California’s English Learner Students

Laura Hill
English Learners are a big part of California’s future

- Nearly 25% of K–12 students (1.4 million)
  - Students who need support to be taught academic subjects in English

- ELs lag behind native-English-speaking peers
  - Some ELs are reclassified quickly (RFEPs)
  - Many long-term ELs have poor academic outcomes

- Graduating more RFEPs and better-prepared EL students is a crucial goal
Outline

- Demographics
- Academic outcomes
- How can we help?
Most of the state’s ELs speak Spanish at home

ELs live in all areas

ELs are not a static group

- Most ELs are U.S.-born
  - 82% in K–5
  - 55% in 6–12
- But new ELs come from abroad in every grade
  - 2% of grade-2 ELs
  - 6% of grade-9 ELs
- More grade level differences
  - One third of kindergartners are ELs
  - Most secondary-school ELs are long-term
Former ELs increase in number by grade

Source: CST takers for grades 1–11, estimates for grades K and 12.
Outline

- Demographics
- **Academic outcomes**
- How can we help?
Former ELs more likely to score basic and above on CST

Grade-4 English Language Arts

Students scoring basic or above (%)

- Reclassified Fluent English Proficient
- English Only
- English Learner

Year

2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011
Former ELs pass the CAHSEE at high rates

Subject passage rates for grade-10 CAHSEE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English Language Arts</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFEP</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Only</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
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EL dropout rates are high

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dropout Rates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELs*</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African America</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
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*Includes any ELs who became RFEPs during high school.
Until grade 7, former ELs more likely to score of proficient or above

English Language Arts CST

Outline

- Demographics
- Academic outcomes
- How can we help?
Reclassification policies should lead to long-term success

- Because reclassified students do better, policymakers want to reclassify more ELs more quickly
  - Do these outcomes persist over time?
- Districts and schools vary in EL programs and implementation
- State establishes minimum reclassification criteria
  - Will reclassified students do as well if the bar is lower?
How will we know what the best reclassification policy is?

- Use variation across districts and time to understand link between reclassification policies and academic outcomes.

- Important considerations
  - EL instruction
  - Post-reclassification support
  - Access to academic content while ELs

- Is the minimum enough?

- Are some districts waiting too long?
Common Core State Standards are an opportunity

- New Common Core State Standards may add to EL challenges
  - English a more important component of every academic subject
- An opportunity to align revised English Language Development standards with CCSS standards
Link funding to outcomes

- It costs more to educate ELs, but how much?
- Is current EL funding effective?
  - Does it reach ELs?
  - Is it well spent?
- Does it create disincentives for reclassification?
- Consider support for former ELs?
- Potential new funding formulas an opportunity to align spending more closely with outcomes
Conclusions

- ELs are large and important student population
  - We have had some successes but need to do more

- Policy considerations
  - Identify reclassification policy that produces the best outcomes for the most students
  - Use new Common Core State Standards to link EL and academic course instruction
  - Ensure additional EL funding reaches ELs
Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.