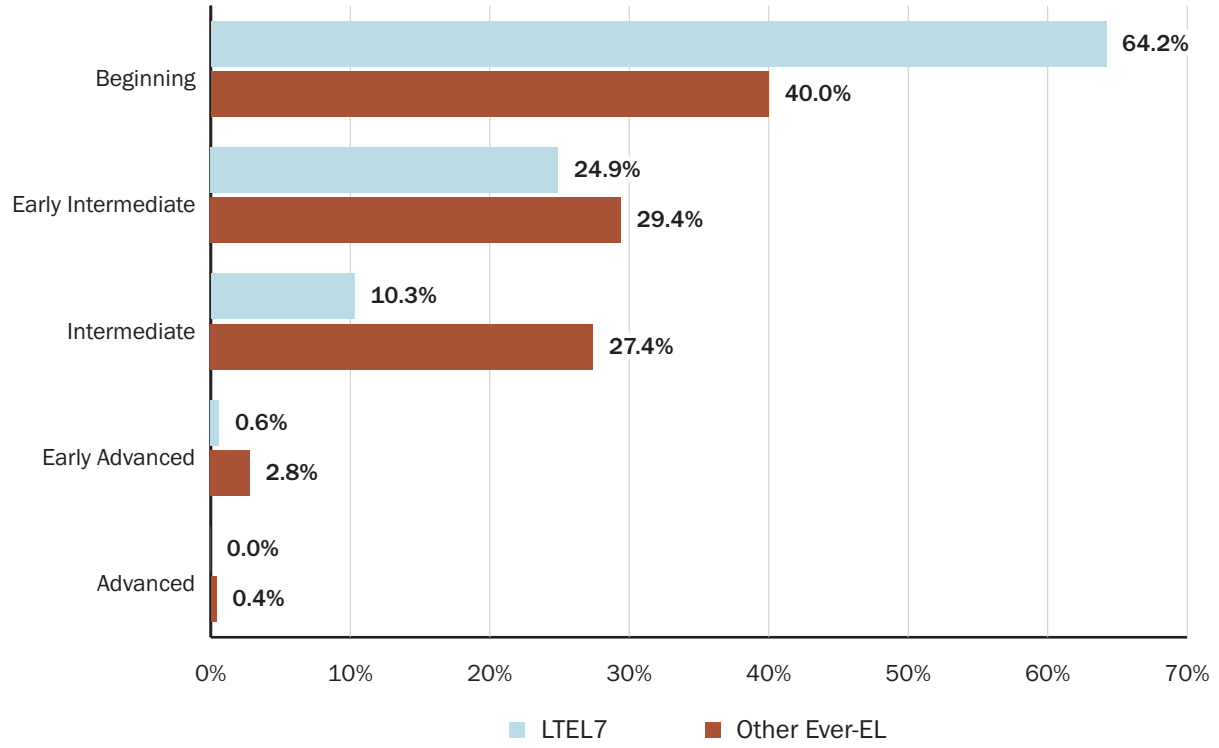
Where They Start

While research suggests that it takes an average of 5–7 years for school-aged students to acquire proficient academic English communication skills, it also explains that this length of time is partially determined by the starting point of students' language proficiency.[25] Some students enter schooling with no prior exposure to communicating in a language other than their home language, others enter with a conversational vernacular, and yet others have years of formal practice familiarizing themselves with academic English.

Initial English Language Proficiency

All students designated as LTEL7 in 2022–23 began their schooling when California used the California English Language Development Test, or CELDT, to assess English language proficiency.[26] CELDT data show that students designated as LTEL7 overwhelmingly began their schooling at the lowest two levels—Beginning or Early Intermediate, indicating very limited initial English language proficiency. In fact, students designated as LTEL7 were 50% more likely to enter the California schooling system scoring at the most basic "Beginning" English proficiency level compared to their other ever-EL peers (64% vs. 40%, respectively; see Figure 11). This finding may be unsurprising, given that students entering at lower levels are likely to need more time to achieve proficiency.[27] However, they also can be used as early indicators of which EL students could benefit from additional or differentiated learning supports.

Figure 11. Initial English Proficiencies of Students Designated as LTEL7 and Other Ever-ELs



Note: Chi-square tests confirm that all differences between LTEL7 and other ever-ELs are significant at $p < 0.001$.
Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CELDT data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

It is also possible that other characteristics of students designated as LTEL7 might increase their likelihood of scoring at the lowest proficiency levels upon school entry. For example, as noted above, we know that students designated as LTEL7 are also more likely to have special needs (see Table 1), which may contribute to delayed language development, resulting in lower initial proficiency scores. Similarly, socioeconomically disadvantaged students are more likely to enter school with lower proficiency levels and students designated as LTEL7 are more likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged. These overlapping characteristics suggest that students may have multiple factors contributing to their lower initial proficiency levels and higher needs for educational support in developing their English language proficiency. In fact, regression models indicated that each of these characteristics (being designated as LTEL7 and being socioeconomically disadvantaged; being designated as LTEL7 and having special education needs) uniquely and additively predicted lower initial proficiency scores (see Technical Appendix for description of models and Table A1 for results). This means that when a student held multiple designations, they were *even more* likely to enter school with lower English proficiency scores than if they had only one of those designations.

Current Academics

In this section, we discuss the academic outcomes of students designated as LTEL7 during the 2022–23 school year. Many educational outcomes shape the college and career aspirations and opportunities for students, from course grades to school discipline experiences to extracurricular participation to graduation status.[28] Formal reclassification as a fluent English proficient student is a particularly important milestone. Research shows that reclassification often holds the key to unlock access to middle and high school coursework that then shapes college and career aspirations and opportunities for EL students.[29] In addition, reclassification shapes self-esteem to aspire to college and career.[30] (For details on reclassification criteria, see Reclassification Criteria.)

Research shows that reclassification often holds the key to unlock access to middle and high school coursework that then shapes college and career aspirations and opportunities for EL students.

Reclassification Criteria

To become reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) in California, students classified as EL have to, at a minimum, (1) reach proficiency on the state-administered English proficiency ELPAC test in each of the four domains of academic English speaking, listening, reading, and writing; (2) receive teacher evaluation indicating curriculum mastery; (3) demonstrate "sufficient proficiency" in curriculum designed for students whose native language is English as measured by an empirically established metric, such as the CAASPP ELA state test; and (4) obtain parental opinion for reclassification.[a]

For students in grades 6–9, attaining "sufficient proficiency" on their CAASPP ELA test is a requirement.[b] In grades 10–12, the CAASPP ELA or another standardized ELA test score may be required to demonstrate "sufficient proficiency in English" relative to same-age peers whose home language is English. Some districts could also require meeting math standards for any students seeking to be reclassified as fluent English proficient. Any student labeled as EL in grades 6–9 who has been enrolled in California schools for 6 or more years and scores at the level 1 of "standard not met" for their CAASPP ELA test cannot be considered for reclassification and will be classified as LTEL. This two-pronged approach to defining RFEP and LTEL allows districts some, but not much, contextual leeway in defining "sufficient proficiency."

[a] California Education Code § 313 – 313.5 (2013). English Language Proficiency Assessment.

[b] California Department of Education. (2024). *Glossary of terms for English learner (EL) Reports*; California Education Code § 313 – 313.5 (2013). English Language Proficiency Assessment.

Progress Toward English Language Acquisition

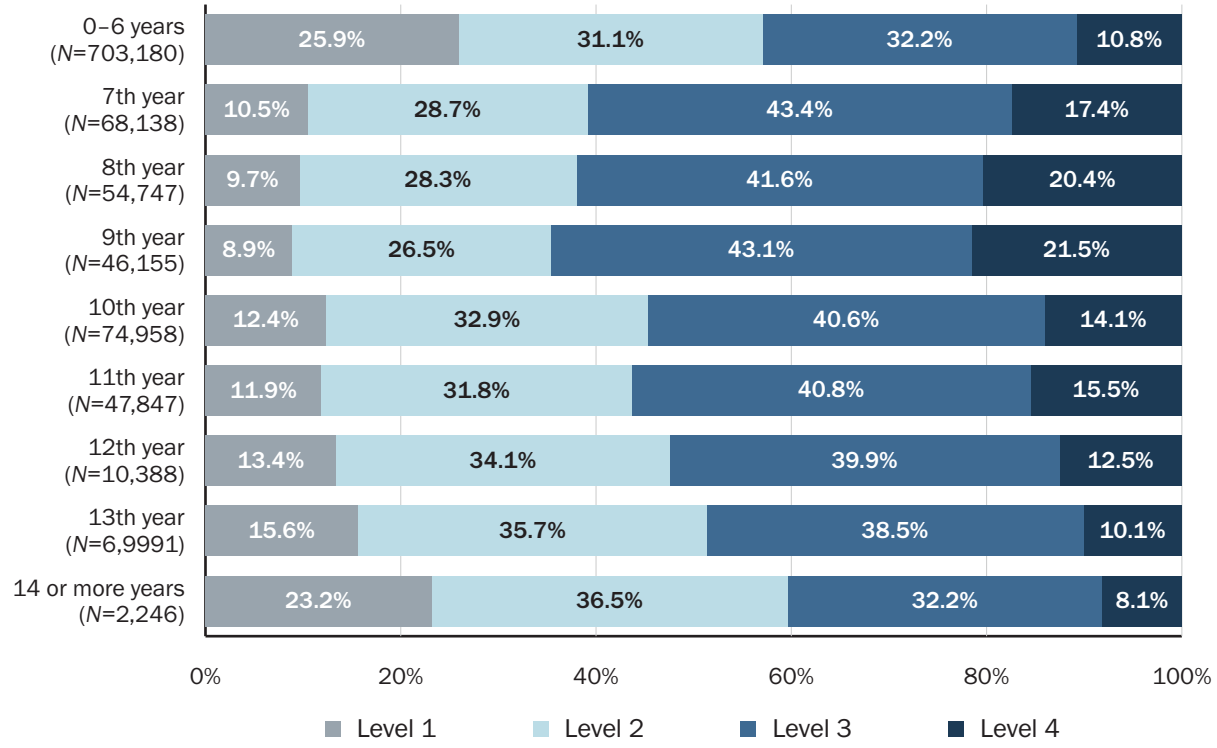
The California English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) is a test that each LEA administers annually to all students currently classified as EL. RFEP students do not participate in the testing. The ELPAC assesses English language development in four domains: listening, speaking, reading,

and writing. Most students classified as EL take the Summative ELPAC while a smaller subset of students with cognitive disabilities take the Summative Alternate ELPAC.[31] To be considered for reclassification, students need to attain level 4 on the Summative ELPAC or level 3 on the Summative Alternate ELPAC.[32]

As discussed earlier, students designated as LTEL7 in 2022–23 included those who had been classified as EL for varying numbers of years (see Figure 7). To examine whether English proficiency levels might differ for students classified as EL for fewer or more years, Figure 12 shows the proportion of students scoring at each ELPAC level broken down by how long they had been classified as EL. The 2022–23 ELPAC results show that 35%–40% of students classified as EL for their 7th, 8th, or 9th year scored at levels 1 or 2; this is substantially fewer than their peers who had been classified as EL for 0–6 years (at 57%). Comparatively, 45%–48% of students who remained classified as EL for 10, 11, or 12 years averaged at level 1 or 2, and more than 50% of students who had spent their entire school career classified as EL scored at level 1 or 2.

On the other hand, when looking at highest levels, about 20% of students classified as EL for 8 or 9 years scored at level 4, which could indicate they would soon qualify for reclassification. Among students classified as EL for 10 or more years, 8%–16% scored at level 4, nearly all of whom were students who started their schooling in California during their early elementary years. It will be important to better understand the factors that support students' progress toward reclassification, which is important for their self-esteem, engagement with school, and self-confidence.[33]

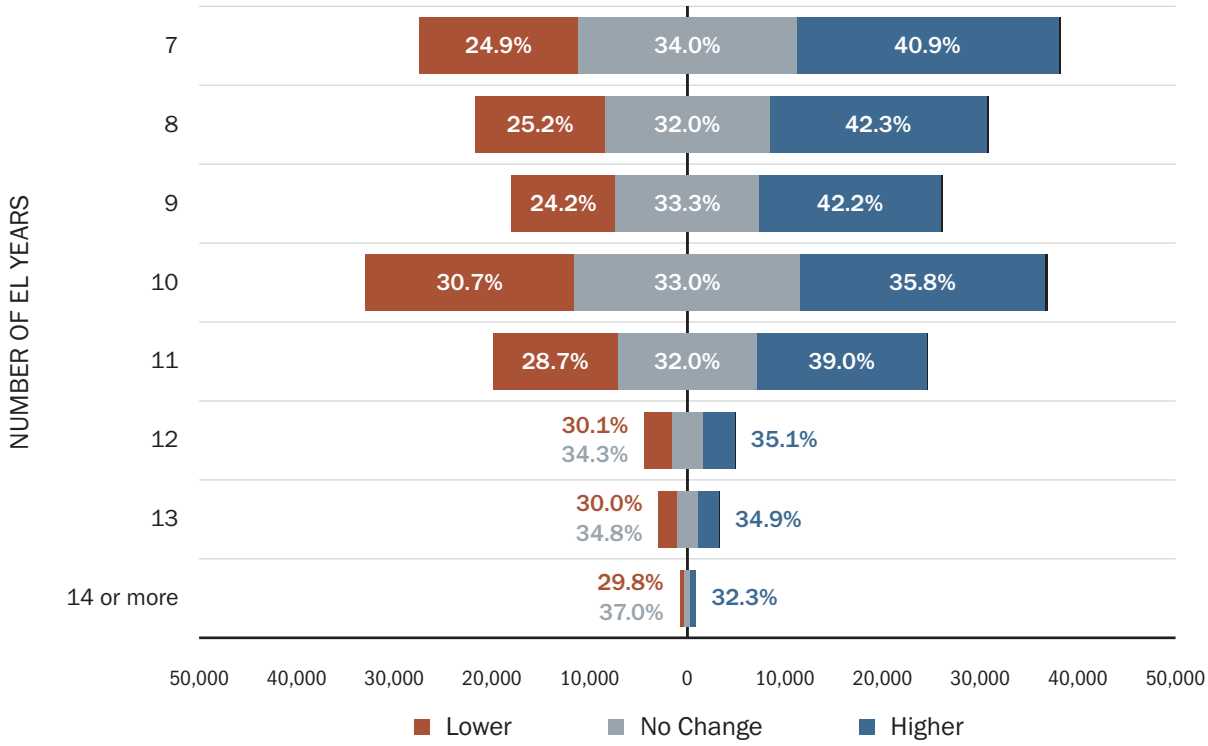
Figure 12. ELPAC Levels by Years Classified as EL, 2022–23



Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS and ELPAC program data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

To assess student progress toward English proficiency, the California School Dashboard's English Language Progress Indicator (ELPI) compares ELPAC results from the current year to those of the previous year. However, since the levels on the ELPAC are quite broad categories, the ELPI splits the ELPAC scores into levels 1, 2L, 2H, 3L, 3H, and 4. Splitting levels 2 and 3 into "low" (L) and "high" (H) allows for students' movements from a lower score to a higher score within the same level to be recorded as positive progress. Figure 13 uses data from each of those ELPI levels to examine the proportion of students whose ELPAC scores placed them in a lower, the same, or a higher ELPI level in 2022–23 compared to their score in 2021–22. Note that when students stay at the same level, it does not mean they have the same language proficiency skills year over year, but rather that they remain in a similar placement of proficiency relative to where the test estimates they "should" be at that grade in school. Thus, no change in level means that students gained some additional English communication skills, but not at a rate that enabled them to catch up to other students who were classified as English proficient.

Figure 13. ELPI Progress, 2022–23 Compared to 2021–22, by Number of EL Years



How to read this graph: Each horizontal bar represents a group of students with different number of years they were classified as EL (noted along the y-axis). The length of the bar represents the number of students in the group. The sections of bars represent the proportion of each of those student groups who took the Summative or Alternate Summative ELPAC in the 2022–23 school year and scored at either a lower (orange), same (gray), or higher (blue) ELPI level than they scored on their 2021–22 ELPAC test. The length of the bar represents the number of students in that category; long bars represent more students in that category than shorter bars.

Note: These data combine all available data from the Summative ELPAC and the Alternate ELPAC and are broken down by the number of years students were classified as EL.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS and ELPAC program data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Across all students designated as LTEL7, approximately one third scored at the same ELPI level between 2021–22 and 2022–23 (see Figure 13). However, as the years classified as EL accumulate, the students who remained designated as LTEL7 did not progress in their level of performance—they were increasingly showing no change or a lower progress on their test performance. While 41%–42% of students classified as EL for 7, 8, or 9 years demonstrated greater progress on ELD by scoring at a higher ELPI level, the proportion was 35% or lower for students classified as EL for 12 or more years.

Among students designated as LTEL7 with special needs, the greatest proportion progressed at a similar rate to their general education peers designated as LTEL7 from 2021–22 to 2022–23 (38% vs. 31%; see Table 3). Another 35% progressed in their ELD by scoring at a higher level in 2022–23 compared to 2021–22, although this proportion was lower than that of general education students designated as LTEL7. Lastly, 27% seemed to have slowed progress on their ELD, which is similar to the rate of general education students designated as LTEL7. A small number of students were categorized as "ineligible for ELPI" as they did not take the same ELPAC test in both years. All of the ineligible students switched from the Summative ELPAC in 2021–22 to the Alternate ELPAC test format in 2022–23 or did not take the test in 2021–22.

Table 3. ELPI Progress for Students Designated as LTEL7 by Special Education Status, 2022–23

	General education	Special education	Number of LTEL7
Lower ELD rate	27.21%	27.15%	79,709
No change in ELD rate	31.45%	38.13%	97,215
Higher ELD rate	41.33%	34.73%	116,159

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS and ELPAC program data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

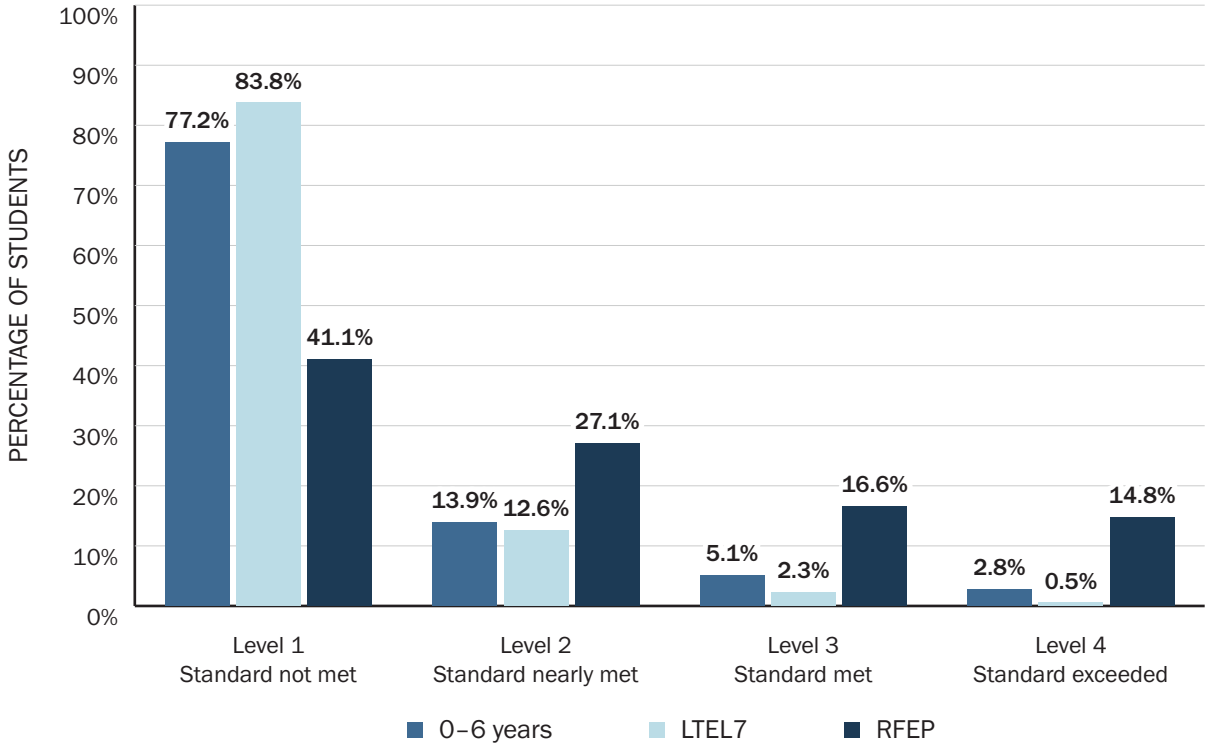
Math and ELA Achievement

The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) tests are taken annually in English language arts (ELA) and math by students in grades 3–8 and 11.[34] Given that the LTEL7 designation typically applies only to middle and high school students, this report highlights the differences in these achievement test scores for the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 11th grades, comparing those students who were designated as LTEL7 to their other ever-EL peers.

Importantly, how students classified as EL perform on the ELA assessments can be crucial in determining if they can be reclassified as fully proficient in English. As part of the California state statute, districts are required to include an academic achievement criterion that is aligned with what their proficient English-speaking peers exhibit.[35] Most districts opt to use the CAASPP ELA test results as their criterion in the grades when it is administered (grades 3–8 and 11).[36] Districts are also allowed to use additional criteria, including scores or grades in other curricular subjects such as math.[37]

Because of reclassification determinations, a gap in CAASPP scores is expected to persist between students designated as LTEL7 (who likely have not scored well enough to be reclassified) and their other ever-EL peers—particularly students who have been reclassified. As Figure 14 and Figure 15 show, most students designated as LTEL7 scored at level 1 on the CAASPP in 2022–23. There were about 3% of students designated as LTEL7 who scored at or above level 3 on math (see Figure 14) and 7% on ELA (see Figure 15), suggesting that these scores may trigger some students to be reclassified shortly after their test results or there may be other factors (or assessments) used that have slowed reclassification of these students as fully proficient English speakers.

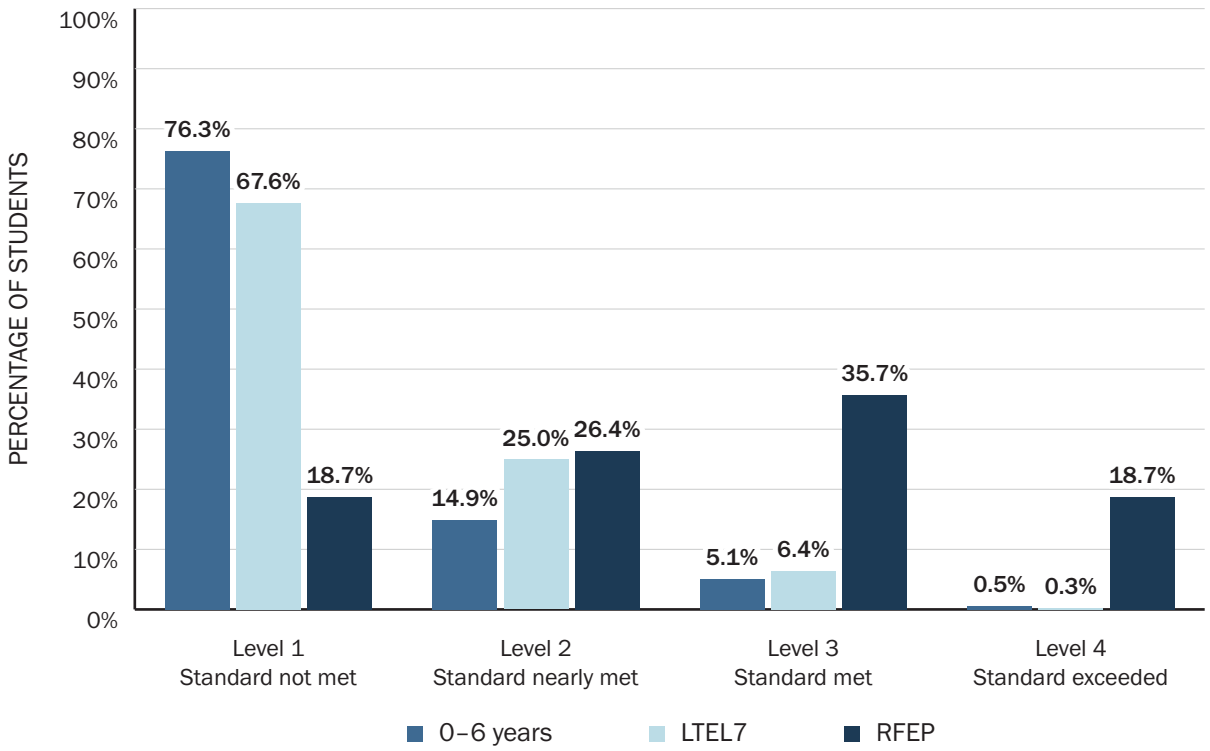
Figure 14. CAASPP Math Performance of Students Designated as LTEL7 and Other Ever-EL Peers, 2022–23



Notes: (1) Results do not include the ~15,000 Ever-EL students taking the California Alternate Assessments. (2) In a logistic regression model controlling for students' status as socioeconomically disadvantaged, having special education needs, race/ethnicity, and home language, students designated as LTEL7 were significantly less likely to meet or exceed the proficiency standard. (3) Percents do not add to 100% since unscored tests are not included in this graphic.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CAASPP achievement data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Figure 15. CAASPP ELA Performance of Students Designated as LTEL7 and Other Ever-EL Peers, 2022–23



Notes: (1) Results do not include the ~15,000 Ever-EL students taking the California Alternate Assessments. (2) In a logistic regression model controlling for students' status as socioeconomically disadvantaged, having special education needs, race/ethnicity, and home language, students designated as LTEL7 were significantly less likely to meet or exceed the proficiency standard. (3) Percents do not add to 100% since unscored tests are not included in this graphic.

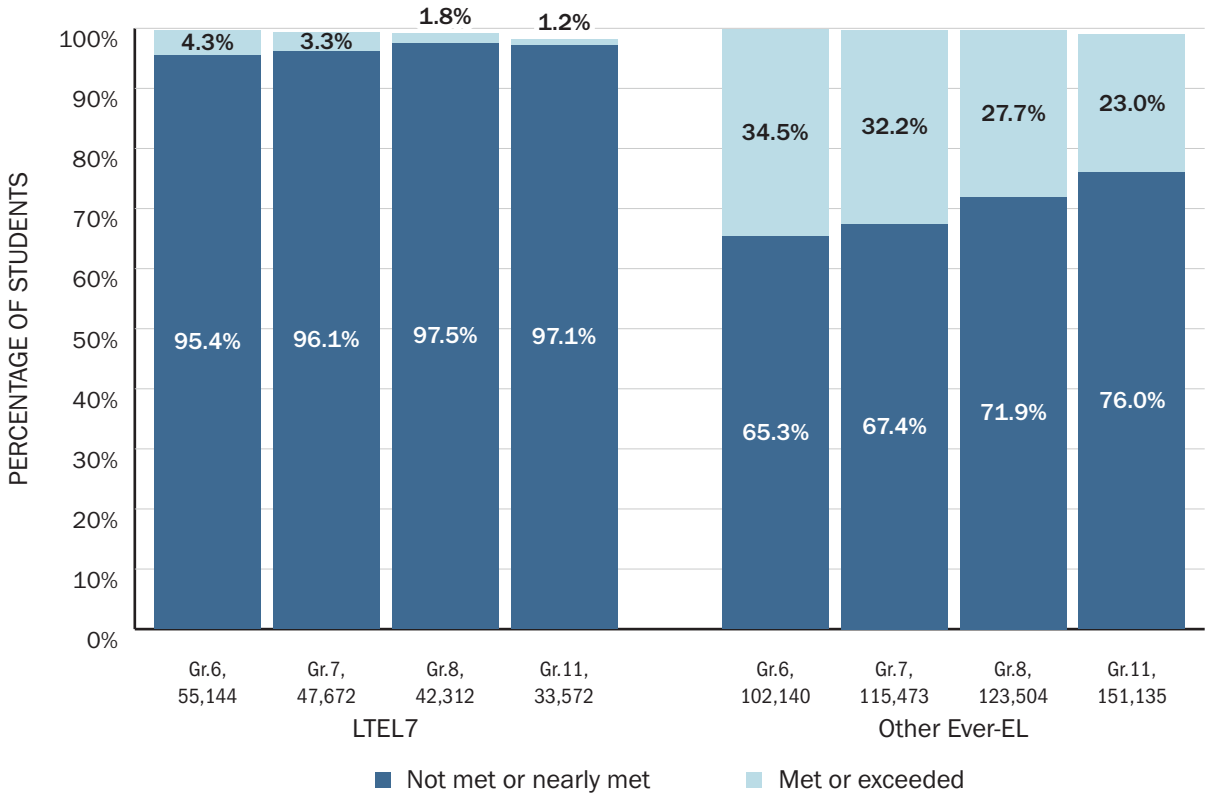
Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CAASPP achievement data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

While Figure 14 and Figure 15 show overall rates of meeting proficiency on the CAASPP, this can obscure differences by grade level, which may be important since the middle school grade-level scores hold such weight on reclassification determinations. We examine this by looking across grade levels in one single school year—2022–23.

Before exploring these grade-level assessment score outcomes, it is important to consider who remains in the LTEL7 designation as students progress through the later grades. The group of students who are designated as LTEL7 consists of fewer and fewer students—for example, in 2022–23, more than 55,000 students were designated as LTEL7 in grade 6, but fewer than 34,000 students were designated as LTEL7 in grade 11. This is because over those grade levels, a portion of students designated as LTEL7 are reclassified as RFEP and fewer *new* students enter the LTEL7 designation. Thus, the students who remain designated as LTEL7 in each successive grade level are those who have not met proficiency on the CAASPP year after year, except for those who joined the California school system in a later grade.

Following this logic, we see that indeed, as we look at higher grade levels—from grade 6 to grade 7 to grade 8 and to grade 11, when CAASPP tests are given—there were smaller portions of students designated as LTEL7 who met or exceeded expectations on the math assessments (see Figure 16). In addition, at each of these grade levels, students designated as LTEL7 were less likely to meet or exceed state math standards than their other ever-EL peers (who largely consist of RFEPs; see Figure 5).

Figure 16. Math Performance of Students Designated as LTEL7 and Other Ever-EL Peers by Grade Level, 2022–23

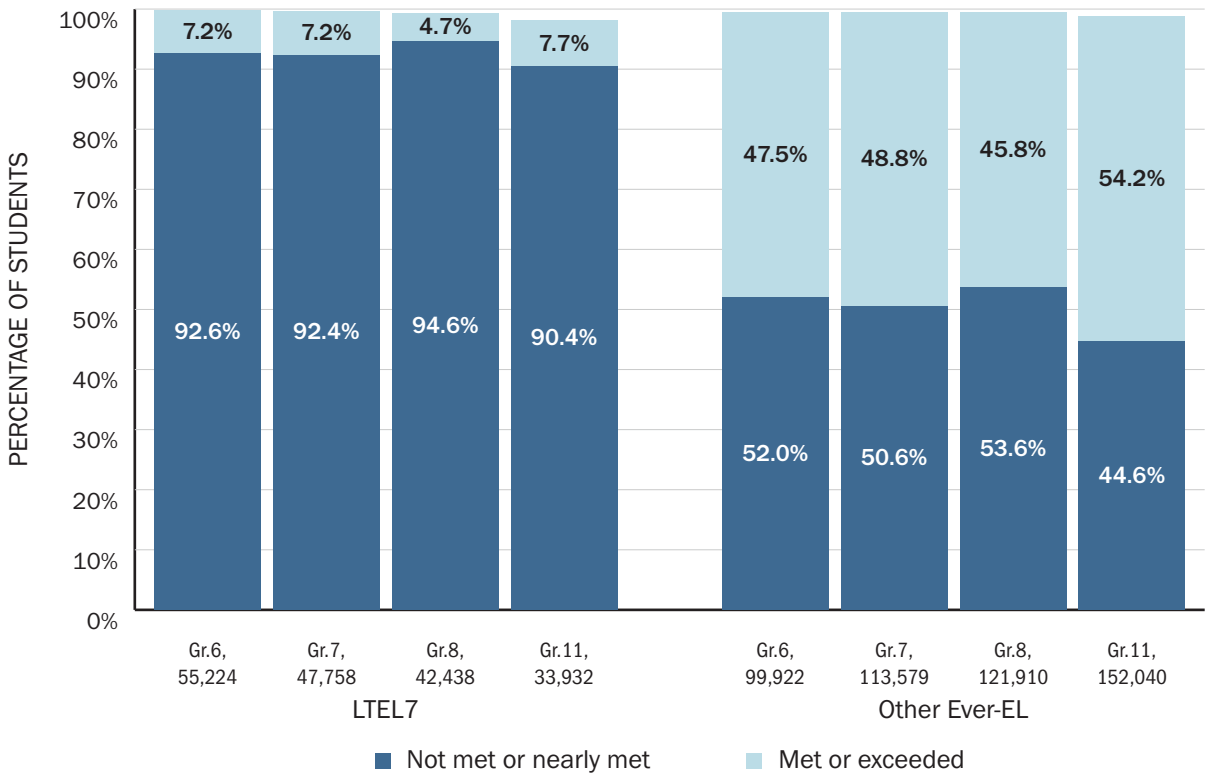


Notes: Chi-square tests confirmed that all differences between LTEL7 and Other Ever-EL were significant at $p < 0.001$. Results do not include the ~15,000 ever-EL students taking the California Alternate Assessments.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CAASPP achievement data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Results on the ELA assessment looked a little different than on the math assessment, whereby similar rates of students designated as LTEL7 were meeting or exceeding proficiency at each grade level tested (see Figure 17). In every grade, 5%–8% of students designated as LTEL7 met or exceeded state ELA standards. About half of their other ever-EL peers met or exceeded ELA minimum proficiency, which is unsurprising since this is part of the criteria necessary to become reclassified as fully English proficient in many districts. Having achieved this benchmark, most students qualify to become RFEP.

Figure 17. ELA Performance of Students Designated as LTEL7 and Other Ever-EL Peers by Grade Level, 2022–23



Note: Chi-square tests confirmed that all differences between LTEL7 and Other Ever-EL were significant at $p < 0.001$. Results do not include the ~15,000 ever-EL students taking the California Alternate Assessments (CAA).

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CAASPP achievement data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

As the size of the LTEL7 group of students got smaller and smaller, meeting proficiency on the ELA assessment remained relatively stable at around 7%. In contrast, the ability to meet math standards seemed to diminish over the grade levels as the group of remaining students designated as LTEL7 lost students who exited into the RFEP designation. The rates of the other ever-EL peers who met or exceeded the math and ELA thresholds were on par among the average math and ELA proficiency levels for California middle and high school students.[38]

Graduation

In 2022–23, far fewer students designated as LTEL7 graduated with a high school diploma than their other ever-EL peers. Analyses of students enrolled in 2022–23 found that 69% of 12th-grade LTEL7-designated students graduated with a high school diploma, compared to nearly 86% of their other ever-EL peers and 85% of never-ELs.[39] (See Table 4.) Over 8% of students designated as LTEL7 officially dropped out of high school by 12th grade compared to fewer than 4% of their other ever-EL peers and 3% of never-ELs in California.

Table 4. Graduation Statuses Among 12th-Grade Students, 2022–23

Graduation Status	LTEL7	Other Ever-EL	Never-EL
HS diploma	68.89%	85.83%	85.20%
IEP completion	2.25%	0.95%	1.21%
GED/graduated no diploma	0.04%	0.17%	0.28%
Dropout	8.29%	3.69%	3.12%
Unknown	20.54%	9.35%	10.18%
Total population	36,099	171,998	291,019

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

We also examined the portion of students receiving a certificate of high school completion with an IEP special circumstance.[40] Among students designated as LTEL7, 2.3% completed high school with an IEP special circumstance compared to 1.0% for both their other ever-EL peers and never-EL students.[41] As Table 4 also shows, the exit status of over 20% of students designated as LTEL7 was "unknown" after they ended their senior year; this is substantially higher than the 9% of their other ever-EL peers. Students designated as LTEL7 had rates (28.9%) that were more than double those of their other ever-EL peers (13.2%) and never-ELs (13.6%) in the combined categories of dropout, no-diploma graduation, and unknown status.

Characteristics of Migrant EL Students

Migrant students are those students whose parent or guardian works in the agricultural, dairy, lumber, or fishing industries and has moved within the past 3 years. As such, migrant students can experience disruptions to their education due to changing residences and often schools and districts. Migrant students are categorically eligible for free or reduced-price meals and are thus identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. Publicly available data show that of the 43,431 migrant students in California in 2022–23, the majority, around 63%, were classified as English learners, while around 30% were reclassified as fluent English proficient, and a further 7% were classified as initially fluent English proficient.

Although migrant students' parents or guardians may move for work,[a] these data showed that the majority of migrant students who were English learners stayed in the same school during the school year.[b] Among those migrant students who took the ELPAC assessment, 6% changed schools while 94% stayed in the same school for the school year. However, around one quarter of migrant students classified as EL did miss a substantial amount of school, averaging 30 absences over the

2022–23 school year. The remaining 75% of migrant students classified as EL missed fewer than 8 days (which equates to an attendance rate of over 95% for a 180-day school year), on average, during 2022–23.

Examination of the data for migrant students who were English learners and took the ELPAC assessment in 2022–23 found that the overwhelming majority of migrant English learners were Spanish speakers—94% of migrant EL students spoke Spanish as their home language while another 4% spoke Otomian languages (Mixteco). The homogeneity of the languages of migrant EL students may offer an opportunity to further develop language-specific curricular materials and professional development for teachers.

The ELPAC data—which include only students who were classified as EL—showed that 27% of migrant English learners were designated as LTEL7, or about 2.2% of all students designated as LTEL7. The other 70% were in their first 6 years of being classified as EL or tested for other reclassification reasons (3%). As with their non-migrant peers, migrant students designated as LTEL7 were more likely to have special needs and to enter schooling at the lowest levels of English proficiency compared to other ever-EL peers. About 20% of migrant students designated as LTEL7 had identified special needs, which is a lower rate than their non-migrant peers (27%).

The data showed that 79% of migrant students designated as LTEL7 entered the California schooling system with level 1 "Beginning" English proficiency and another 15% attained a level 2 score on their initial CELDT proficiency assessment. These proportions are greater than those for other students designated as LTEL7 (see Figure 11).

The socioeconomic disadvantage and beginner English skills of migrant students designated as LTEL7, along with the fact that 1 in 5 were dually identified with special needs, point to multiple factors that challenge the amount of learning time needed to learn to communicate academically in English.

[a] California Department of Education. (2016). *California Migrant Education Program profile*.

[b] Publicly available data indicate that overall migrant students have on average lower stability rates than their non-migrant peers (85.5% vs. 91.2%). See California Department of Education. *DataQuest*.

Sources: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS and ELPAC data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024). *Absenteeism by reason*.

Summary and Policy Considerations

This report provides an overview of K–12 students in California who have been English learners for 7 or more years: who they are, where they are located, what their school contexts are like, and how they have performed in school. These findings can inform discussions around how to improve policies and practices to fulfill the goals of the California English Learner Roadmap so that every English learner, including those designated as LTEL7, can "fully and meaningfully access and participate in a 21st-century education."[42]

English learners in California represent nearly 1 in 5 students in the state. Recognizing the benefits of bilingualism to student learning and development, the California English Learner Roadmap sets the vision that all ELs have the opportunity to attain high levels of English proficiency, master grade-level standards, and develop proficiency in multiple languages, with access to differentiated supports to accommodate the diversity of ELs in the state.[43] Given these goals, students classified as English learners for extended periods without attaining English proficiency may be at risk of missing out on accessing the full school curriculum, and in turn, achieving their full educational potential.

The inclusion in the California School Dashboard of students with 7 or more years as English learners—beginning in fall 2024—takes an important next step in the context of numerous changes in EL educational policy of the previous decade and continuing the focus on English learners after the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Against this benchmark, local education agencies can monitor the progress of English learners in their jurisdiction. In doing so, district administrators and state policymakers may consider the following factors raised in this report.

Findings from this report suggest several considerations for California as the state continues to identify ways to better support English learner students. Policies and practices may focus on the following five recommendations:

1. **Ensuring that all students, including those designated as LTEL7, have access to adequate schooling resources and necessary whole child supports.** The report's finding that nearly 9 out of every 10 students designated as LTEL7 are socioeconomically disadvantaged suggests that, in addition to fewer resources available in school, these students have less access to resources outside of school compared to their more affluent peers. This underscores the importance of investing in additional supports for students designated as LTEL7, such as those provided by community schools that typically offer a wide range of integrated student supports (e.g., health, mental health, and social service supports). Research shows that community schools contribute to student and school outcomes ranging from improvements in student attitudes and attendance to achievement and attainment.[44]

2. **Continuing to address the statewide teacher shortage.** Our analyses found that the schools serving proportionately more students designated as LTEL7 were significantly less likely to have enough qualified teachers to teach their courses. One key policy need is to ensure that fully qualified teachers credentialed to teach the courses are available in all schools. While California has initiated a number of programs to reduce shortages—ranging from service scholarships and loans to Grow Your Own pathways and teacher residencies[45]—additional support for both recruitment and retention may be needed in schools of concentrated poverty as well as rural and remote areas in which it is typically more challenging to recruit staff.[46]

3. **Better identifying and addressing what EL students need in their early years, given the high proportion who are also eligible for special education services.** Most students designated as LTEL7 began schooling at the lowest levels of English proficiency and many were also eligible for special education services. Key questions should include how to better support students designated as LTEL7 with disabilities and what testing accommodations would be appropriate for purposes of reclassification. Additionally, it will be important to identify the nature of disabilities students designated as LTEL7 may have—and their relationship to language processing—and at what point in their educational trajectory students are identified as having a disability in the context of their English language learning. A more detailed understanding of these issues may enable students' learning needs to be detected early, learning programs to be designed to address students' specific learning needs, and appropriate resources and supports to be deployed, which may include earlier interventions than those currently utilized.

4. **Collecting more data on how districts support English learners.** There is a lack of statewide data on the district-specific criteria for reclassification as fluent English proficient (RFEP). This leaves gaps in understanding the different targets that students need to meet and how they need to meet them in order to progress from being designated as LTEL7 to a fluent English speaker in that district. In addition, the state does not collect information about educational programming and supports for English language development offered at schools. This means policymakers and leaders lack ways to assess whether or how particular approaches or programs benefit different groups of EL students. The ability to understand how students designated as LTEL7 are faring in English immersion, dual immersion, bilingual, or other school EL programs would offer more information about the strategies and approaches that benefit this population of students.

5. **Conducting further research on the experiences of students designated as LTEL7.** Areas for further research include:

    - **Supports Needed for Graduation.** Students designated as LTEL7 are more than twice as likely to drop out of or exit high school without a diploma as other ever-EL or never-EL students. In addition to higher dropout rates, 21% of students designated as LTEL7 are listed as having no known information about their status after 12th grade, which may signal the possibility of moves or other modes of exiting the school system. More research is needed to understand the circumstances of these students with respect to both their family and school contexts so that districts and schools can seek to provide curricula and programming that address their needs and ensure that they are prepared for their college and career pathways.

    - **Academic Opportunities.** Research indicates that students classified as EL may lack the scheduling opportunities in some high schools to register for A–G courses—a minimum required for admission to California's public universities and a requirement for high school graduation in some districts.[47] It would be useful to know the extent to which this is a barrier in high schools, as well as to understand why high schools with more LTEL7 students are less likely to offer the Seal of Biliteracy. It is possible that high schools offering the Seal of Biliteracy have stronger resources in terms of teacher staffing, professional development, coursework options, and other supports for students to develop fluency in two languages and have the capacity to test students using the required assessments. Students designated as LTEL7 may

be less exposed to schooling that offers this range of supports and may be missing out on opportunities that could develop the dual language capacities associated with stronger English acquisition and academic outcomes.

- **Reclassification Processes.** Finally, it would be useful to examine why some EL students who meet state proficiency standards in ELA—a very high bar in California—may still be enrolled in EL programming. It is possible that students who met this standard may have been reclassified shortly after the test results were released, since many districts use the threshold of ELA performance for reclassification. Where that is not the case, it will be important to understand other factors that may be creating lags in reclassifying students after they demonstrate strong performance on the CAASPP. This can have implications in some schools for students' opportunities to access content-based coursework that may use reclassification-based criteria as prerequisites.

The addition of students designated as LTEL7 to the California School Dashboard is a step toward raising these kinds of questions and may serve as a foundation for a greater understanding of the educational experiences of this student group, their needs, and the supports required for their educational success.

Technical Appendix

Data

The data presented in this report include both publicly available and restricted-use data. Data on long-term English learners (LTELs), presented mainly in the first part of this report, are drawn from publicly available data downloaded from the California Department of Education (CDE) website.[48] These include state-level Summative ELPAC and Enrollment by ELAS, LTEL, and At-Risk by Grade data sets. Some of these public data sets count only students enrolled on "census day" in October and exclude students who entered school after this official count day.

To generate findings for students designated as LTEL7, the authors created a unique analytic data set from individual-level California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) data provided by request to CDE. These included data such as gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status of household conditions, English learner, and special education variables as well as discipline data. Additional individual-level data included California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) variables. These data sets include a cumulative count of all students who were enrolled during the 2022–23 school year, including those who enrolled after the census count day. These were paired with publicly available school-level data to provide additional context for student learning environments. Data sets included those for school poverty and teacher assignment monitoring outcomes, as well as data from the California school directory.[49]

The resultant 2022–23 unique analytic data set comprised a cumulative count of 5,997,196 students, including 2,111,214 ever-ELs and 330,733 students designated as LTEL7. Adult EL and "TBD" EL students are excluded from the LTEL7 analysis. Students who are enrolled in non-school locations are also excluded from the analysis.

The unique analytic data set presented cumulative data across the school year, and, to avoid the potential for double counting, the authors assigned each individual-level student observation to a single school; each student was counted only once in the school year. Thus, some findings presented may differ from those available through DataQuest or from other publicly available data.[50]

Methodology

Analysis techniques primarily involved descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics for the public as well as the unique analytic data used population data, and thus no sampling error estimates applied. We supplemented these with regression analyses to investigate associations among variables while controlling for other characteristics, such as when comparing the composition of students designated as LTEL7 to the composition of ever-ELs.

Several variables were constructed or recoded from the data provided by the CDE. Where possible, the authors compared new variable construction calculations to public postings of data as a validity check.

Variable Definition and Constructions

Students designated as LTEL7. To determine which individual observations constituted 7 or more years classified as EL in 2022–23, the authors followed rules provided to them by CDE: students must be enrolled during the 2022–23 school year, be classified as English learners, and have their initial EL status acquisition date on or before June 30, 2017.

Ever-EL. Students whose English language acquisition code is not missing and were classified as English learners (ELs), reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP), or adult English learners (ADELs) in grades K–12.

Never-EL. Students whose English language acquisition code indicated classification as English only (EO) or initial fluent English proficient (IFEP), or whose English language acquisition code was missing.

Socioeconomic disadvantage. The CDE categorizes a student as socioeconomically disadvantaged if they are eligible for or participating in the free or reduced-price meal program, or if their parents did not receive a high school diploma. Students experiencing homelessness, foster youth or tribal foster youth, Title I Part C migrant students, students enrolled in juvenile court school, or other directly certified students are also categorized by the CDE as socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Languages. The CDE offers caregivers over 100 home languages to report. For parsimony, the languages were recoded into binary variables of whether or not the student spoke a subset of those languages. Binary variables were created for the 16 languages (including English) spoken by more than 10,000 California students. More than 90 other languages were condensed into one "Other listed languages" binary variable. The CDE category of "Miscellaneous, not listed" was also maintained in the recoding process.

Special education needs. Students with disabilities receiving special education or related services according to an Individualized Education Plan.

Race/ethnicity. CDE enrollment data record a student's caregiver-reported ethno-racial identity. When this datum is missing, it is replaced by the CAASPP ethno-racial identifier. If the ethno-racial identifier is still unknown, it is coded as "not reported."

Gender. CDE records all students' caregiver-reported gender as female, male, or nonbinary, and these definitions are used in descriptive statistics. For regression models, the analyses used a binary indicator of male or not.

Grade. Student grade during enrollment of longest duration in 2022–23.

Note: In the instances where a student has attended multiple schools in the 2022–23 school year and their background characteristics differ between schools, the characteristics of the student as of the most recent enrollment are used.

District locale. CDE applies census codes to the district identifiers. These many codes are collapsed into three categories of "city" if the locale code ranges from 11 to 19, "suburb" if the code ranges from 21 to 29, and "ruraltown" if the locale code ranges from 31 to 49.

Teaching assignments by fully credentialed staff. Teachers are defined as "fully credentialed" if they possess a clear or preliminary teaching credential to teach their assigned course. This is measured as the proportion of time related to each course as it contributes the full FTE of the staff member.[51]

Chronic absenteeism. The percentage of students who were absent for 10% or more of the instructional days they were enrolled to attend. Students must be enrolled for at least 31 instructional days to be included in the chronic absenteeism rate.[52]

Seal of biliteracy diploma offered. The number of seals awarded per high school were recoded into whether or not the school awarded any seals of biliteracy.

FRPM. The proportion of students attending the school who were eligible for federal free- or reduced-price school meals.

School population. The count of the total number of students enrolled in the school.

Analytic Models

Analyses on the CDE LTEL public data in the Introduction section are simply descriptive—we present averages, and any discussion of these data point out any similarities and differences between and among different comparison groups, without running statistical tests.

The descriptive statistics that compare students designated as LTEL7 to their other ever-EL peers use chi-square tests of association to verify that the averages of different groups are significantly different.

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were used in the school context section, since the outcome variable of proportion of the student body at the school who are designated as LTEL7 is a continuous outcome, ranging from 0.00 to 1.00. While not perfectly distributed between 0.00 and 1.00, the distribution of this outcome is good enough that it does not violate the best linear unbiased estimator assumptions of OLS. The variables listed in the left column of Table A1 are each of the six key school context conditions hypothesized to relate to the proportion of the student body at the school who are designated as LTEL7. Model 1 of Table A1 shows the association of other school context variables that are controlled in the model to isolate the association of the key school context factors. These school context regression models in Table A1 control for the proportion of ever-EL school population, proportion of students receiving free- or reduced-price school meals, total size of the student body population, the grade levels served at the school, and locale. These five models excluded elementary-only serving schools, since their population of students designated as LTEL7 clouds the results of the associations because their distribution is left-skewed to 0%.

Model 1: $Y = B_0 + SB_1$
Where S is all the school context control variables.

Model 2: $Y = B_0 + SB_1 + XB_2$
Where S is all the school context control variables and X is proportion of teaching assignments by fully credentialed staff.

Model 3: $Y = B_0 + SB_1 + XB_2$
Where S is all the school context control variables and X is proportion of teaching assignments without fully credentialed staff.

Model 4: $Y = B_0 + SB_1 + XB_2$
Where S is all the school context control variables and X is the chronic absenteeism rate of the school.

Model 5: $Y = B_0 + SB_1 + XB_2$
Where S is all the school context control variables and X is the rate of 4-year high school diplomas awarded at the school.

Model 6: $Y = B_0 + SB_1 + XB_2$
Where S is all the school context control variables and X is the access to the Seal of Biliteracy at the school.

Table A2 shows the multinomial regression model used to examine initial CELDT English proficiency intake test scores for students designated as LTEL7 compared to all other ever-EL students. The outcomes were the likelihood of scoring at each level, with level 1 being the reference group (e.g., the difference between scoring a level 1 vs. level 2 or 3 or 4 or 5). Each level 2–5 is compared to the association with level 1, "Beginning to Develop." Predictors in the model include a socioeconomic disadvantage status (versus not disadvantaged), a special needs designation (versus no special needs), and the interactions of LTEL7 designation and socioeconomic disadvantage as well as LTEL7 designation and special education designation. The models also control for differences in gender, race/ethnicity, and language spoken at home. Odds ratios equal to 1 or not significantly different ($p \geq 0.05$) from 1 indicate that the factor does not distinguish a difference between level 1 and the other level (CELDT level 2, level 3, level 4, or level 5). Odds ratios greater than 1 and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) indicate that the key factor associates with higher odds of a student attaining that level 2, 3, 4, or 5 than they otherwise would score a level 1. Odds ratios less than 1 and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) indicate that the key factor associates with lower odds of a student attaining a level 2, 3, 4, or 5 than scoring a level 1, or, put another way, higher odds of student attaining a level 1 CELDT score.

Table A1. Regression Models Testing the Associations Between School Context Factors With Proportion of LTEL7 School Population

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Bi-variate correlation		-0.128	0.170	0.342	-0.282	-0.278
% Teaching assignments by fully credentialed staff		-0.001*** (0.000)				
% Teaching assignments without fully credentialed staff			0.001*** (0.000)			
% Chronic absentee rate				0.001*** (0.000)		
% 4-year HS diploma					-0.001*** (0.000)	

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Seal of Biliteracy HS diploma offered						-0.036*** (0.004)
% Ever-EL	0.278*** (0.005)	0.283*** (0.005)	0.286*** (0.005)	0.277*** (0.006)	0.257*** (0.009)	0.263*** (0.009)
% FRPM	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)
Total school population	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)
Gr. 6–8	(reference)	(reference)	(reference)	(reference)	N/A	N/A
Gr. 9–12	-0.015*** (0.002)	-0.019*** (0.002)	-0.020*** (0.003)	-0.031*** (0.003)	-0.005 (0.004)	-0.013** (0.004)
Gr. K–12	-0.030*** (0.002)	-0.036*** (0.003)	-0.035*** (0.002)	-0.036*** (0.002)	(reference)	(reference)
City locale	-0.021*** (0.003)	-0.021*** (0.003)	-0.019*** (0.003)	-0.028*** (0.003)	-0.036*** (0.004)	-0.025*** (0.004)
Rural or town locale	(reference)	(reference)	(reference)	(reference)	(reference)	(reference)
Suburban locale	-0.006* (0.003)	-0.005* (0.002)	-0.005 (0.002)	-0.012*** (0.002)	-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.007 (0.004)
Constant	0.015*** (0.004)	0.069*** (0.005)	0.004 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	0.108*** (0.010)	0.043*** (0.007)
Observations	4,360	4,360	4,360	4,155	1,772	1,772
Adjusted R-squared	0.545	0.565	0.567	0.575	0.512	0.501

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education merged with publicly available school data. (2024).

Table A2. Probability of Students Designated as LTEL7 Testing at Each CELDT Level Beyond Level 1 Compared to Other Ever-ELs, 2022–23

Independent variables	CELDT level 2	CELDT level 3	CELDT level 4	CELDT level 5
LTEL7	0.496*** (0.007)	0.206*** (0.004)	0.106*** (0.006)	0.071*** (0.013)
Socioeconomic disadvantage	0.675*** (0.005)	0.452*** (0.003)	0.313*** (0.005)	0.259*** (0.009)
LTEL7 and socioeconomic disadvantage	1.101*** (0.017)	1.338*** (0.025)	1.674*** (0.108)	1.637* (0.333)
Special education needs	0.472*** (0.004)	0.271*** (0.003)	0.212*** (0.007)	0.127*** (0.014)
LTEL7 and special education needs	1.459*** (0.018)	1.933*** (0.035)	2.277*** (0.163)	3.159*** (0.814)
Control variables included gender, race/ethnicity, and language spoken at home	X	X	X	X
Constant	0.934* (0.025)	1.793*** (0.047)	0.309*** (0.017)	0.070*** (0.009)
Observations (N)	1,288,802	1,288,802	1,288,802	1,288,802

Pseudo R-squared = 0.0483, *** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$

How to read this table: This multinomial regression model tested the likelihood that LTEL7 students scored differently than other ever-ELs at each progressive level of the CELDT (from level 2 through 5) compared to level 1, including controls for socioeconomic disadvantage, special needs, race/ethnicity, and language spoken at home. All odds ratios of interest (LTEL7 as the predictor, compared to other ever-ELs) were significant and less than 1. Less than 1 indicates that students with LTEL7 status have lower odds of attaining a level higher than level 1 compared to their other ever-EL peers.

Note: A multinomial regression included CELDT levels as the outcome, with CELDT level 1 being the reference group.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of CALPADS enrollment data provided by the California Department of Education. (2024).

Endnotes

1. California State Department of Education. (2014). *California English language development standards: Kindergarten through grade 12*.

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9. Correspondence with CDE staff corroborated this point. J. Isler (personal communication, October 17, 2024).

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12. This number is a cumulative count, which includes both students who enrolled at the start of the year and those who enrolled after census day. Further information on how counts were generated can be found in the technical appendix to this report.

13. A student is generally considered socioeconomically disadvantaged if they are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, or if none of their parents received a high school diploma. Students experiencing homelessness, in foster care, in juvenile justice, or who are eligible as a Title I Part C Migrants are also regarded as socioeconomically disadvantaged.

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15. Among the LTEL7 status, Asian is the only racial or ethnic category that has a modest negative correlation with socioeconomic disadvantage (Pearson's r = -0.13).

16. Learning Policy Institute analysis of California Department of Education. *Enrollment by ethnicity and grade* [Data set]. https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/EnrEthGrd.aspx?cds=00&agglevel=state&year=2022-23

17. Per California definitions, a student needs to be enrolled in grade 6 or higher to be classified as a long-term English learner. Additionally, transitional kindergarten (TK) does not "count" as a year for LTEL classification, although students do receive EL services in TK. California Department of Education. (2024). *Glossary of terms for English learner (EL) reports.* https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/longtermel/Glossary.aspx

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21. Chi-square test, $p < .001$.

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24. Regression models underlie these results and verify the independent associations of the characteristics, controlling for factors such as the socioeconomic status, home language, gender, and race/ethnicity of the students. Results are reported only if the association between the predictor variable and the outcome is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Substantial differences are also noted.

25. Goldschmidt, P., & Hakuta, K. (2017). *Incorporating English learner progress into state accountability systems.* Council of Chief State School Officers.

26. The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) was used until 2017–18 and subsequently replaced by the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California, or ELPAC.

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34. Analysis of CAASPP data in this brief includes only the Smarter Balanced assessments taken by the majority of students. Around 2% of students who are English learners for 7 or more years take the California Alternate Assessment intended for students with more significant cognitive disabilities.

35. California Education Code § 313 – 313.5 (2013). https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=313.&lawCode=EDC. The specific wording regarding criterion 4 is: "Comparison of the performance of the pupil in basic skills against an empirically established range of performance in basic skills based upon the performance of English proficient pupils of the same age, that demonstrates whether the pupil is sufficiently proficient in English to participate effectively in a curriculum designed for pupils of the same age whose native language is English."

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