The Language of Reform:

English Learners in California's Changing Landscape

The Education Trust–West

Authors: Carrie Hahnel, Leni Wolf, Jeannette LaFors, Amber Banks

Ed Trust-West: 510-465-6444

Purpose of our report

- Create public awareness of the challenges facing English learners in California schools
- Highlight districts serving English learners particularly well across a number of metrics
- Share effective school and district-level practices for serving English learners that may serve as examples for other districts
- Provide policy recommendations for district and state leaders to ensure every student has access to the highest quality educational opportunities

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

Report Format

- Review of federal and state legislative history related to English learners
- Analysis of district English-learner related results
- Effective district and school-level English learner practices
- Review of English learner services in LCAPs
- District and state-level policy recommendations

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

Overview of our sample and peer groups

- We limited the sample to **unified** districts serving at least **100 English learners** in 2012-13 *(n=276)*
- Peer groupings:
  1. Higher poverty (>60% FRPM), predominantly Spanish-speaking (>50% of English learners speak Spanish) districts
  2. Lower poverty (<60%), predominantly Spanish-speaking (>50% of English learners speak Spanish) districts
  3. Other/Multilingual districts (>50% of English learners speak languages other than Spanish, AND/OR at least 3 languages are spoken by 10% of English learners)

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

We analyzed district outcomes across four metrics:

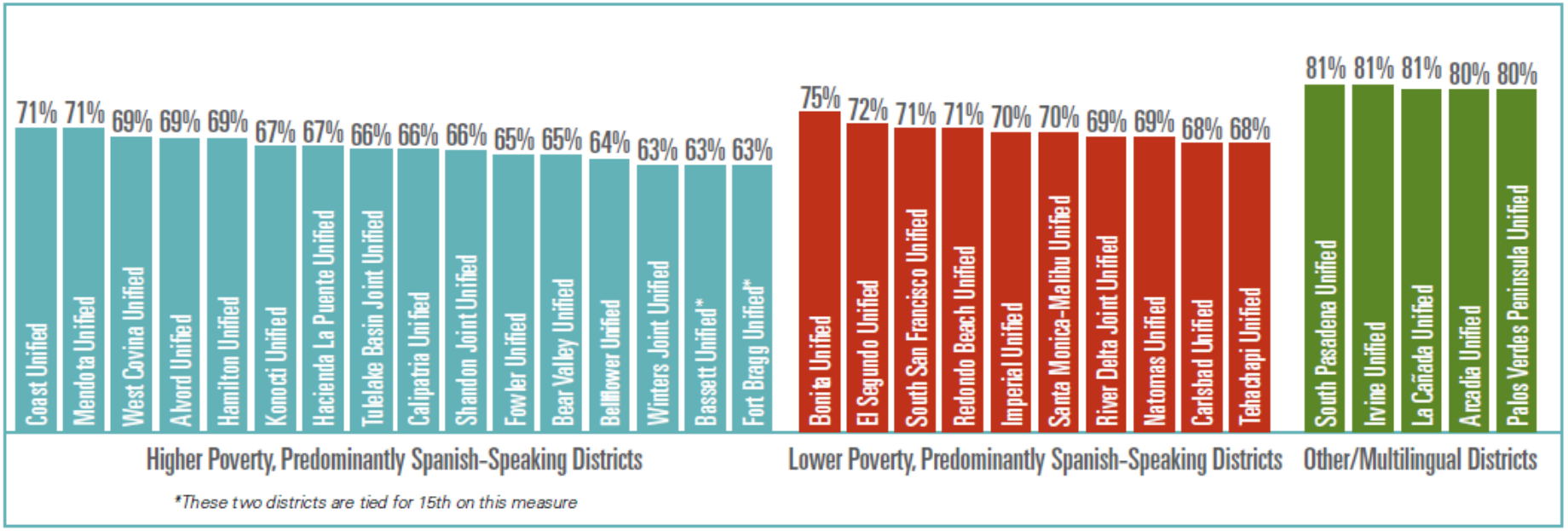
	What the indicators tell us about a district
CST ELA "Ever-EL" Proficiency 	The **CST ELA "Ever-EL"** indicator tells us how well a district's 3rd, 8th, and 11th grade English learners and reclassified (RFEP) students scored on the state English language arts test in 2012-13. Combining the results of these subgroups allows us to study the performance of a consistent group of students rather than shifting groups defined by their performance.
CELDT Advancement 	The **CELDT** indicator tells us what percentage of a district's English learners were making annual progress in learning English in 2012-13.
Long-Term English Learner Rate 	The **LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNER** indicator tells us what percentage of a district's students had been English learners for 5 years or more (per the federal definition) as of 2012-13.
Reclassification Rate 	The **RECLASSIFICATION** indicator tells us the average percentage of a district's elementary, middle, and high school students that were reclassified across 3 years (2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13).

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

For each measure and peer grouping, we show the top ~10% of districts

This figure provides an example of one such top-district display in the report:

Figure 6: 2013 CELDT advancement rates for top performing districts from each peer group



© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

Top Districts

Our methodology surfaces 11 districts that are at the top for at least 3 out of 4 indicators

Figure 9: Top districts across 3 or more indicators

(Enrollment / % Free or Reduced-Price Meals / % English Learners / Primary Languages in Other/Multilingual districts)

Higher Poverty, Predominantly Spanish-Speaking Districts	
Hacienda La Puente USD	20,358 / 74% / 19%
Live Oak Unified	1,740 / 80% / 19%
Riverdale Joint Unified	1,568 / 85% / 26%
West Covina Unified	14,460 / 65% / 7%

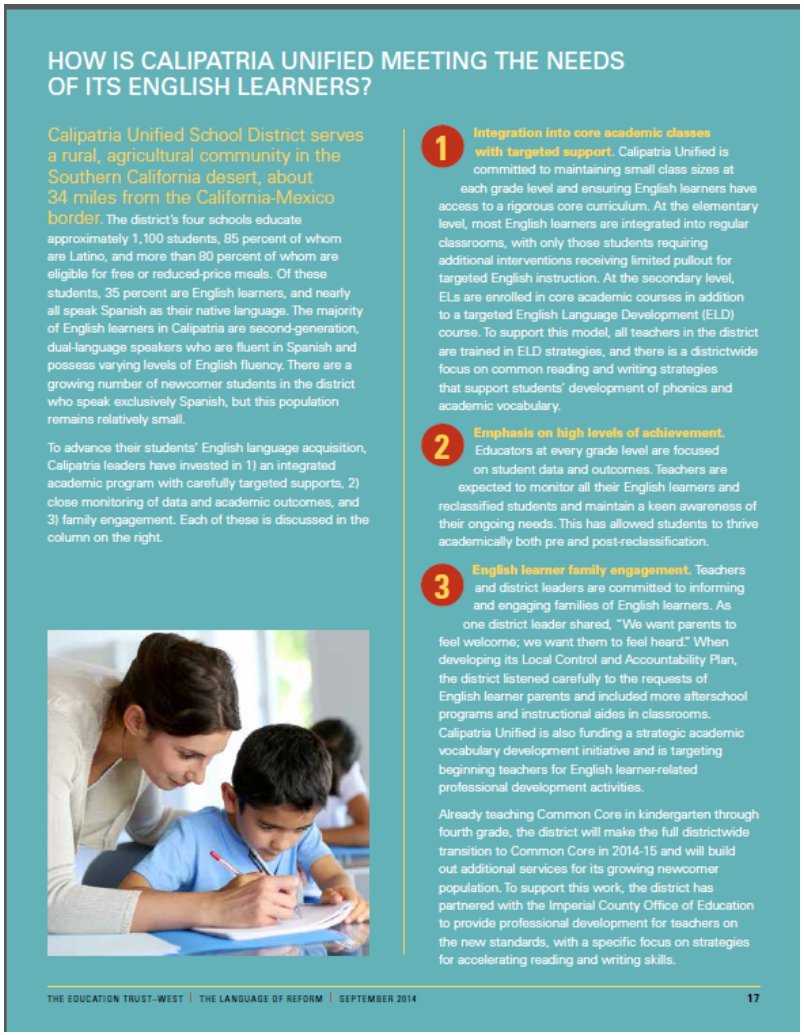
Lower Poverty, Predominantly Spanish-Speaking Districts	
Claremont Unified	7,018 / 39% / 5%
Los Alamitos Unified	9,912 / 13% / 2%
Redondo Beach Unified	8,967 / 20% / 6%

Other/Multilingual Districts	
Arcadia Unified	9,667 / 18% / 12% *Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish*
La Cañada Unified	4,119 / 1% / 5% *Korean, Spanish, Armenian*
Palo Alto Unified	12,357 / 8% / 10% *Spanish, Mandarin, Korean*
San Marino Unified	3,146 / 3% / 6% *Mandarin*

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

District Profiles

- Selma Unified
- Calipatria Unified
- Los Alamitos Unified
- West Covina Unified
- San Francisco Unified



HOW IS CALIPATRIA UNIFIED MEETING THE NEEDS OF ITS ENGLISH LEARNERS?

Calipatria Unified School District serves a rural, agricultural community in the Southern California desert, about 34 miles from the California-Mexico border. The district's four schools educate approximately 1,100 students, 85 percent of whom are Latino, and more than 80 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Of these students, 35 percent are English learners, and nearly all speak Spanish as their native language. The majority of English learners in Calipatria are second-generation, dual-language speakers who are fluent in Spanish and possess varying levels of English fluency. There are a growing number of newcomer students in the district who speak exclusively Spanish, but this population remains relatively small.

To advance their students' English language acquisition, Calipatria leaders have invested in 1) an integrated academic program with carefully targeted supports, 2) close monitoring of data and academic outcomes, and 3) family engagement. Each of these is discussed in the column on the right.

1 **Integration into core academic classes with targeted support.** Calipatria Unified is committed to maintaining small class sizes at each grade level and ensuring English learners have access to a rigorous core curriculum. At the elementary level, most English learners are integrated into regular classrooms, with only those students requiring additional interventions receiving limited pullout for targeted English instruction. At the secondary level, ELs are enrolled in core academic courses in addition to a targeted English Language Development (ELD) course. To support this model, all teachers in the district are trained in ELD strategies, and there is a districtwide focus on common reading and writing strategies that support students' development of phonics and academic vocabulary.

2 **Emphasis on high levels of achievement.** Educators at every grade level are focused on student data and outcomes. Teachers are expected to monitor all their English learners and reclassified students and maintain a keen awareness of their ongoing needs. This has allowed students to thrive academically both pre and post-reclassification.

3 **English learner family engagement.** Teachers and district leaders are committed to informing and engaging families of English learners. As one district leader shared, "We want parents to feel welcome; we want them to feel heard." When developing its Local Control and Accountability Plan, the district listened carefully to the requests of English learner parents and included more afterschool programs and instructional aides in classrooms. Calipatria Unified is also funding a strategic academic vocabulary development initiative and is targeting beginning teachers for English learner-related professional development activities.

Already teaching Common Core in kindergarten through fourth grade, the district will make the full districtwide transition to Common Core in 2014-15 and will build out additional services for its growing newcomer population. To support this work, the district has partnered with the Imperial County Office of Education to provide professional development for teachers on the new standards, with a specific focus on strategies for accelerating reading and writing skills.

THE EDUCATION TRUST–WEST | THE LANGUAGE OF REFORM | SEPTEMBER 2014 17

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

Effective Practices

What are high-flying districts doing to close achievement gaps between English learners and native English speakers, and to reclassify English learners as English proficient?

- Having a systemwide belief in English learners' ability to achieve at high levels
- Ensuring English learners are taught by highly skilled teachers capable of meeting students' unique needs
- Providing professional development opportunities that emphasize the instructional shifts of CCSS and ELD standards
- Ensuring access to a full Common Core-aligned curriculum, including college-preparatory courses
- Differentiating instructional strategies: previewing content, using language objectives, emphasizing reading/writing/speaking
- Engaging parents to forge strong home-school connections

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

LCAP Review

We reviewed the Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) from our 11 top-performing districts to uncover the programs and services they plan to offer English learners. Here are some of the common investments we found:

- Increased professional development opportunities, including PLCs and instructional coaches
- Additional bilingual aides in classrooms
- Extended learning opportunities for English learners
- Parent services such as translation and education programs
- Expanding access to rigorous academic, college, and career-ready opportunities for English learners
- Interventions and supports to help English learners academically and with language acquisition

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

…LCAP Review, cont'd

We also noted some trends related to district use of the LCAP template and overall readability of LCAPs:

- Varying levels of detail on the programs and services proposed for English learners
- Some lack of clarity on how much LCFF funding is supporting English learner programs and what will be "increased or improved" for English learners
- Inconsistent mention of the new ELD standards and related goals
- Varying levels of reference to English learner master plans

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

Recommendations

1. Ensure English learners have full access to rigorous content and college-prep coursework aligned with the Common Core, English Language Development, and Next Generation Science Standards
2. Train teachers to support language development within the context of the core curriculum
3. Monitor early implementation of the new Smarter Balanced assessments to understand their impact on English learners
4. When reporting test data on English learner achievement, disaggregate results for long-term English learners

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

…Recommendations, cont'd

5. When reporting data on English learner achievement, focus on student growth, not just overall proficiency
6. Ensure the needs of English learners are adequately addressed within LCAPs
7. Support biliteracy as a viable instructional program
8. Create clearer, more uniform statewide reclassification standards and criteria
9. Modify the Local Control Funding Formula to allow reclassified English learners to generate supplemental and concentration funds

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

APPENDIX A: DATA BY DISTRICT

HIGHER POVERTY, PREDOMINANTLY SPANISH-SPEAKING DISTRICTS

★ = District ranks in the top 15 in this peer group for this indicator.

District	County	# Students	% Free or Reduced-Price Meals	% English Learners	% ELs Who Speak Spanish	Academic Indicators				Reclassification Indicators			
						CST ELA Ever-EL Proficiency			CELDT Advancement	Long-Term ELs	3-Yr Avg. Reclassification Rate		
						Grade 3	Grade 8	Grade 11			Elem.	Middle	High
Alpaugh Unified	Tulare	577	74%	34%	94%				58%	45%	6%	14%	
Alvord Unified	Riverside	19,634	77%	41%	95%	30%	52% ★	34%	69% ★	50%	2%	16%	7%
Anderson Valley Unified	Mendocino	556	82%	40%	100%	20%	32%	36%	62%	31%	7%	15%	
Antioch Unified	Contra Costa	18,852	62%	17%	84%	24%	40%	32%	52%	38%	8%	20% ★	8%
Apple Valley Unified	San Bernardino	14,701	61%	8%	92%	30%	45%	39%	52%	39%	11%	11%	8%
Azusa Unified	Los Angeles	9,755	85%	30%	99%	24%	28%	35%	56%	40%	12%	13%	9%
Baldwin Park Unified	Los Angeles	18,845	86%	25%	94%	33%	43%	33%	54%	32%	13%	15%	13%
Banning Unified	Riverside	4,524	83%	19%	89%	37% ★	44%	21%	53%	44%	10%	12%	5%
Barstow Unified	San Bernardino	5,929	72%	13%	94%	24%	44%	21%	52%	43%	4%	5%	5%
Bassett Unified	Los Angeles	4,194	91%	33%	97%	26%	53% ★	36%	63% ★	45%	10%	14%	7%
Bear Valley Unified	San Bernardino	2,605	62%	13%	97%	11%	37%	24%	65% ★	39%	3%	3%	12%
Bellflower Unified	Los Angeles	13,721	63%	20%	88%	36%	48%	36%	64% ★	41%	8%	9%	
Borrego Springs Unified	San Diego	513	83%	38%	99%	13%			51%	34%	0%	5%	7%
Calexico Unified	Imperial	9,203	79%	66%	100%	17%	37%	27%	47%	42%	6%	6%	5%
Calipatria Unified	Imperial	1,191	81%	35%	99%	31%	40%	50% ★	66% ★	46%	6%	9%	8%
Calistoga Joint Unified	Napa	809	80%	46%	100%	53% ★	21%		63%	28% ★	4%	7%	
Caruthers Unified	Fresno	1,347	85%	37%	86%	33%	40%	33%	54%	37%	12%	12%	24% ★
Ceres Unified	Stanislaus	12,839	81%	30%	92%	39% ★	44%	37%	55%	37%	13%	14%	14%
Coachella Valley Unified	Riverside	18,720	80%	51%	100%	17%	30%	23%	46%	38%	9%	11%	7%
Coalinga-Huron Unified	Fresno	4,322	85%	45%	97%	27%	33%	17%	62%	48%	10%	10%	9%
Coast Unified	San Luis Obispo	762	60%	37%	98%	15%		40%	71% ★	43%	3%	7%	8%
Colton Joint Unified	San Bernardino	23,172	79%	25%	96%	28%	35%	25%	59%	42%	11%	12%	9%
Colusa Unified	Colusa	1,408	61%	30%	99%	25%	43%	21%	52%	38%	7%	9%	3%

© 2014 THE EDUCATION TRUST— WEST

For questions about this report, please contact:

Leni Wolf, Data and Policy Analyst
lwolf@edtrustwest.org

© 2013 THE EDUCATION TRUST – WEST