



California Department of  
EDUCATION

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## **Appendix D:**

# **Context, Development, and Validation of the California English Language Development Standards**

# Context, Development, and Validation of the California English Language Development Standards

## The Context for the California English Language Development Standards

The California English Language Development Standards (CA ELD Standards) reflect recent and emerging research and theory and are intended to support language development as English learners (ELs) learn rigorous academic content. The CA ELD Standards provide a foundation for the ways in which K–12 ELs are educated in California schools so that each EL is able to access, engage with, and achieve state subject matter standards for college- and career-readiness.

## Purposes and Intended Users

The CA ELD Standards are designed to meet the needs of a variety of intended users for a variety of purposes. The CA ELD Standards:

- reflect expectations of what ELs should know and be able to do with the English language in various contexts;
- set clear developmental benchmarks that reflect ELs' English language proficiency at various developmental stages in a variety of cognitive and linguistic tasks;
- provide teachers a foundation for delivering rich instruction for ELs so that they can help their students develop English proficiency, and prepare ELs to meet grade-level academic achievement standards;
- provide parents, guardians, families, and other caretakers a vehicle for discussing learning progress so that they can continue to support their children's language and cognitive development at home;
- provide curriculum developers guidance on creating rigorous, linguistically and academically rich curriculum and instructional materials for ELs; and
- provide a framework to guide development of ELD assessment systems that help California educators ensure that all ELs are progressing in and achieving the English language knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to become college- and career-ready.

## California's English Learner Students

ELs come to California schools from all over the world, and from within California, with a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, experiences with formal schooling, proficiency with native language and English literacy, migrant statuses, and socioeconomic statuses, as well as other experiences in the home, school, and community. All of these factors inform how educators support ELs to achieve school success through implementation of the CA ELD Standards and the academic content standards. Some of these key factors follow:

- **Stages of Cognitive Development.** It is important to note how ELs learn the English language at different stages of their cognitive development. Most notably, it is

important to distinguish between students in the primary grades, for whom the focus is “learning to read” while also engaging in challenging content learning, and students in the intermediate and secondary grades, for whom the focus is “reading to learn” in various content areas. ELs entering California schools in kindergarten, for example, will benefit from participating in the same instructional activities in literacy as their non-EL peers, along with additional differentiated support based on student need. EL students who enter in secondary grades, depending upon the level and extent of previous schooling they have received, may need additional support mastering certain linguistic and cognitive skills in order to fully engage in intellectually challenging academic tasks.

- **Native Language Literacy.** Adolescent ELs who enter California schools after the primary grades may have varying levels of native language foundations in literacy. All students can draw upon knowledge of oral vocabulary and structures (e.g., recognition of cognates) to inform their English language learning to some extent, depending on their native language oral proficiency and how closely their native language is related to English. Students with established native language literacy and content knowledge can transfer these skills and knowledge to English with appropriate instructional support. (See Appendix A: Foundational Literacy Skills for English Learners for additional information on teaching foundational literacy skills to students with varying literacy experiences.) Nevertheless, even with strong native language foundations, some EL adolescents may still struggle to master disciplinary literacy, given the accelerated time frame in which they are expected to meet grade-level content-area expectations.
- **Long-Term English Learners.** Many ELs may have not received the support they need to continually progress in English language development and academic subjects (typically English language arts [ELA]), giving rise to the “long-term English learner” phenomenon. These long-term ELs have been schooled in the U.S. for six or more years but have not made sufficient linguistic and academic progress to meet redesignation criteria and exit English learner status.<sup>1</sup> Fluent in social/conversational English but challenged by literacy tasks, and particularly disciplinary literacy tasks, these students find it difficult to engage meaningfully in increasingly rigorous coursework. Long term ELs face considerable challenges succeeding in school as the amount and complexity of the academic texts they encounter rapidly increase. Regardless of the challenges ELs face, they are expected to achieve the same core academic standards as their non-EL peers.
- **Programs and Services for English Learners.** California’s ELs are enrolled in a variety of different school and instructional settings that influence the application of the CA ELD Standards. An EL could be in a newcomer program, a structured English immersion program, a mainstream program where ELs may receive specialized ELD instruction, a separate ELD class, or a bilingual/dual-language program. The CA ELD Standards apply to all of these settings and are designed to be used **by all teachers of academic content and of ELD in all these settings**, albeit in ways that are appropriate to the setting and identified student needs. For example, they are the focal standards in settings

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of defining the term “Long Term English Learners” see Olsen, L. (2010). *Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California’s Long Term English Learners*. Californians Together. Available at: [www.californianstogether.org](http://www.californianstogether.org).

specifically designed for English language development—such as an ELD class where ELs are grouped by English language proficiency level. Additionally, the CA ELD Standards are designed and intended to be used *in tandem with* other academic content standards to support ELs in mainstream academic content classrooms. These could include, for example, a third-grade self-contained classroom during ELA, social studies, math, and science instruction; a middle school math class; or high school science class.

### **Goals of the California English Language Development Standards**

The CA ELD Standards correspond with California’s Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (Common Core State Standards for ELA) and are designed to apply to English language and literacy skills across all academic content areas, in addition to classes specifically designed for English language development. The Common Core State Standards for ELA raise expectations for all California students. Among other things, students are expected to participate in sustained dialogue on a variety of topics and content areas; explain their thinking and build on others’ ideas; construct arguments and justify their positions persuasively with sound evidence; and effectively structure written and oral texts in a variety of informational and literary text types. English learners must simultaneously successfully engage in these challenging academic activities while developing proficiency in advanced English. The CA ELD Standards are intended to support this dual endeavor by providing fewer, clearer, and higher standards:

1. **Fewer:** Those standards that are necessary and essential for development and success;
2. **Clearer:** A coherent body of standards that have clear links to curriculum and assessments;
3. **Higher:** Alignment with the elevated standards of the Common Core State Standards for ELA.

The CA ELD Standards achieve this goal of fewer, clearer, and higher standards in two ways. First, the CA ELD Standards highlight and amplify those Common Core State Standards for ELA that promote ELs’ abilities to *interact in meaningful ways* during rich instruction so that they develop both English and content knowledge. Second, the CA ELD Standards guide teachers to build ELs’ *knowledge about how the English language works* in different contexts to achieve specific communicative purposes. The CA ELD Standards emphasize specific linguistic processes (e.g., structuring cohesive texts) and linguistic resources (e.g., expanding sentences) that ELs need to develop in the context of rigorous academic learning for successful academic achievement.

A focus on these two areas can help educators more effectively support all ELs to:

- read, analyze, interpret, and create a variety of literary and informational text types;
- develop an understanding of how language is a complex, dynamic, and social resource for making meaning and how content is organized in different text types and disciplines

using text structure, language features, and vocabulary, depending on purpose and audience;

- be aware that different languages and variations of English exist and recognize their home languages and cultures as resources to value in their own right and to draw upon in building proficiency in English;
- contribute actively to class and group discussions, asking questions, responding appropriately, and providing useful feedback;
- demonstrate knowledge of content through oral presentations, writing, collaborative conversations, and multimedia; and
- develop proficiency in shifting register based on context.

### What the California English Language Development Standards Are Not

While the CA ELD Standards are a powerful tool for supporting ELs' linguistic and academic development, they alone are insufficient to achieve the goals outlined in the previous section. Therefore, it is important to state explicitly the purposes for which they are *not* intended, and uses that would be *inappropriate*. These include the following:

- **The CA ELD Standards are *not to be used in isolation* from the Common Core State Standards and other content standards during academic content instruction.** Instead, they are designed, and should be used, as a *complement* to the Common Core State Standards and other academic content standards. It is fully expected that all ELs will receive high-quality Common Core State Standards–based instruction as well as CA ELD Standards–based instruction.
- **The CA ELD Standards are *not to be used piecemeal* at a given proficiency level.** In order to be used appropriately and effectively, standards articulated in both Part I: Interacting in Meaningful Ways and Part II: Learning About How English Works should be used *in tandem* in strategic, intentional, and purposeful ways.
- **The CA ELD Standards *do not provide an exhaustive list of all of the linguistic processes and resources that ELs need to develop in order to be successful in school.*** This is especially the case with regard to disciplinary literacy. The CA ELD Standards do, however, provide descriptions of knowledge and skills that are essential and critical for development, which teachers and curriculum developers can both unpack and expand upon in order to provide a comprehensive instructional program for ELs.
- **The CA ELD Standards are *not a curriculum or a curriculum framework.*** The CA ELD Standards describe what ELs should be able to accomplish *if* they receive high-quality instruction with appropriate scaffolding and instructional materials. They do not specify how teaching should occur or what instructional materials to use.
  - Note: **Examples** provided in specific standards are *shared only as illustrative possibilities* and should *not* be misinterpreted as the only objectives of instruction or as the only types of language ELs might or should be able to understand or produce.

- Curriculum and assessment frameworks provide more specific guidance for implementation of these standards via instructional and assessment practices. *The ELA/ELD Framework* is intended to incorporate and support the Common Core State Standards for ELA, as well as the CA ELD Standards. It reflects current research on ELA instruction, and it also addresses appropriate and effective ELD instruction. Curriculum frameworks provide guidance to teachers, administrators, and parents on how a standards-based curriculum is implemented in the classroom.

### **Rationale for Three Proficiency Levels for Instructional Purposes**

The new CA ELD Standards define three proficiency levels: Emerging, Expanding, and Bridging. These levels are intended to serve instructional purposes and do not necessarily represent the full range of performance levels in English language proficiency as may be determined by a standardized ELD assessment. A rigorous standard-setting process applied to actual assessment results may identify a different number of *performance levels* at various cut points along the proficiency level continuum; it is these performance levels that will be used to support determinations of placement, progress, and redesignation of ELs for diagnostic and accountability purposes.

The decision to define three overarching proficiency levels for the new CA ELD Standards was made based on available research and existing practice. As there is currently no available empirical evidence to support a particular number of ELD proficiency levels as optimal, the design and development of proficiency level descriptors (PLDs), as well as the three proficiency levels described in the CA ELD Standards, were determined in light of the following sources:

- **Input from Statewide Focus Groups and Panel of Experts**
  - Recommendations from practitioners, administrators, and academic researchers throughout the state confirmed that while ELs may progress through multiple stages of ELD (which may vary in number according to the skills being developed and the ways in which the skills are defined or measured), students are typically grouped into three separate levels for the purposes of instruction.
- **Existing CELDT Performance Levels and Descriptors for CA ELD Standards**
  - Previous CA ELD standards drew distinctions between early intermediate and intermediate levels, as well as between early advanced and advanced levels. CELDT performance levels were established directly from these distinctions. The descriptors for the entry/early and exit stages within the new ELD Proficiency Level Continuum are consistent with the previous five levels used in the state for instruction and assessment of ELs, providing continuity with current expectations of what ELs know and can do as their English skills progress. As previously noted, a standard-setting process involving expert groups of educators and based on results of an assessment aligned to the new CA ELD Standards will determine which points along the continuum represent meaningful distinctions among student performances, and may yield more than three performance levels to

further delineate measurement of the three proficiency levels described in the new CA ELD Standards.

- **Proficiency Level Descriptors from Other English Language Development Standards**
  - The number, range, and type of descriptors were informed by consultation and consideration of other widely used and/or respected national and state ELD standards, such as World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Standards and the Kansas Curricular Standards for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Additional frameworks (which delineate three proficiency levels) also drawn upon include *The Framework for English Language Proficiency/Development Standards Corresponding to the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012); and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. (See Appendix C: Theoretical Foundations and Research Base for the California English Language Development Standards for a complete list of sources consulted.)

The CA ELD Standards describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities in English as a new language that are expected **at exit from each proficiency level**, with the highest level, Bridging, being aligned to the Common Core State Standards for ELA. These exit descriptors signal high expectations for ELs to progress through all levels and to attain the academic English language they need to access and engage with grade-level content in all content areas. As previously noted, the PLDs include specifications at “early stages” and at “exit” for each of the three levels, providing valuable information that can be used in the standard-setting process for determining meaningful performance level distinctions.

### **Legislation and Process for Development and Validation**

Assembly Bill 124 (Fuentes, Chapter 605, Statutes of 2011), signed into law on October 8, 2011, required the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE), to update, revise, and align the state’s current ELD standards by grade level to the state’s ELA standards, by November 2012. This legislation directed the SSPI to complete revised CA ELD Standards for SBE review no later than August 31, 2012.

In order to accomplish this work in the required time frame, the California Department of Education (CDE) requested the assistance of the California Comprehensive Assistance Center at WestEd. Specifically, WestEd's California Comprehensive Center (CA CC), in partnership with the Assessment & Standards Development Services (ASDS) program at WestEd, worked at the request of CDE to conduct an independent analysis of the state’s current ELD standards relative to the new CA ELA Standards; and, under the CDE’s direction, reviewed information on other states’ (e.g., Arizona, Kansas) and organizations’ (e.g., WIDA) ELD standards revision and alignment efforts; analyzed statewide public and expert input on revision parameters; drafted the proposed CA ELD Standards; and revised them as needed based on stakeholder review and feedback.

The SSPI convened five focus groups in the winter/spring of 2012, which included between 10 and 15 educators who were selected to ensure balanced representation of regions, types of schools, and experience, to provide initial input on the CA ELD Standards. Focus-group members were recruited from across California, and focus groups were conducted in the following locations: California Department of Education, Sacramento; Ventura County Office of Education, Camarillo; Alameda County Office of Education, Hayward; Los Angeles County Office of Education, Downey; and San Diego County Office of Education, San Diego.

The SSPI also convened a panel consisting of experts in English language instruction, curriculum, and assessment in order to provide ongoing input and guidance on the CA ELD Standards, the PLDs, and accompanying materials, such as the Overview and appendices. The panel included school site principals, school district or county office of education administrators overseeing programs and support for ELs, faculty of teacher training programs and researchers with EL expertise at institutions of higher education, and curriculum and instructional specialists with extensive EL experience. The Panel of Experts, composed of 21 individuals from across California, met five times (two one-day meetings and three two-day meetings, all of which were open to the public) between March and August of 2012, to review initial and revised drafts of the CA ELD Standards and PLDs and to provide guidance for ongoing development. These meetings were recorded, and transcripts were made available, along with shared materials, on the CA CC and CDE websites.

Before each Panel of Experts meeting, WestEd staff met with CDE staff from multiple divisions, including English Learner Support; Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources; Professional Learning Support; and Assessment Development and Administration. These ongoing collaborative meetings resulted in further revisions and refinements to the drafts of the CA ELD Standards, informed by the specific expertise of CDE staff.

The CDE also held two public hearings, and invited the public to provide written feedback on the CA ELD Standards during a one-month Public Comment period that ended August 6, 2012. The extensive oral and written comments and suggestions provided by multiple stakeholders—including teachers, principals, district and county offices of education, advocacy groups, educational scholars, and other educational community members—was thoroughly reviewed and analyzed, and a final revised draft was presented to the SBE in September 2012. At the request of the SBE, the CDE, in conjunction with SBE staff, oversaw minor technical revisions to the ELD standards and PLDs, as well as refinements to the appendices, and the development of a glossary of technical terms, carried out by WestEd’s CA CC and ASDS staff.