

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



MINDING THE GAP: How Do New LCAP Requirements Address Equity for English Learners?

A Review of the 2024 – 2027
Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)

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California’s school funding policy—the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)—mandates that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) document goals, actions, services, and funding allocation to support student outcomes via the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), particularly for high-needs students. This report is the fifth in a series of analyses of LCAPs focused explicitly on English learners (ELs) since the inception of LCFF in 2013. The LCAPs we reviewed over the years are from districts with the largest number and highest percentages of English learners.

Over the past 10 years of these analyses and reports, results continue to reveal that public school districts have missed the mark in detailing explicit support for English learners (ELs). This year’s analyses and results continue to tell the same story. Despite the evolution of the LCAP template and increased attempts by the California legislature to require additional transparency and accountability, districts still fall short of articulating metrics, goals, and actions to support ELs. This report presents the analyses of 2024-27 LCAPs from 26 public school districts that serve either high percentages or high numbers of ELs.

Key Findings

The mixed methods analysis revealed these major findings:

- FINDING 1** **District plans for English learners remain generic, with little evidence of exemplary practice.** Across six focus areas, nearly half of rubric ratings were designated as *Weak* and only 4% were rated *Exemplary*. Most districts describe strategies and programs, but few demonstrate depth, coherence, or a clear link to improved outcomes for ELs.
- FINDING 2** **Educational partner engagement is increasing, but is rarely accompanied by differentiated measurable change.** While the vast majority of districts reported sharing data and discussing disparities with families, educators, and students, only about half translated these conversations into differentiated goals and actions for ELs.
- FINDING 3** **Differentiated growth targets for ELs are still the exception, not the rule.** Just half of districts set subgroup-specific goals, and even fewer applied them broadly across metrics. Without accelerated targets, achievement gaps are unlikely to close.
- FINDING 4** **Supports for Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) are limited.** Most districts mentioned LTEL-related actions (such as professional development, interventions, or reclassification procedures), but only one included a specific LTEL goal. With the California School Dashboard now including LTEL outcomes separately, future LCAP cycles will reveal whether districts strengthen intentional planning for this subgroup.

These findings reveal that, while progress has been made, there are seldom plans that include disaggregated EL data and/or demonstrate engagement with education partners to describe actions and services that can be rated as *Exemplary*. Even fewer provide accelerated growth targets for ELs to reduce disparities. New California School Dashboard data on LTELs can potentially put a spotlight on these students, yet it remains to be seen whether these more targeted EL metrics are sufficiently detailed to provide the right guidance, and whether they will motivate districts to implement meaningful changes. The following recommendations call on state and local leaders to strengthen accountability and supports.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

State-Level Recommendations

- **Require disaggregation of data for ELs, LTELs, and other EL profiles in the Dashboard and LCAP template** to enable more precise monitoring, targeted programs, services, enrichment and interventions.
- **Update the County Office of Education (COE) LCAP Approval Manual and Differentiated Assistance** support to include explicit requirements that LCAPs identify differentiated goals and metrics for ELs and LTELs. These updates should reflect the intent of LCFF and the California English Learner Roadmap by ensuring that county reviewers examine whether districts are setting subgroup-specific outcomes, addressing persistent disparities, and articulating goals that accelerate progress for English Learners, including LTELs.
- **Sustain and expand EL-focused professional learning beyond the Educator Workforce Investment Grant: Effective Language Acquisition Programs (EWIG: ELAP)**, which will end in June 2026. Future cycles should include explicit alignment to LCAP planning and require external evaluation, similar to the EWIG: Computer Science program.
- **Strengthen the role of the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) in supporting English learners** by encouraging its technical assistance and the System of Support to more explicitly align with implementation of the California English Learner Roadmap and monitoring of EL progress.
- **Strengthen state guidance with the California Department of Education and CCEE** by providing exemplars, models, and technical resources that demonstrate how LCAPs can function as tools for equity-driven strategic planning rather than solely compliance documents, especially during the Differentiated Assistance process.
- **Require the use of a standard definition** for LTELs to include the number of years and limited or stagnant progress. To prevent LTEL status, the template should include a goal to also address students “At-Risk” of becoming Long Term English Learners (AR-LTELs).

District-Level Recommendations

- **Set differentiated growth targets** for ELs, newcomers, dual language learners (DLLs), AR-LTELs, and LTELs that are distinct from “all students” targets, and designed to accelerate gap closure.
- **Include LTEL-specific** Focus Goals or Actions nested within an EL-focused goal to ensure intentional attention and accountability for this student group.
- **Develop and implement targeted supports** tied to these goals, including evidence-based instructional strategies, professional development for teachers of ELs/LTELs, and staffing strategies that increase district and educator capacity.
- **Leverage state and county resources** such as COE, CCEE, and the newly funded Regional English Learner consultants for technical assistance, state-provided exemplars, and model practices from other districts to strengthen planning, implementation, and monitoring of EL-focused goals and actions.

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Californians Together, a coalition of education, civil rights, parent/caregiver, community, advocacy organizations, champions the educational success of California's more than million English learners. Californians Together serves as a trusted voice, source of expertise, and steadfast advocate standing for the educational rights of access for California's English learners, immigrants, and linguistically and culturally diverse students. Seeking to overcome and transform the harms of systemic racial, language, cultural inequality in education and to close opportunity gaps from early childhood through post-secondary education, the coalition exposes timely issues, advocates for cutting-edge policy and practice solutions grounded in research, and mobilizes to provide capacity-building support to multiple levels of the educational system.

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