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EDUCATION POLICY

DLL NATIONAL WORK GROUP

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SEEING CLEARLY

Five Lenses to Bring English Learner Data into Focus

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About the Author

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Terminology

This paper uses the term English learner (EL) to refer to students between the ages of 3–21 enrolled in the PreK–12 educational system who have a native language other than English and are in the process of developing their academic English language proficiency. This definition aligns with that used in a recent consensus report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

Nearly one-third of children in the United States live in a household where a language other than English is spoken.[1] At school, one in ten receives services as an English learner (EL), the fastest-growing student group in K–12 public education.[2] Across diverse geographic and political contexts, schools play a critical role in integrating these students into American society, equipping them with English mastery for strong college and career outcomes.

Success with this population matters. *So, how can state and local leaders tell if a school or district is doing a good job with ELs?* This seemingly simple question yields fuzzy answers. Data policies on EL outcomes are often complexly designed and generate information that is frequently misinterpreted. As a result, many states' and districts' vision of what constitutes excellence for ELs is blurry at best. When exemplars are hard to see, it is hard to learn from and replicate their successes.

Worse yet, data about ELs are often downright misleading in ways that can present these students as an unsolvable problem or a liability. For example, it is common to refer to a large, stagnant "achievement gap" between ELs and native English speakers. This rhetoric is useful to attract public attention to the needs of a historically marginalized population. However, the framing quickly becomes a catchall phrase that misrepresents the issue. If stakeholders are serious about closing an EL "gap," they will need to diagnose the root causes of it in the data, understand its contours, and have a means to detect whether they are making progress.

Understanding and drawing inferences from EL data is complicated for a variety of reasons. This report will offer a framework of five corrective lenses that are critical for seeing this population accurately:

1. The EL subgroup is not static.
2. Learning a language takes time—but not forever.
3. ELs at different stages progress at different rates.
4. English skills impact academic performance.
5. Poverty affects most ELs and, as a result, their educational outcomes.

These EL data quandaries are not new. For years, academics have noted issues with EL data collection, reporting, and accountability policies.[3] However, the research has struggled to gain comprehensibility with practitioners, advocates, community stakeholders, and the media, to say nothing of policymakers. There is a clear "translation" problem of communicating what researchers have identified in academic circles into plain, actionable language on the ground.

Moreover, there is a disconnect between EL specialists and general educator professional

> **There is a clear "translation" problem of communicating what researchers have identified in academic circles into plain, actionable language on the ground.**

communities. While EL educators are often well aware of data challenges, their insights rarely reach leaders at all levels. In the words of Lesli Maxwell, editor of *Education Week*, the data issues are a "hot topic in the world of EL[s]" but struggle to gain traction more broadly.[4]

Now, in light of new flexibilities for setting EL outcomes, goals, and accountability metrics under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it is critical to explain these issues and build data literacy among a wider audience. In the ESSA era, ensuring equity and transparency for ELs will require expanding the coalition of stakeholders who understand EL-related data beyond just technical experts. This paper shines a light on data challenges and sets a vision for how to improve the collection, use, and interpretation of EL data. Ultimately, EL data conversations must shift from the margins to the core of equity-minded education reform.

Further Reading

A companion case study to this report, *Pioneering Change: Leveraging Data to Reform English Learner Education in Oregon*, illustrates what it looks like to put key principles for EL data into action through concrete policy changes. State leaders in Oregon passed legislation and revised policies to design more thoughtful EL data indicators, codify more transparent reporting requirements, and link data insights to additional support for ELs.

THE STATE OF ENGLISH LEARNER DATA

Data on student outcomes enable decision-makers to spot where districts and schools are serving which students well, and under what circumstances. When these data are accurate, accessible, and well understood, leaders are better equipped to replicate successes and address needs. This reality is true for all students generally and for EL students specifically as an underserved population.

Historically, federal policies play a major role in shaping what EL outcomes data are collected—with varying degrees of transparency and publicly accessible reporting. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is one frequently-cited source of data on EL math, reading, and science achievement, sampled at the state and national level. In a much more expansive way, reauthorizations of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) have significantly impacted structures for EL data collection and reporting over the years.

Looking Back: Data Under No Child Left Behind

Since the reauthorization of ESEA in 2002 as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), American public education systems have emphasized outcomes-related data tied to accountability. NCLB required states to measure the academic performance of all students in grades 3–8 and once in high school in math and reading. For current and recently-exited ELs in grades K–12, states also annually measured English skills using a statewide English language proficiency (ELP) test. To fulfill this requirement, two multi-state ELP test consortia emerged: WIDA (originally named for its three lead states, Wisconsin, Delaware, and Arkansas) and the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21). Other states developed their own tests. These ELP exams assess students' English abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing and score them according to different levels. WIDA, for example, uses a scale of six levels, with level 5 indicating English proficiency.

NCLB required districts to report data to federal officials on both academic and ELP measures for ELs under Title III, the part of the federal law designed to benefit ELs. Title III mandated that districts and states report on three Annual Measurable Achievement Outcomes, or AMAOs:

- **AMAO 1, English Language Growth:** annual increases in the number or percentage of children making progress in learning English on the state's ELP test
- **AMAO 2, English Language Achievement:** annual increases in the number or percentage of children attaining English proficiency by the end of each school year

- **AMAO 3, Academic Achievement:** annual performance and participation targets in assessments in reading and math[5]

The AMAOs represented a first attempt to gather outcomes-related data on the EL population at scale. However, there were several weaknesses to the metrics' design for ELs, ones that became clearer as the policy played out over the next decade.

Due to federal parameters, the majority of states set one-size-fits-all targets and timelines for English language growth (AMAO 1) and achievement (AMAO 2) throughout the NCLB era, despite the diversity of the population and the variety of factors impacting progress. There was substantial emphasis on ELs meeting an academic achievement bar (AMAO 3), even though students were designated as ELs with the explicit expectation that their English skills would interfere with academic success. Moreover, AMAO 3's design was fundamentally flawed because the most successful ELs would exit the subgroup each year, so that their success never translated into a bump in EL achievement. Finally, researchers found that AMAOs were often poorly understood by practitioners beyond the limited group of EL-specific district administrators, let alone the broader audience of public stakeholders, because of the calculations' complexity.[6] More broadly, as was the case with other outcomes, the AMAO data were not made publicly available in an obvious way.

The View Ahead: Data Under ESSA

The use of EL data faces a major turning point as states shift from NCLB to the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. With provisions in effect for the 2017–18 school year, ESSA allows states considerably greater flexibility in setting educational goals and deciding how to meet them.

For ELs, the law eliminates AMAOs and shifts accountability related to ELP progress from Title III to Title I, the largest source of federal funding dedicated to schools serving high numbers of students in poverty. Several scholars and advocates have argued that the move heightens the visibility and importance of ELs by integrating their linguistic outcomes into the core accountability structure for all students under Title I, which comes with a much larger pot of funding.[7]

Under Title I, states can now choose to include ELP growth (like AMAO 1) as a sole indicator or devise a composite set of indicators in addition to ELP growth, such as data on ELP achievement (like AMAO 2) and long-term ELs.[8] In addition to the ELP growth measure, Title I requires data and accountability for EL academic outcomes in math and reading (like AMAO 3).

While much attention has centered on the EL indicators under Title I, Title III also features key changes. This section of the law newly requires extra EL data collection and reporting metrics. These Title III requirements lack the full force of what the Data Quality Campaign (DQC), a nonpartisan advocacy organization, has described as the "hammer" of Title I accountability. However, the Title III data have great value as a "flashlight," which DQC describes as the ability to "shine a light on what is working, to empower decision makers, and to illuminate the path to success."[9]

Title III of ESSA stipulates that districts must report to the state on:

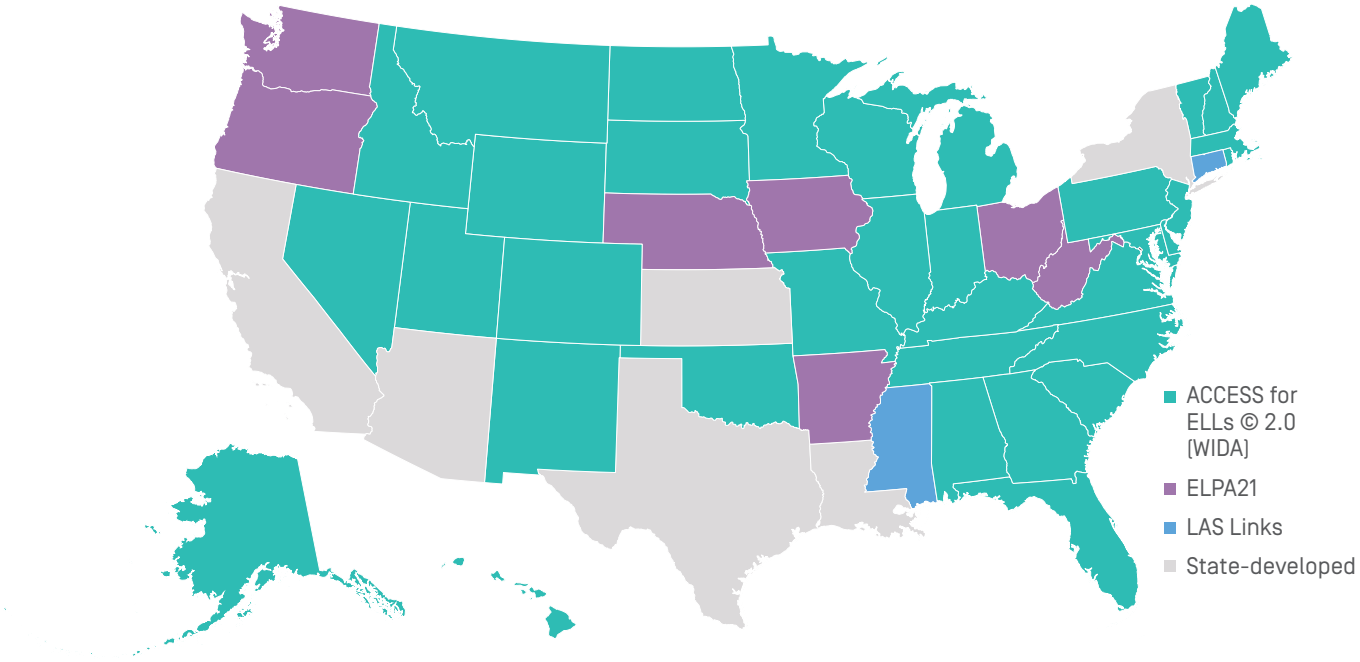
- the number and percentage of K–12 ELs making progress in English, in aggregate and disaggregated by students with disabilities;
- the number and percentage of K–12 ELs who achieve English proficiency and exit EL status;
- the number and percentage of former ELs who meet academic achievement standards for each year of the four years after exiting EL services, in aggregate and disaggregated by students with disabilities; and
- the number and percentage of ELs who have not exited EL status after five years, similar to the concept of a "long-term" EL category.[10]

Codifying these data reporting policies is valuable. However, precisely because the Title III requirements *are* distinct from core accountability debates, it is critical to ensure the data are maximally visible and accessible to public stakeholders. Since the extra data policies fall under Title III, it is unclear to what extent states will publicly report the data or incorporate the information into the more prominent Title I "report cards."[11]

The issue of "former" ELs represents an area most in need of coherence between Title I accountability and Title III data reporting policies. Under Title I, states may choose to incorporate former ELs in accountability systems for up to four years after they exit, yielding a composite subgroup of previously-identified ELs combined with still-classified ELs. This flexibility allows states to generate a fuller picture of how students do after exiting EL status. But the option has concerned some advocates who worry that inclusion of former ELs could mask current EL performance. Some have pushed to ensure Title I report cards disaggregate between the two groups—a reporting requirement under Title III.[12]

In any event, the Title III-required data have the potential to create a more nuanced understanding of states' EL performance and yield more granular data

Figure 1 | K–12 English Language Proficiency Assessments by State, 2016–17

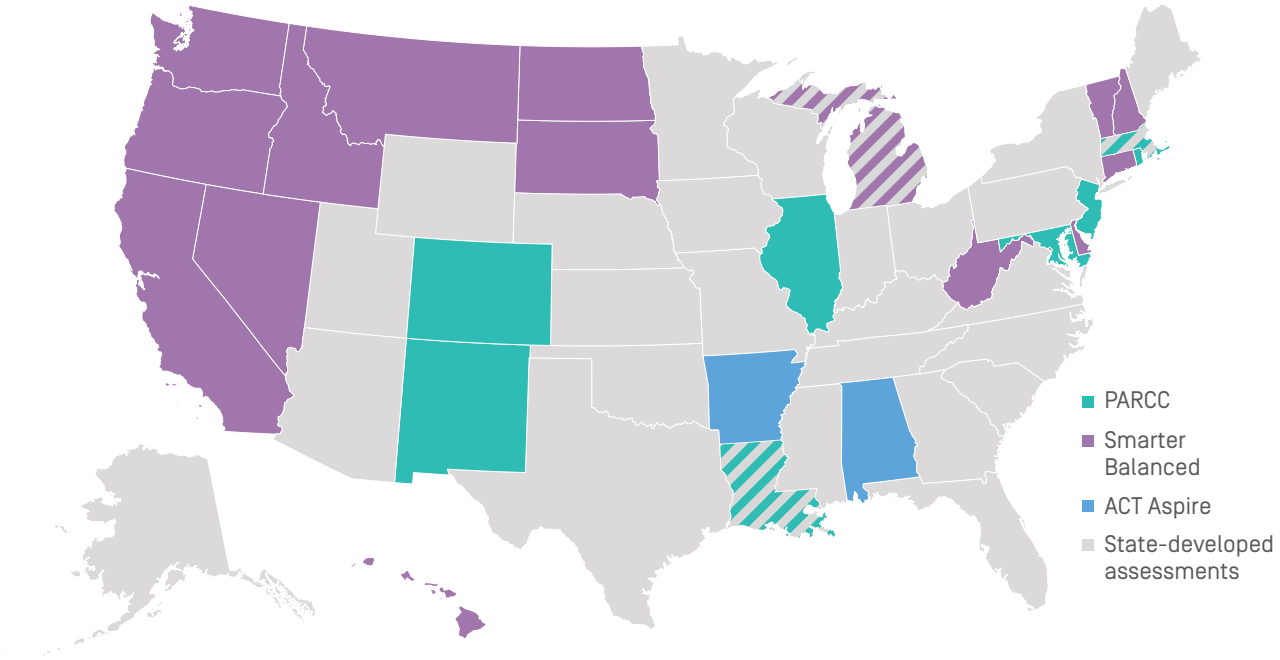


Source: WIDA Consortium, "Consortium Members," *Wisconsin Center for Education Research*, 2017, **https://www.wida.us/membership/states/**; ELPA21, "ELLs in ELPA21," *University of California Los Angeles*, 2017, **http://www.elpa21.org/standards-initiatives/ells-elpa21**.

over a longer arc of time. For example, under NCLB, former ELs were monitored for only two—not four—years. There were also no specific requirements to report on long-term ELs or to disaggregate for ELs with disabilities. In this way, Title III provisions illustrate the potential of improved "flashlight" data distinct from "hammer" data.

Currently, to gather data on K-12 students' English language proficiencies, 36 states use WIDA's ACCESS 2.0, 7 use ELPA21, 2 use LAS Links, and the remainder use their own tests, such as New York, California, Texas, and Arizona (see **Figure 1**). To gather data on academic performance in math and reading in grades 3–8, 14 states use Smarter Balanced, 7 use Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, 3 use a hybrid of consortium and state-developed assessments, and 2 use ACT Aspire. The remaining 25 states use state-developed assessments (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2 | Academic Math and Reading Assessments for Grades 3–8 by State, 2016–17



Note: The data above, collected at mid-year, reflect the assessments that states intended to administer at the end of year.

Source: Catherine Gewertz, "What Tests Does Each State Require?" *Education Week*, February 15, 2017.

READING AND USING ENGLISH LEARNER DATA: FIVE KEY LENSES

With new flexibility under ESSA, each state has considerable autonomy regarding EL data decisions. But trying to understand and avoid the pitfalls of NCLB's AMAOs and related data points is not easy work. As noted by national advocacy organization Education Trust, many state- and community-based organizations are seeking to "engage with leaders in state education agencies as they make critical decisions affecting English learners" but "[t]he technical language and complexity of this task can feel overwhelming."[13]

What do leaders and advocates need to keep in mind to use EL data responsibly and effectively? The following section offers five corrective lenses to help stakeholders decode EL data and related claims.

1. The EL subgroup is not static.

- **Problem:** EL outcomes are a moving target in data systems, which biases data interpretations against current ELs.
- **Related data points:** Current EL academic achievement, graduation rates.
- **Solution:** Report all EL outcomes disaggregated by former and current ELs. Create an "ever-EL" group to track the entire group of current and former ELs over their K–12 years.

EL status is intended to be temporary. Every year, schools identify new students who qualify to "enter" EL status, and schools "exit" those who no longer need services because they have achieved English proficiency. Due to migration trends and shifting demographics, this flow of EL students entering and exiting is not necessarily balanced every year; the population is in a state of constant flux. Scholars refer to this reality as subgroup "instability," which creates the effect of a "revolving door"[14] or a "moving target" when evaluating performance.[15]

The "revolving door" nature of the EL subgroup is one of the most critical data challenges because it creates a Catch-22 situation for schools.[16] When educators are successful at shifting ELs to English proficiency, students "exit" and are systematically removed from the subgroup. Their scores no longer count for the EL subgroup. Under this design, there will *always* be an EL achievement gap—it is "the gap that cannot go away."[17] As leading EL experts assert, "it becomes impossible to determine which schools and practices are successful for these students,"[18] and "districts can't prove they did a good job."[19]

More longitudinal data tracking for ELs is therefore imperative. Meaningful evaluation should compare performance of current ELs, former ELs, and "ever" and "never" ELs over time (see **Table 1**). Indeed, in some cases, these data reveal that former ELs actually *outperform* non-ELs (see **Figure 4**).[20] Researchers have also proposed creating an ever-EL category, to combine current and former ELs and create a more integrated sense of how the population is faring overall (see **Figure 3**).[21] Otherwise, as researcher Vivian Louie recently concluded, "with neither an ever-EL category nor a longitudinal orientation toward collecting and analyzing EL data, we risk skewing the picture of EL achievement gaps and of our success or challenges in addressing them."[22]

Table 1 | Terms for K–12 English Learner (EL) and English-Proficient Students

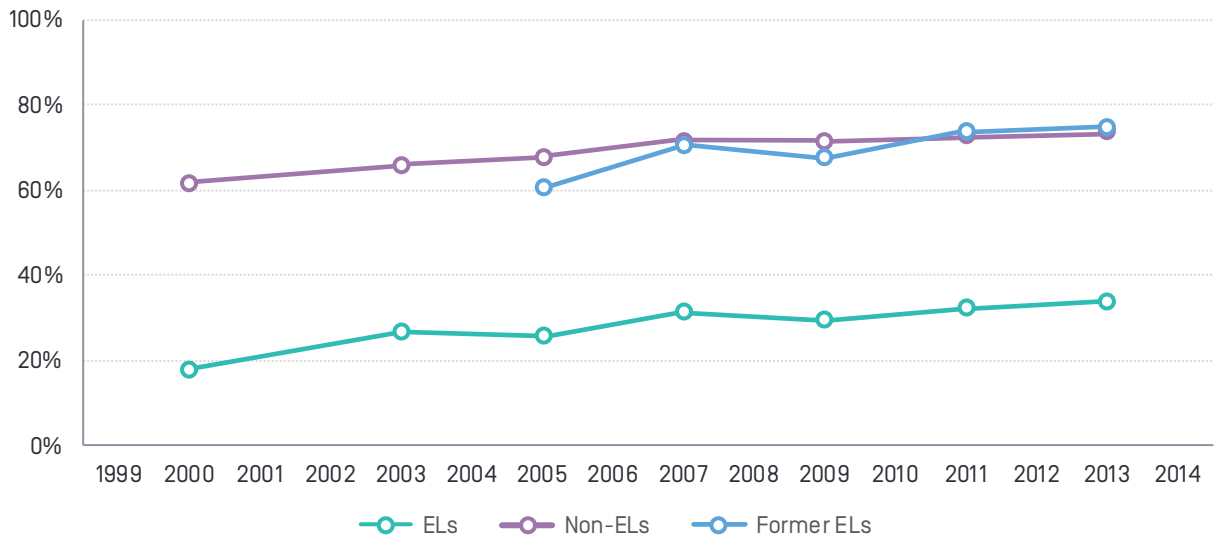
Term	Definition
Current EL	Currently classified.
Former EL	All K–12 students who were formerly classified as ELs, including those within and beyond the federally-mandated monitoring window. *Note: Under Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA), the term specifically refers to students monitored for a four-year window after exiting the EL status. Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), it refers to students monitored for a two-year window after exiting. Few states and districts currently report outcomes for former EL students longitudinally, beyond these windows.*
Ever EL	All K–12 students who have "ever" been classified as an EL (current and former EL categories combined).
Never EL	Students never identified as ELs. Native English speakers or initially English proficient.

Figure 3 | The Ever-EL Framework

Nationally, the majority of current ELs, represented by the white area, are concentrated in the early and elementary grades. As more and more exit EL status over time, the population of former ELs in the K–12 system increases over time, represented by the teal area. While new immigrants tend to enter school at higher grade levels, these students typically represent a small proportion of the overall EL population in most states and districts. The circle, encompassing both the teal and white space, represents the total population of students who have "ever" been EL in K–12, ever-ELs.

Source: Karen Thompson, "Incorporating English Learners into State Accountability Systems," presentation, "What Does ESSA Mean for English Learners and Accountability?" event at the American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC, April 7, 2016.
Graphic representation by Ilana Umanksy.

Figure 4 | Percent of U.S. Public School Students Scoring at the Basic Level or Above in Fourth-Grade Reading, by English Learner Status (Selected Years, 2000–13)



This graph uses National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data to compare a sample of current, former,* and non-ELs performance in fourth-grade reading achievement. It illustrates how former ELs can achieve at levels similar to—if not higher than—non-ELs.

***Note:** Here, NAEP defines "former ELs" as who received ELL services within the past two years.

Source: David Murphey, *The Academic Achievement of English Language Learners: Data for the U.S. and Each of the States* (Bethesda, MD: Child Trends, 2014).

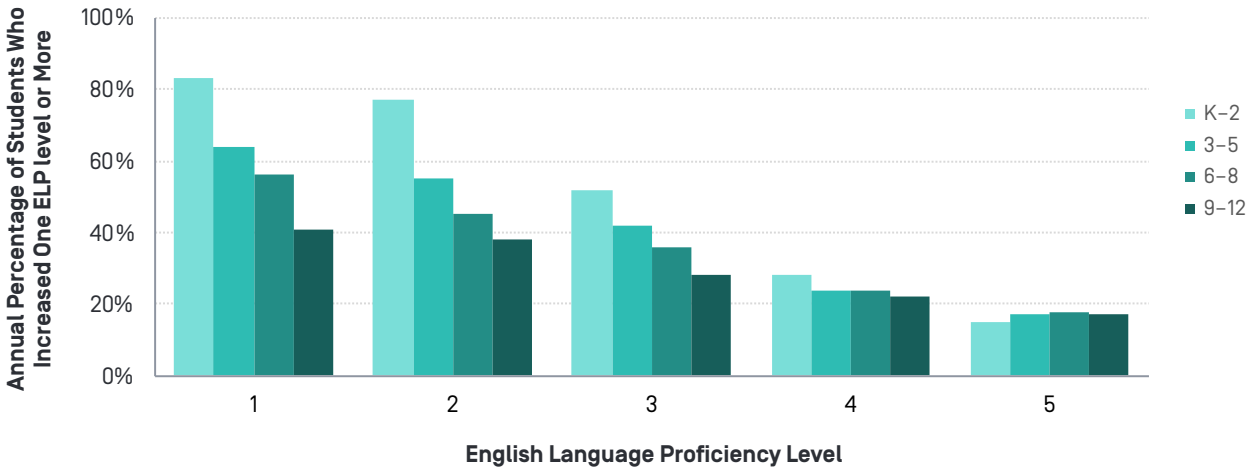
2. Learning a language takes time—but not forever.

- **Problem:** It is unrealistic to set a one-size-fits-all timeframe for language acquisition.
- **Related data points:** Reclassification rates, or ELP achievement.
- **Solution:** Use reclassification data with extreme caution. Monitor and report on ELs who have not exited after five to seven years.

Even under the best conditions, learning a new language is a gradual process over several years. Research suggests learning conversational English takes three to five years, while full academic proficiency takes four to seven years.[23]

Within that window, it is clearly preferable for students to reach genuine, robust proficiency sooner rather than later. However, an overemphasis on rapid English attainment and reclassification can introduce perverse incentives with a "rush to reclassification" in which schools and districts exit ELs before they are ready to thrive in mainstream classes.[24] For example, studies have shown that schools in Arizona exited thousands of ELs prematurely under their strict English-only instructional policies, which aim to have ELs proficient in a year's time.[25] However, keeping students designated as ELs indefinitely can impact their access to core curriculum and integration with English-proficient peers, especially at the secondary level.

Figure 5 | English Learner Growth: The "Lower is Faster, Higher is Slower" Principle



Source: H. Gary Cook, Tim Boals, Carsten Wilmes, and Martin Santos, *Issues in the Development of Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for WIDA Consortium* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 2007).

The type of language instruction program also significantly impacts appropriate timeframes for reclassification. Research suggests that ELs in bilingual programs take longer, on average, to attain English proficiency. However, in the long run, they are ultimately more likely to be reclassified and have stronger academic outcomes. Rushing to reclassify these students could undermine their programs' efficacy.[26]

Ultimately, there is a "Goldilocks" nature to reclassification: the goal is to exit ELs not too early, not too late, but when it's just right for their long-term success.

Studies have found there is "a reclassification window" during the upper elementary grades, where most students who entered school in kindergarten will exit EL status.[27] Overall, this trend is a neutral one, corresponding to the developmental realities of language acquisition. However, ELs who stay classified beyond this point could constitute a red flag, possibly signaling low-quality instruction or inappropriate reclassification criteria. It could also reflect a presence of ELs with particular disabilities, which presents a distinct set of policy considerations.

3. ELs at different stages progress at different rates.

- **Problem:** It is unrealistic to set one-size-fits-all expectations for year-to-year English language proficiency (ELP) growth.
- **Related data points:** ELP growth.
- **Solution:** Use growth models that account for contributing factors like initial ELP level and grade of entry.

Learning a language is not a smooth, linear process. Students' initial level of English and grade of school entry affect the rate of language growth.[28] Researchers widely note a "lower is faster, higher is slower" rule: in general, it is more difficult for

ELs to achieve English growth at higher grades and higher English levels. The graph above (see **Figure 5**) illustrates the "lower is faster, higher is slower" principle with annual WIDA data. ELs in lower grades and lower ELP levels made more growth (an increase of one ELP level or more) than ELs in higher grades and higher ELP levels.

This growth principle is an important one to keep in mind when evaluating current EL progress to make claims about a school's performance. For example, it will be easier for an average kindergarten EL to move from level 1 to 2 on the ELP exam than a sixth grade EL to move from level 4 to 5. This reality suggests the need for differentiated growth goals, ones that are more ambitious earlier on and more conservative in older years and/or at higher ELP levels. Over a dozen states began to use differentiated growth models for ELP progress (AMAO 1) under NCLB.[29] Many states are moving forward with differentiated growth models under ESSA.[30]

4. English skills impact academic performance.

- **Problem:** Below a certain threshold of English proficiency, it is impossible to make valid claims about academic proficiency in English.
- **Related data points:** Current EL academic achievement.
- **Solution:** In general, use academic *achievement* data with extreme caution. Emphasize academic growth models for current ELs. Set different academic targets based on ELP level.

By definition, current EL academic scores should lag in comparison to English-proficient peers.[31] Indeed, before certain English levels, language interferes too significantly to derive meaning from academic indicators. Researchers have used techniques to estimate that EL academic scores are only valid on math starting at a level 3 of WIDA and on reading starting at level 4 (see **Figure 6**).[32] Before those thresholds, it is simply not possible to make valid inferences from EL academic results.

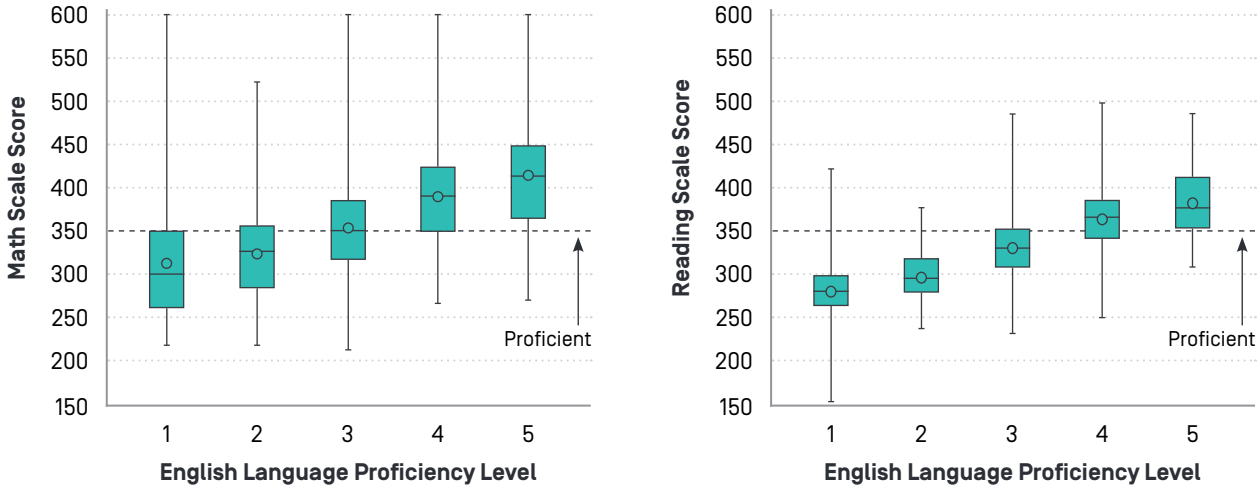
Coupled with the unstable, "revolving door" nature of EL status, setting a one-size-fits-all achievement bar biases results against the EL subgroup.[33] It underrepresents progress, discourages students and educators, and reinforces a deficit-based mindset where ELs are framed as dragging down test scores.

And yet, EL experts stress there is still a need to keep an eye on academic performance even at nascent English levels. Otherwise, they assert, systems may "creat[e] incentives for educators to focus on ELP development apart from or instead of content area knowledge."[34] To use academic indicators fairly, states could set differentiated expectations based on ELP and grade levels in setting both academic growth and achievement goals. While federal law prohibits growth or achievement goals to vary by student characteristic, experts argue that ELP level constitutes a "prior assessment result," a factor that is permitted in setting academic growth models.[35] Striking a balance between impossibly ambitious or overly relaxed, academic growth models for ELs provide a way to evaluate ELs more fairly.[36]

5. Poverty affects most ELs and, as a result, their educational outcomes.

- **Problem:** Without consideration of how poverty impacts the EL population, interpretations of EL data may misdiagnose root causes.
- **Related data points:** All outcomes.
- **Solution:** Report demographic needs data alongside outcomes data to bring awareness to the realities of school and district needs.

Figure 6 | The Validity Threshold: When Are Academic Test Scores Valid for English Learners?



The circle represents the mean academic score at a given ELP level. The box's center line represents the median score. When the median score (the circle) crosses above the horizontal proficiency line, half of the ELs at the given ELP level are performing proficiently on the academic test. That is, they are equally likely to score proficient as they are to score non-proficient. The method presumes that this point of "equal likelihood" is when students' English language abilities are not interfering with academic performance. Generally, this validity threshold is crossed around ELP level 3 in math and ELP level 4 in reading using WIDA data.

Source: Robert Linquanti and H. Gary Cook, *Toward a "Common Definition of English Learner"* (Washington, DC: The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013), 26.

Poverty impacts the development of ELs—and all students—in a fundamental way. In fact, researchers have noted that EL status and low socioeconomic status are often conflated. Studies show that academic differences between ELs and non-ELs are eliminated when socioeconomic status is taken into account, and wealthier ELs achieve English proficiency faster than poorer ELs.[37] And yet, as a population, ELs are far more likely than non-ELs to grow up in poverty and with less educated parents. Fully 65 percent of all ELs qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch compared to 36 percent of their non-EL peers.[38]

In addition, the school and district context as it intersects with poverty is another significant factor for ELs. Around 70 percent of ELs nationwide attend schools with disproportionately greater numbers of low-income students and other ELs.[39] Such schools are typically under-resourced and have higher dropout rates, higher student mobility, more difficulty hiring and retaining effective teachers, and poorer quality curricular resources.[40] Leaders can use data to push for greater transparency about these resource and opportunity gaps facing ELs, and help to lay out the degree of investment it would take systemwide to counteract them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As leaders rethink metrics for ELs, they should approach discussions with the above framework of lenses in mind to ensure data systems yield focused information and accurate interpretations. By clarifying the data metrics to gauge success and needs, leaders can advance more strategic action.

State leaders—including legislators and state education agency chiefs and administrators—should consider taking the following actions:

1. Publicly communicate a statewide vision for EL equity with end goals in mind.

   Is it possible to accurately articulate the nature of "achievement gaps" with the data collected for this population? What would excellence for ELs look like, and how would this be apparent in the data?

2. Closely examine the validity of EL outcomes metrics with a diverse group of stakeholders.

   Do data systems report longitudinally on current and former EL outcomes? Do policies emphasize academic and linguistic growth, *relative to ELs of similar backgrounds*, *rather than one-size-fits-all proficiency targets?*

3. Elevate demographic data to highlight the needs of the EL student population.

   Do leaders identify and target underlying factors impacting EL performance?

4. Beyond federal requirements, create an EL-specific report to publish all data on EL outcomes.

   Are EL data available to the public in a transparent, centralized way?

5. Foster researcher-practitioner partnerships.

   How are the competencies and capacities of local and outside experts leveraged throughout EL data policymaking?

Through these actions, states can foster more visible, meaningful insights on how English learners in their communities are faring. With improved EL data literacy and policies, leaders can see the needs—and successes—of this important population more clearly.

Notes

[1] Child Trends Data Bank, "Of All U.S. Children (Ages Birth to 17), Percentage Living in a Non-English-Language Household: 2004–2013," 2014, https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/127_fig1.jpg.

[2] National Center for Education Statistics, "English Language Learners in Public Schools," March 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp; Mikyung Kim Wolf, Joan L. Herman, and Ronald Dietel, *Improving the Validity of English Language Learner Assessment Systems* (Los Angeles, CA: National Center for Research, on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing, 2010).

[3] See, for example, William M. Saunders and David J. Marcelletti, "The Gap That Can't Go Away: The Catch-22 of Reclassification in Monitoring the Progress of English Learners," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 35 (June 2013): 39–156; Megan Hopkins, Karen D. Thompson, Robert Linquanti, Kenji Hakuta, and Diane August, "Fully Accounting for English Learner Performance: A Key Issue in ESEA Reauthorization," *Educational Researcher* 42 (March 2013): 101–108; Michael Kieffer, Nonie Lesaux, and Catherine Snow, *Promises and Pitfalls: Implications of No Child Left Behind for Defining, Assessing, and Serving English Language Learners* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2008); and Vivian Louie, *Research to Improve Outcomes for English Learners* (New York: William T. Grant Foundation, May 2017).

[4] Lesli A. Maxwell, "The 'Revolving Door' Problem in English-Learner Accountability," *Education Wee*k, November 17, 2011.

[5] For details on AMAOs, see Andrea Boyle, James Taylor, Steven Hurlburt, and Kay Soga, *Title III Accountability: Behind the Numbers* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2010).

[6] For more on the ways AMAO were implemented, see Courtney Tanenbaum, Andrea Boyle, Kay Soga, Kerstin Carlson Le Floch, Laura Golden, Megan Petroccia, Michele Toplitz, James Taylor, and Jennifer O'Day, N*ational Evaluation of Title III Implementation—Report on State and Local Implementation* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2010).

[7] Vivian Louie, *Research to Improve Outcomes for English Learners* (New York: William T. Grant Foundation, May 2017); Delia Pompa, "New Education Law Puts More Pressure on States to Serve English Learners," *EdSource*, January 5, 2016; *Students Can't Wait: English-Language Proficiency* (Washington, DC: Education Trust, July 2016).

[8] Pete Goldschmidt and Kenji Hakuta, "Incorporating English Learner Progress into State Accountability Systems," slide presentation, September 13, 2016, http://www.education.nh.gov/essa/documents/accountability-ell.pdf; Susan Lyons and Nathan Dadey, *Considering English Language Proficiency within Systems of Accountability Under the Every Student Succeeds Act* (Dover, NH: Center for Assessment, March 27, 2017).

[9] *Time to Act: Making Data Work for All Students* (Washington, DC: The Data Quality Campaign, April 2016).

[10] *Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, September 23, 2016), 37–40.

[11] The issue of "former" ELs represents an area most in need of coherence between Title I accountability and Title III data reporting policies. Under Title I, states may choose to incorporate former ELs in accountability systems for up to four years after they exit, yielding a composite subgroup of previously-identified ELs combined with still-classified ELs. Advocates have pushed to ensure Title I report cards disaggregate between the two groups to ensure the data do not mask *current* EL performance—a reporting requirement under Title III.

[12] Delia Pompa, "New Education Law Puts More Pressure on States to Serve English Learners," *EdSource*, January 5, 2016; *Students Can't Wait: Setting New Accountability for English-Learner Outcomes in ESSA Plans* (Washington DC: Education Trust, July 2016).

[13] *Students Can't Wait: Setting New Accountability for English-Learner Outcomes in ESSA Plans* (Washington DC: Education Trust, July 2016).

[14] Lesli Maxwell, "The 'Revolving Door' Problem in English-Learner Accountability," *Education Wee*k, November 17, 2011.

[15] Allison Ross, "Closing Gap for Immigrant Students Under Common Core in Kentucky is a Moving Target," *The Hechinger Report*, May 22, 2016; Janie Carnock, "The

Delusional Ways We Evaluate English Learners," *The Hechinger Report*, August 4, 2016.

[16] Linda Darling-Hammond and Kenji Hakuta, "Ending the No Child Left Behind Catch-22 on English Learner Progress," *EdSource*, January 9, 2017.

[17] William M. Saunders and David J. Marcelletti, "The Gap That Can't Go Away: The Catch-22 of Reclassification in Monitoring the Progress of English Learners," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 35 (June 2013): 39–156.

[18] Megan Hopkins, Karen D. Thompson, Robert Linquanti, Kenji Hakuta, and Diane August, "Fully Accounting for English Learner Performance: A Key Issue in ESEA Reauthorization," *Educational Researcher* 42 (March 2013): 101–108.

[19] Catherine Snow (Patricia Albjerg Graham Professor of Education, Harvard University), interview with author, May 10, 2017.

[20] Elizabeth Autio and Angela Roccograndi, *The Academic Achievement of Former English Language Learners in Multilingual and Spanish-Dominant Settings* (Portland, OR: Education Northwest, December 9, 2011); Office of English Language Acquisition, U.S. Department of Education, "English Learners' (ELs') Results From the 2015 Nation's Report Card," January 2016, **http://www.ncela.us/files/fast_facts/OELA_FF_NAEP_2015_For_Grades48.pdf**; Karen Thompson, "Incorporating English Learners into State Accountability Systems" presentation, "What Does ESSA Mean for English Learners and Accountability?" event at the American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC, April 7, 2016.

[21] Megan Hopkins, Karen D. Thompson, Robert Linquanti, Kenji Hakuta, and Diane August, "Fully Accounting for English Learner Performance: A Key Issue in ESEA Reauthorization," *Educational Researcher* 42 (March 2013): 101–108.

[22] Vivian Louie, *Research to Improve Outcomes for English Learners* (New York: William T. Grant Foundation, May 2017).

[23] Kenji Hakuta, Yuko Goto Butler, and Daria Witt, *How Long Does It Take English Learners to Attain Proficiency?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2000).

[24] Robert Linquanti and H. Gary Cook, *Re-examining Reclassification: Guidance from a National Working Session on Policies and Practices for Exiting Students from English Learner Status* (Washington, DC: The Council of Chief State School Officers, November 2015).

[25] Amaya Garcia, "Analysis: Arizona Is the Worst State in the Nation in Serving Students Still Learning English," *The 74*, May 16, 2016.

[26] Jennifer L. Steele, Robert O. Slater, and Gema Zamarro, "Effects of Dual-Language Immersion Programs on Student Achievement: Evidence from Lottery Data," *American Educational Research Journal* 54, no. 1 (April 11, 2017); Ilana Umansky and Sean F. Reardon, "Reclassification Patterns Among Latino English Learner Students in Bilingual, Dual Immersion, and English Immersion Classrooms," *American Education Research Journal* 51, no. 5 (2014); Rachel A. Valentino and Sean F. Reardon, "Effectiveness of Four Instructional Programs Designed to Serve English Language Learners: Variation by Ethnicity and Initial English Proficiency," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 37, no. 4 (2015): 612–637.

[27] Karen D. Thompson, "English Learners' Time to Reclassification: An Analysis," *Educational Policy* 31 (August 2015): 330–363.

[28] Gary Cook, Robert Linquanti, Marjorie Chinen, and Hyekyung Jung, *National Evaluation of Title III Implementation Supplemental Report: Exploring Approaches to Setting English Language Proficiency Performance Criteria and Monitoring English Learner Progress* (Washington DC: American Institutes for Research, 2012), 66.

[29] Andrea Boyle, James Taylor, Steven Hurlburt, and Kay Soga, *Title III Accountability: Behind the Numbers* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2010), 11.

[30] As was the case with AMAO 1 implementation, there are a variety of ways to design ELP progress metrics due to variation in targets and the definition of what constitutes "progress." Technical experts have identified a variety of statistical methods that could set differentiated growth goals based on initial ELP level and time in program. These include values tables, student growth models, student growth percentiles, value-added models, and growth to standard models. For more see Pete Goldschmidt and Kenji Hakuta, *Incorporating English Learner Progress into State Accountability Systems* (Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, January 2017); Susan Lyons and Nathan Dadey, *Considering English Language Proficiency within Systems*

of Accountability Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (Dover, NH: Center for Assessment, March 27, 2017).

[31] Federal law defines current ELs as students "whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual...the ability to meet the challenging State academic standard... [and] successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English." See *Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, September 23, 2016), 43.

[32] Robert Linquanti and H. Gary Cook, *Toward a "Common Definition of English Learner"* (Washington, DC: The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013), 26.

[33] David J. Francis, "Supporting DLL/ELLs in STEM Learning: Guiding Principles," presentation, stakeholder convening at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Washington, DC, May 25, 2017.

[34] Megan Hopkins, Karen D. Thompson, Robert Linquanti, Kenji Hakuta, and Diane August, "Fully Accounting for English Learner Performance: A Key Issue in ESEA Reauthorization," *Educational Researcher* 42 (March 2013): 101–108.

[35] Pete Goldschmidt and Kenji Hakuta, *Incorporating English Learner Progress into State Accountability Systems*, (Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, January 2017), 7.

[36] Researchers still stress, however, that even academic growth models for ELs are imperfect. Such models do not address the validity and reliability concerns related to ELs taking content assessments in English. Since the results from these tests serve as the basis of growth calculation, the accuracy of any growth metric is likely compromised. The use of accommodations for ELs in content-area assessments, such as translated test items in math or bilingual glossaries, could mitigate validity and reliability concerns. Some have also suggested using native language assessment to address validity and reliability issues. Since NCLB, federal law has permitted states to use content assessments in EL native languages. In recent years, over a dozen states have taken advantage of this option. For example, in school year 2013–14, 13 states offered reading, math, or science tests in languages other than English. But, while these exams have the potential to reduce validity concerns, they are also problematic. For one, developing native language assessments is costly. Moreover, they are not necessarily a more accurate measure. Students may not be literate in their native languages and, if content instruction at school occurs in English, students will not necessarily have the equivalent academic proficiencies in their native languages. For more on this, see U.S. Department of Education Negotiated Rulemaking Committee, *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act*, Issue Paper #5a (April 1, 2016), **https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/session/issue-paper-5a-els-inclusion-in-academic-assessments.pdf**; and the interview with Tim Boals, Gary Cook, and Jesse Markow found in Janie T. Carnock, "Interview: How the WIDA Consortium Is Preparing Its 35 States Under ESSA," *EdCentral* (blog), New America, March 7, 2016, **https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/wida-essa/**.

[37] Ruby Takanishi and Suzanne Le Menestrel, eds., *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2017), 6–2, 6–18.

[38] Ibid., 3–15.

[39] Ibid., 6–16.

[40] Ibid., 1–9.