



PPIC

PUBLIC POLICY
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

Adapting to Changes in California's English Learner Population

Technical Appendix

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Appendix A. Interviews with School Districts

Interview Guide

Driving Questions:

1. What are the effects of declining enrollment on school districts, particularly among English learners?
2. How have districts been responding to their changes in enrollment size over the last XXX [number depends on years of enrollment change] years?

I. Introduction

[Informal Introductions. Obtain consent for meeting to be recorded.]

[START RECORDING] We really appreciate your consent to record this interview for our research purposes. Our meeting is now being recorded. Thank you so much for joining us today, we are grateful for your time. My name is (Name, Position at PPIC), and I will be facilitating this interview alongside my colleague(s) _____. As you know, we are interested in speaking to you today because we would like to learn more about your experience with the changes in English Learner / Multilingual enrollment over the last XXX years in your district. Our current research shows that since 2015, overall enrollment in California has declined by around 6%, with substantial declines of around 15% among English learners. Obviously, there is variation among districts, and so we are interested in gathering insights from school districts across the state to better understand what the factors, effects, and responses to these enrollment changes are among English learners. Our questions today will focus on your experience with any challenges to changing enrollment, reclassification (both during COVID and currently), effects on TK and kindergarten, and any other enrollment trends you may have been observing over the last XXX years. If there are no further questions, we can go ahead and get started!

II. Questions

[Note: the facilitator will use phrases such as “Tell me more”, “Could you give me an example?”, “Could you explain that?” as prompts to solicit more detailed information when needed.]

Introductions

3. To start us off, can you tell us a bit more about your role at the district?
4. What experience and background with English learners do you bring to your work?

Challenges to growing/decreasing EL enrollment

5. What trends you have observed in English Learner enrollment size over the last XXX years? Any changes in composition?
6. Probe for language, country of origin, age/newcomers/unaccompanied minors, other
7. Does the district have goals for #/% of students biliterate?
8. How has the change in enrollment affected your ability to offer programs, especially bilingual or dual immersion programs?
 - a. Have any programs been reduced, expanded, or adjusted in response?
 - b. Staffing – have you had issues staffing, do you anticipate issues staffing?
9. What resources does your district provide for parent for EL families?
 - c. Probe for DELAC or ELAC committees, translation services, other
 - d. How has engagement or structure of these resources changed with enrollment changes?

10. Are there any other challenges you feel like your district and ELs have faced given enrollment changes over the last XXX years?

Younger children/TK

11. (For districts that offer TK) How ID students in need of EL services in TK now that can't use ELPAC?
e. Opinion of that change?
12. Thoughts about upcoming universal dyslexia (reading difficulty) screening?
f. Does district do any / universal screening now? Of ELs? How?

Reclassifying Students – COVID brought many changes, including to how students were reclassified during the peak of the school closures. We're curious about those changes, and if any of these reclassification changes seem particularly beneficial or harmful.

13. How did EL students get evaluated for reclassification eligibility on their ELA proficiency when the SBAC wasn't available? (especially curious about whether districts relied on just the ELPAC)
14. Do you feel like those students are performing as well as their peers who were reclassified using the SBAC before and after COVID?
15. Have you returned to the SBAC? What is the cut score you use?
16. State has been working on Teacher Observation. How does your district satisfy that component of the reclassification criteria now?

If district is experiencing enrollment decline

17. Is your district contemplating school closures?
18. What factors are being considered for school consolidation?

Close

19. Any other issues for ELs that you would like to tell us about?

TABLE A1

Characteristics of districts interviewed

Region	Size	% change in ever EL	% Spanish speaking in 2023	% FRPM in 2023
Los Angeles County Suburban	6,000	-20% or more <i>decrease</i>	40-50%	80-90%
Sacramento County Suburban	2,000	-20% or more <i>decrease</i>	30-40%	60-70%
San Deigo County City	4,000	-20% or more <i>decrease</i>	Over 80%	50-60%
Central Valley Rural	2,000	-10-20% decrease	60 to 70%	80-90%
Central Coast City	10,000	-10 – 20% decrease	Over 80%	60-70%
Southern CA City	40,000	-10-20% <i>decrease</i>	20-30%	40-50%
Bay Area City	40,000 +	-10-20% decrease	60 to 70%	50-60%
Central Valley City	10,000	0 – 10% <i>increase</i>	40-50%	70-80%
San Diego County Rural	4,000	20% or more <i>increase</i>	20-30%	50-60%

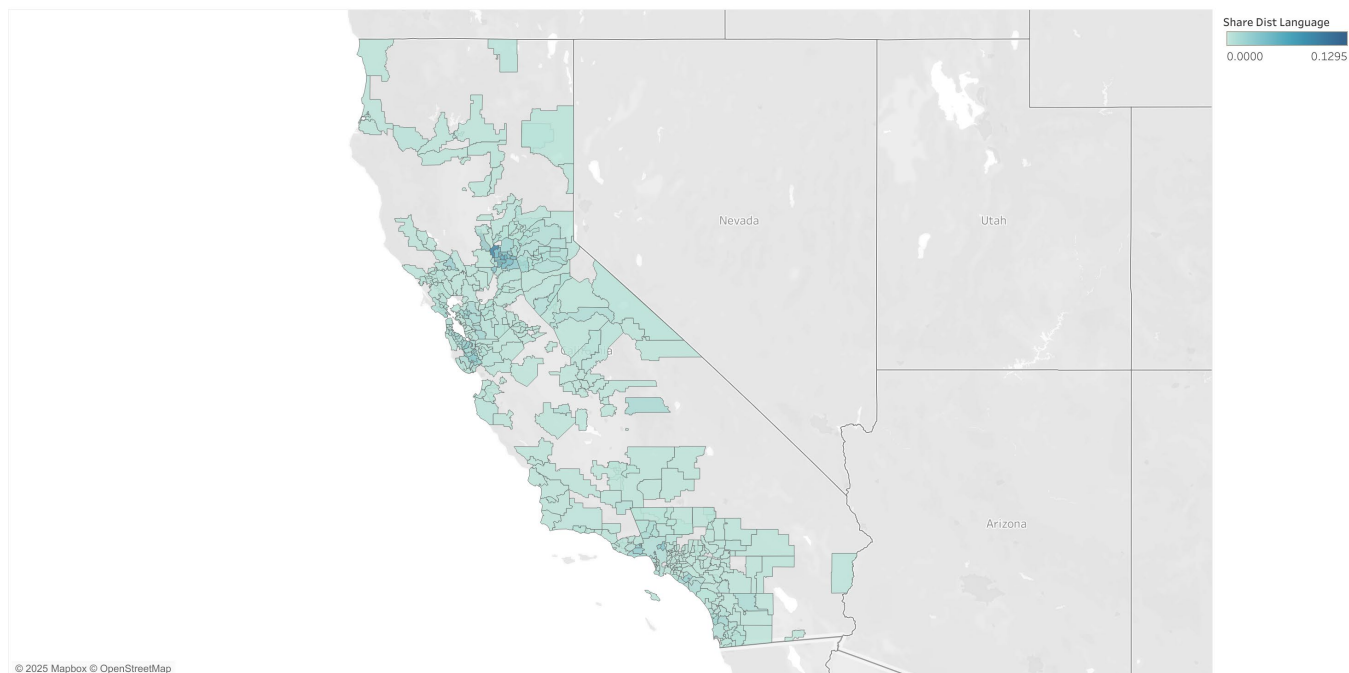
SOURCES: CDE Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status, Long-Term English Learner, and At-Risk, by Grade, 2015–16 to 2023–24

NOTES: Enrollment sizes and percentages are rounded to preserve anonymity of districts.

Appendix B. Supplemental Figures and Analyses

FIGURE B1

Share of district that speaks Russian, 2023-24

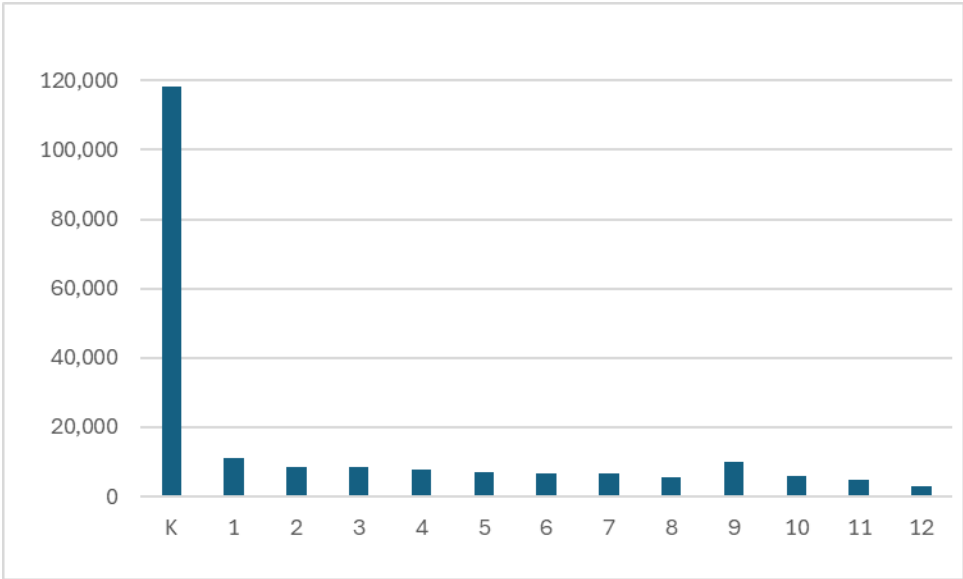


SOURCE: California Department of Education, English Learners by Grade & Language 2023; FEP Students by Grade & Language 2023; Census Day Enrollment Data 2023

NOTE: For more information, please visit

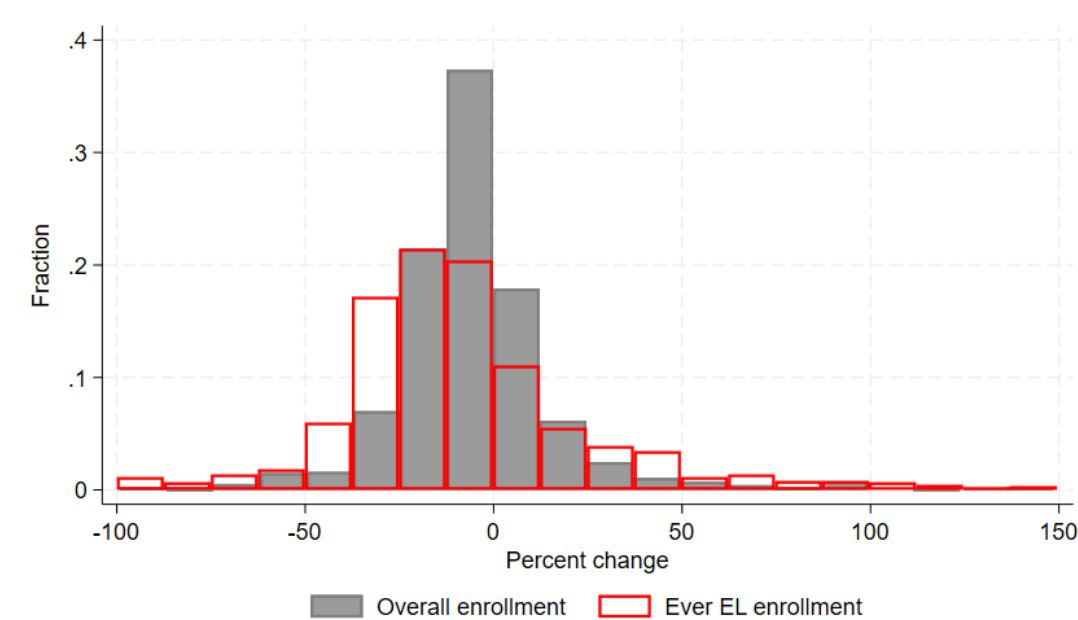
<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/beyond.deng/viz/Shareofdistrictthatspeakslanguage/Sheet1?publish=yes>.

FIGURE B2
 Number of students entering as new ELs, by grade, 2023-24



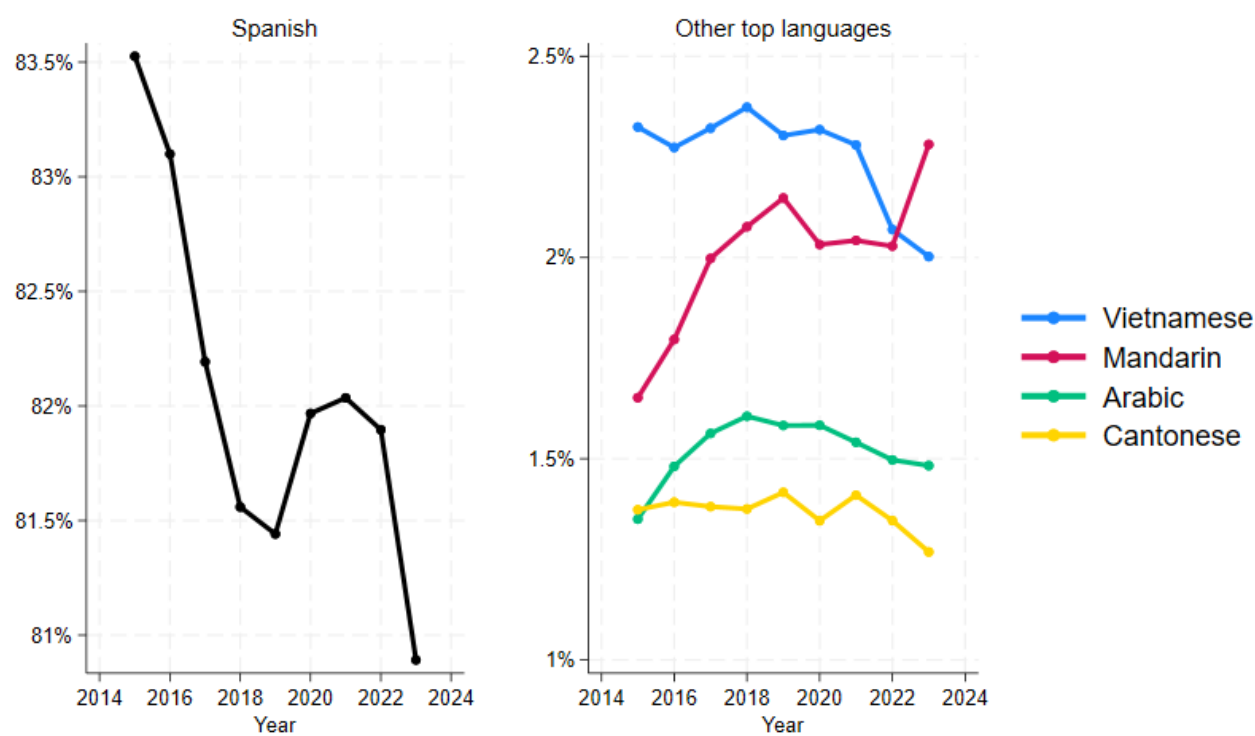
SOURCE: CDE ELPAC test results, 2023-24
 NOTE: New English Learners are the number of ELPAC initial test takers scoring at novice or intermediate EL levels

FIGURE B3
 Majority of districts had enrollment declines



SOURCE: CDE Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status, Long-Term English Learner, and At-Risk, by Grade, 2015–16 to 2023–24
 NOTE: Author’s calculations.

FIGURE B4
Share of multilingual learners that speak a language other than English

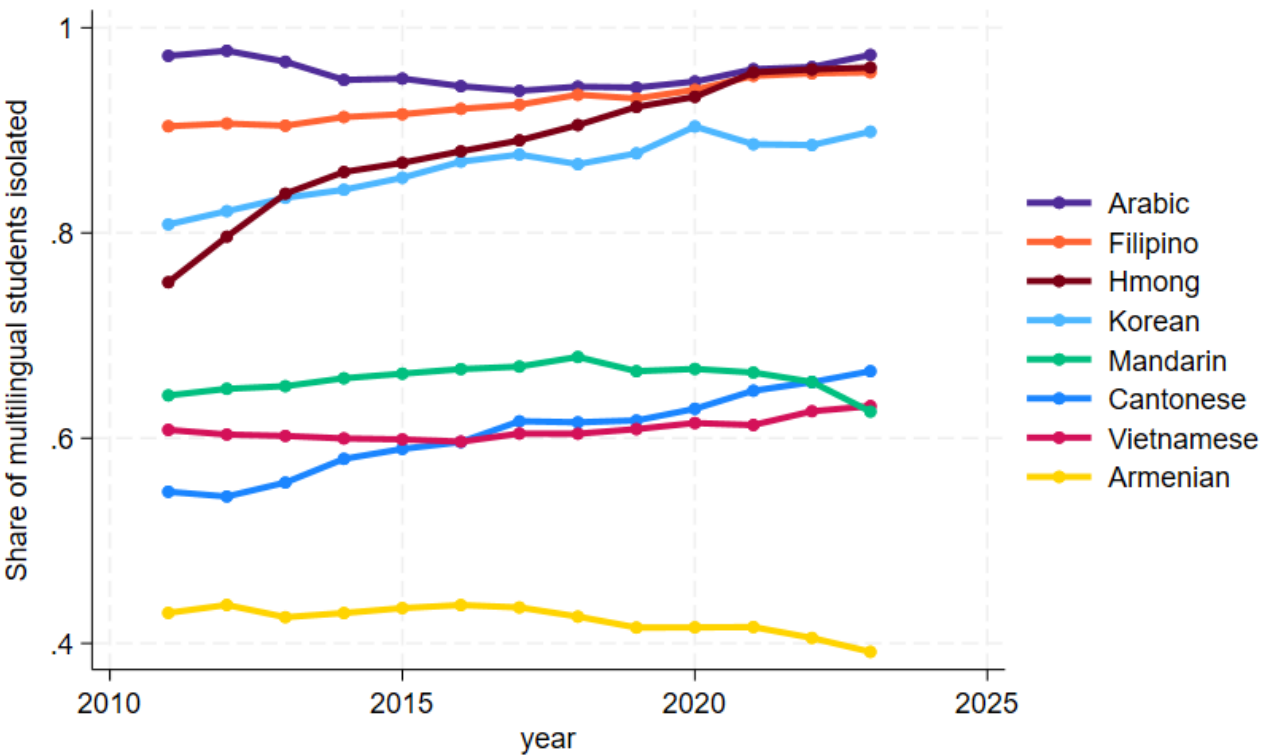


SOURCE: California Department of Education, English Learners by Grade & Language 2011-2023; FEP Students by Grade & Language 2011-2023; Enrollment by School Files 2011-2022; Census Day Enrollment Data 2023

NOTE: Author’s calculations. Mandarin language was renamed from “Mandarin (Putonghua)” to “Mandarin (Putonghua, Guoyu)” in 2023.

FIGURE B5

Variation in rates of language groups stranded at schools with no translation services



SOURCE: California Department of Education, English Learners by Grade & Language 2011-2023; FEP Students by Grade & Language 2011-2023; Enrollment by School Files 2011-2022; Census Day Enrollment Data 2023

NOTE: Author's calculations. Mandarin language was renamed from "Mandarin (Putonghua)" to "Mandarin (Putonghua, Guoyu)" in 2023. Filipino language was renamed from "Filipino (Pilipino or Tagalog)" to "Filipino; Pilipino" in 2023. The CDE also added a new category in 2023 called "Philippine languages" which was included in the calculations.

TABLE B1

Number of students with the State Seal of Biliteracy, Current or Former English Learners

	Total SEAL	Ever-EL	EO + IFEP
2023-24	71,814	28,731 (40%)	43,083
2022-23	59,703	27,082 (45%)	32,621
2021-22	57,561	28,698 (50%)	28,863
2020-21	72,252	28,698 (49%)	43,554
2019-20	65,622	31,004 (47%)	34,618
2018-19	56,370	-	-
2017-18	55,175	-	-
2016-17	46,380	-	-
2015-16	39,741	-	-
2014-15	32,764	-	-
2013-14	23,941	-	-

SOURCES: List of Districts and Schools Participating in State SEAL of Biliteracy, 2013-14 to 2023-24. Participating Current and Former English Learners, 2019-20 to 2023-24. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ml/sealofbiliteracy.asp>

NOTES: Data on ever English Learners who have the State SEAL of Biliteracy is only available from 2019-20 onwards. The column EO+IFEP is the difference between the Total SEAL column and the Ever-EL column.

TABLE B2

Distribution of districts that had growth/declines in overall enrollment and ever EL enrollment from 2015-2023

	Ever EL growth	Ever EL declines
<i>Overall growth</i>	188 (20.1%)	109 (11.6%)
<i>Overall declines</i>	146 (15.6%)	494 (52.7%)

SOURCES: CDE Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status, Long-Term English Learner, and At-Risk, by Grade, 2015–16 to 2023–24

NOTES: Based on author's calculations. Percentages are calculated as share of total districts that have growth/declines in their overall and ever-EL populations. There are a total of 937 districts observed from 2015 to 2023.

TABLE B3

Enrollment changes for districts with largest declines and growth in ever EL, including the top 10 largest school districts

District	Percent change in ever EL	Ever EL 2015	Ever EL 2023	Percent change in enrollment	District enrollment 2015	District enrollment 2023
Sausalito Marin City	-65.1%	169	59	-45.7%	521	283
Lost Hills Union Elementary	-60.5%	516	204	-51.1%	554	271
Waugh Elementary	-52.0%	171	82	-12.9%	908	791
SBE - Academia Avance Charter	-50.5%	323	160	-44.9%	437	241

District	Percent change in ever EL	Ever EL 2015	Ever EL 2023	Percent change in enrollment	District enrollment 2015	District enrollment 2023
Baldwin Park Unified	-50.0%	9,627	4,809	-44.6%	18,407	10,196
Pond Union Elementary	-48.6%	148	76	-22.8%	219	169
Ravenswood City Elementary	-47.1%	3,353	1,775	-37.0%	4,058	2,555
San Bruno Park Elementary	-47.0%	1,162	616	-28.5%	2,727	1,950
Valle Lindo Elementary	-46.7%	452	241	-24.6%	1,160	875
Savanna Elementary	-46.6%	1,207	644	-27.6%	2,397	1,735
Long Beach Unified	-37.6%	30,942	19,321	-17.4%	77,812	64,267
Los Angeles Unified	-27.4%	325,250	236,107	-17.1%	639,337	529,902
San Diego Unified	-25.9%	52,981	39,256	-11.6%	129,380	114,330
San Bernardino City Unified	-18.6%	24,850	20,224	-7.3%	53,303	49,407
Fresno Unified	-15.2%	28,114	23,828	-2.7%	73,460	71,480
San Francisco Unified	-15.1%	28,767	24,427	-5.8%	58,865	55,452
Corona-Norco Unified	-10.4%	15,251	13,669	-5.8%	53,354	50,256
Capistrano Unified	-8.1%	9,131	8,394	-10.3%	53,878	48,326
Elk Grove Unified	2.1%	19,363	19,760	1.2%	62,767	63,518
San Juan Unified	38.9%	9,508	13,204	0.6%	49,564	49,857
Helendale Elementary	149.5%	295	736	204.6%	2,400	7,311
Borrego Springs Unified	169.7%	482	1,300	267.5%	772	2,837
Kit Carson Union Elementary	174.1%	197	540	148.5%	613	1,523
Lammersville Joint Unified	177.4%	935	2,594	91.1%	4,062	7,764
Spencer Valley Elementary	200.0%	226	678	42.0%	2,736	3,885
Buckeye Union Elementary	210.2%	325	1,008	95.3%	5,218	10,189
Acton-Agua Dulce Unified	245.8%	969	3,351	72.2%	7,475	12,875
Winship-Robbins	362.0%	100	462	1438.7%	173	2,662
Maricopa Unified	379.8%	183	878	579.8%	2,138	14,535
Lucerne Valley Unified	795.0%	180	1,611	442.0%	2,346	12,716

SOURCES: CDE Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status, Long-Term English Learner, and At-Risk, by Grade, 2015–16 to 2023–24

NOTES: Based on Author's calculations. Top 10 districts with largest growth/declines are of districts that had at least 100 ever EL students in 2015.

TABLE B4

Distribution of English Learners, by grade level, 2019 and 2023

		Grade			
		5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th
2019	RFEP	69,466 (42%)	91,378 (51%)	109,914 (60%)	126,595 (65%)
	EL 0-3 years	11,125 (7%)	10,353 (6%)	10,120 (5%)	9,772 (5%)
	EL 4-5 years (At-Risk)	64,987 (39%)	4,307 (2%)	3,648 (2%)	3,568 (2%)
	EL 6+ years (LTEL)	21,585 (13%)	72,117 (40%)	60,779 (33%)	55,260 (28%)
2023	RFEP	46,404 (34%)	73,355 (47%)	90,390 (56%)	106,565 (63%)
	EL 0-3 years	11,629 (9%)	10,825 (7%)	10,010 (6%)	9,357 (6%)
	EL 4-5 years (At-Risk)	57,258 (42%)	5,113 (3%)	4,222 (3%)	3,889 (2%)
	EL 6+ years (LTEL)	20,544 (15%)	65,528 (42%)	57,047 (35%)	48,312 (29%)

SOURCES: "Ever-ELs" by Years as EL and Reclassification (RFEP) Status and Grade, 2019-20 and 2023-24

NOTES: Percentages represent the share of English Learners in that grade level at a certain stage in their learning trajectory. We only represent grades 5 through 8 because these are the grades in our cohort analysis that would have been most affected during the pandemic in 2020. Figure 7 shows that in 2020, the grades most affected in our cohort were Grades 2nd through 5th, so by 2023, these students would have been in the 5th through 8th grade.

TABLE B5

Number of English Learner graduates with the State Seal of Biliteracy

	EL Graduates
2023-24	4,632
2022-23	2,280
2021-22	2,368
2020-21	4,104
2019-20	2,494
2023-24	2,565
2022-23	2,591
2021-22	2,863

SOURCES: Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, English Learner, 2023-24.

<https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?cds=00&agglevel=state&year=2023-24>

NOTES: Data accessed on DataQuest, filtered to English Learner students only.

Calculating reclassification rates

According to the CDE, the reclassification rate is calculated as the total number of newly reclassified students since the last census divided by the total number of English learners reported in the prior year's Census Day. The CDE has reported annual statewide reclassification rates and counts from 2011-12 until 2020-21, but it has since been discontinued. However, the CDE has also reported enrollment data by English Language Acquisition Status (ELAS), Long-Term English Learner (LTEL) status, and At-Risk of becoming LTEL status by grade level, from

2015-16 to 2023-24. These files include the cumulative number of reclassified students and English learner counts by grade and year.

Since these measures are cumulative, we must estimate how many *newly* reclassified students there have been in each grade since the last census. Our way of estimating this is to take the cumulative number of reclassified students in grade g in year t and subtract the cumulative reclassified students from grade $g-1$ in year $t-1$. For instance, in 2017, the total number of reclassified students in 2nd grade was around 19,500, but a year earlier in 2016, when these students were in 1st grade, only 2,000 had been reclassified. This suggests that approximately 17,500 students were newly reclassified by the 2nd grade in 2017. Further, the total number of English learners in 1st grade in 2016 was around 159,000 students. Therefore, the reclassification rate of 1st graders in 2016 to 2nd graders in 2017 is around $17,500/159,000$, or about 11%.

We can aggregate the number of newly reclassified students for all grade levels in each year. We can then calculate the total number of English learners across all grades in the previous year to estimate our statewide reclassification rate. We can do this for the years that we have data from 2016-2023 since 2015 is the first year the data is disaggregated. This method of estimating reclassification rates cannot account for students moving away from the state, entering the state between grades, or grade retention.

Creating Synthetic Cohorts

To address this issue of new entrants/exits and cross-sectional variation across years (2nd graders in 2017 may be different from 2nd graders in 2023), we create synthetic kindergarten cohorts to mimic longitudinal data that tracks the same set of students over time, as done in other studies but where individual students can be followed over time (Novicoff et al. 2024). In this case, a 2015 kindergarten cohort would follow 1st graders in 2016, 2nd graders in 2017, 3rd graders in 2018, and so on. With these cohorts, we can calculate the cumulative proportion of the initial kindergarten group that becomes reclassified over time. In this case, we can use the cumulative counts of reclassified students that the CDE reports as our numerator and use the initial number of kindergarteners who were ELs at the start of their cohort year as the denominator.



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