California Department of Education

Executive Office

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# **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 14, 2018

**TO:** MEMBERS, State Board of Education

**FROM:** TOM TORLAKSON, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** Summative English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC): Update on Supplemental Empirical Analyses to Determine ELPAC Criterion for Reclassification.

## Summary of Key Issues

This Memorandum provides a summary of additional Summative English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) supplemental empirical analyses conducted to help determine a recommendation for the ELPAC criterion for English learner (EL) reclassification decisions. Results from these studies will be used to inform a proposed recommendation to the State Board of Education (SBE) in January 2019.

### Purpose of the Supplemental Empirical Analyses

In November 2018, the SBE approved the updated Summative ELPAC threshold scores that will be implemented in the 2018–19 school year. Two studies were conducted to help inform these updated threshold scores; a threshold validation study, and supplemental empirical analyses. The purpose of the supplemental empirical analyses was to examine the relationship between student test scores and performance levels on the first operational Summative ELPAC relative to student test scores and achievement levels on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy (ELA). Both the ELPAC and CAASPP assessments were administered in the spring of 2018. In November 2018, analyses utilizing the 2017–18 ELPAC threshold scores were presented to the SBE and, subsequently, the SBE unanimously approved the recommendation to increase the rigor of the ELPAC threshold scores.

Following the SBE action, researchers at WestEd’s California Comprehensive Center (CA CC) updated the supplemental empirical analyses examining whether students who perform at Overall Performance Level (PL) 4 on the ELPAC are more likely to approximate the achievement levels of English-only (EO) students on the CAASPP ELA assessment. Attachment 1 includes an executive summary of findings from the updated analyses. The results from these updated supplemental empirical analyses were presented to the ELPAC Technical Advisory Group (TAG) in November. The ELPAC TAG members then took a vote regarding how these analyses should inform reclassification guidelines. All members that voted recommended use of Overall PL 4 as the ELPAC criterion for EL reclassification decisions. (One TAG member abstained from making a recommendation.) The TAG members also suggested additional supplemental analyses be conducted to support their recommendation prior to the January SBE meeting.

### Next Steps

The CDE is currently reviewing the results of the updated supplemental empirical analyses using the threshold scores approved by the SBE in November 2018 and collaborating with the CA CC in conducting further recommended analyses. The CDE will provide the SBE with a recommendation for use of the ELPAC in the reclassification guidelines at the January 2019 SBE meeting. If the SBE approves the recommended criterion for EL reclassification decisions in January 2019, the CDE will notify superintendents and charter school administrators of the policy decision regarding the 2018–19 ELPAC criterion for EL reclassification.

The CDE is contracting with WestEd, beginning in December 2018 and ending in June 2020, to develop, pilot, and validate an observation protocol to support teacher evaluation of EL proficiency as it pertains to EL reclassification. The Observation Protocol for Teachers of English Learners (OPTEL), a teacher-administered observational tool, will provide an opportunity to standardize teacher evaluation of a pupil’s English language proficiency while engaging in academic content learning and interacting with peers. Development and validation of the OPTEL will be driven by the specifications of California *Education Code* Section 313.3, as added by Assembly Bill 1808, Chapter 32, Statutes of 2018. The CDE anticipates recruiting the same teachers from the ELPAC standard setting panel to participate in the development of the OPTEL

## Attachment(s)

* Attachment 1: Updated Supplemental Empirical Analyses of the Summative ELPAC (3 pages).

# **Updated Supplemental Empirical Analyses of the Summative English Language Proficiency Assessments for California**

## Background

At the request of the California Department of Education (CDE), in August through September 2018, the California Comprehensive Center at WestEd (CA CC) conducted supplemental empirical analyses to examine the relationship of English Learners’ (ELs) performance on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts/literacy (ELA) relative to their Summative English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) performance. These analyses of CAASPP ELA performance by ELPAC level used preliminary ELPAC threshold scores approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) in November 2017. In addition, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) conducted a threshold score validation study utilizing teacher judgments of students’ English language proficiency compared to student performance on the Summative ELPAC. Validation of threshold scores and empirical analyses of the relationship of ELPAC to CAASPP ELA are critical for appropriate test use and state-level policy discussions on establishing an ELPAC criterion for EL reclassification decisions.

The results from the threshold score validation study and the initial empirical analyses suggested that increasing the threshold scores, particularly where ELPAC performance level (PL) 3 ends and level PL 4 begins, would set the ELPAC PL 4 threshold to more closely approximate the performance level estimations given by teachers and the achievement distribution of the English-only (EO) students on the CAASPP ELA assessment. The CDE therefore proposed new threshold scores for the summative ELPAC, which the SBE unanimously approved at its November 2018 meeting. As a result, the CDE requested that the CA CC conduct further supplemental analyses of the achievement of EL students on CAASPP ELA disaggregated by Summative ELPAC performance levels using the SBE’s newly adopted Summative ELPAC threshold scores. These additional empirical analyses are intended to help inform the CDE’s proposal to the SBE for the ELPAC English language proficiency criterion to be used in EL reclassification.

## Data Sources

For this analysis which took place in November through December 2018, the CDE supplied the CA CC with an updated, matched student level data file containing: (a) 2018 CAASPP assessment data for **all students** in grades three through eight and grade eleven, including overall scale score and achievement level results for ELA; and (b) 2018 Summative ELPAC assessment data for **all EL students** in grades three through eight and grade eleven, including scale score and performance level results at the overall, oral and written, and individual (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) domain levels using the newly SBE-adopted Summative ELPAC threshold levels.

## Analytic Methods

Three analytical methods[[1]](#footnote-1) were undertaken:

1. **Descriptive box plot analysis**[[2]](#footnote-2)examines the distribution of overall scale scores on CAASPP ELA for ELs by each performance level on ELPAC, for each applicable grade level. This analysis also includes the distribution of overall scale scores on CAASPP ELA for reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP), initially fluent English proficient (IFEP), and monolingual English (English-only, or EO) students for comparison. The purpose of the analysis is to identify an ELPAC performance level where (a) ELs have an equal likelihood of scoring at or above the CAASPP ELA Level 3 threshold (Standard Met); or (b) ELs’ score distribution on CAASPP ELA is very similar to that of EO students statewide.
2. **Logistic regression analysis** estimates the probability of reaching Level 3 (Standard Met) on CAASPP ELA for each ELPAC overall scale score. This approach helps to identify the ELPAC overall scale score range in which ELs have a probability equal to or greater than 50 percent of attaining that standard on the CAASPP ELA.
3. **Decision consistency analysis** analyzes ELPAC and CAASPP proficient-level categorizations and optimizes consistent categorization of ELs at or above the current CAASPP ELA threshold score for Level 3 (Standard Met). The analysis determines the ELPAC overall scale score range that maximizes the amount of agreement between achieving ELPAC proficiency and CAASPP ELA proficiency.[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Findings and Next Steps

For grades three through eight and grade eleven, a total of 15.3 percent of ELPAC examinees attained the 2018 ELPAC Overall (PL) 4, which is currently the ELPAC threshold level performance for the English-proficient criterion based on the 2018–19 threshold scores approved by the SBE at its November 2018 meeting. This represents a decrease from the total of 24 percent of ELPAC examinees that attained Overall PL 4 under the prior Summative ELPAC performance threshold levels.

Updated grade-level ELPAC-CAASPP empirical analyses largely converged across methods. Analyses suggest that, across all grades tested on CAASPP ELA, the performance of ELs at ELPAC Overall PL 4 improves under the newly adopted ELPAC performance threshold levels when compared to the former levels. Nevertheless, for grades five through eight and grade eleven, ELs at ELPAC Overall PL 4 still do not demonstrate an equal likelihood of attaining Level 3 on CAASPP ELA, nor do they approximate EO student performance. This is particularly so for ELs in grades seven, eight, and eleven. In grades three and four, ELs at ELPAC Overall PL 4 have an equal or greater likelihood of reaching Level 3 on CAASPP ELA, and of approximating or exceeding the performance of EO students on the ELA test.

In light of these findings, the CA CC team once again analyzed options for adding conjunctive minimum rules related to the oral and written composite domains for EL students at ELPAC Overall PL 4. Applying these conjunctive rules shifted outcomes for those ELs at ELPAC Overall PL 4 meeting conjunctive minimum requirements to more closely approximate those of EO students. However, the proportion of ELs meeting these conjunctive minimum requirements decreased substantially: Under the former ELPAC performance threshold levels, 11.5 percent to 12.3 percent of ELs met the requirements; under the current ELPAC performance threshold levels, 6.0 percent to 6.6 percent of ELs met them (depending upon conjunctive minimum rules applied).

The CA CC team is currently conducting additional supplemental analyses comparing the CAASPP ELA performance of ELs at ELPAC Overall PL 4 to recently reclassified (recent-RFEP) students, and to similarly situated[[4]](#footnote-4) EO students. At the recommendation of the ELPAC TAG, the CA CC team is also obtaining additional data from the CDE to analyze the performance of ELs at ELPAC Overall PL 4 to that of other student subgroups on specific CAASPP ELA content area claims (e.g., reading). These analyses will be summarized in a final report to be included in the January SBE item.

1. These methods, described in Cook, Linquanti, Chinen & Jung (2012) at <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-iii/implementation-supplemental-report.pdf>, are used by many states to support decision making on setting an optimal English-proficient performance standard on their state English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessments. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2 A box plot shows graphically five-number summaries—the smallest observation, lower quartile, median, upper quartile, and largest observation—as well as individual outliers, if applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3 The analysis takes the CAASPP Level 3 as given, and determines the ELPAC overall score range that maximizes the percentage of agreement (i.e., proficient on ELPAC and "standard met" on CAASPP; not proficient on ELPAC and below “standard met” on CAASPP) and minimizes the percentage of non-agreement (i.e., proficient on ELPAC, below “standard met” on CAASPP; not proficient on ELPAC, “standard met” on CAASPP). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. That is, EO students having both “economic disadvantaged” as well as “non-IDEA” status. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)