California Department of Education

Executive Office

SBE-002 (REV. 11/2017)

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# **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 13, 2023

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

**FROM:** TONY THURMOND, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** Summative Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessments for California: Update on Threshold Score Validation Study and Report on Supplemental Empirical Analyses to Inform Reclassification of English Learner Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities.

## Summary of Key Issues

This memorandum provides a summary of two research studies which utilized data from the Summative Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). Results of these studies will be used to inform a proposed recommendation to the California State Board of Education (SBE) in May 2023 on standardized reclassification criteria for English learner (EL) students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are eligible for alternate assessments.

### **Background**

In May 2022, the SBE approved the Summative Alternate ELPAC threshold scores that were implemented for the 2021–22 administration. Two studies were conducted to evaluate the placement of the threshold scores and inform a recommendation related to reclassification of EL students with the most significant cognitive disabilities: a threshold score validation study and supplemental empirical analyses. These two studies mirror the work completed in 2018 to evaluate the Summative ELPAC threshold scores.

The California Department of Education (CDE) in collaboration with their testing contractor, ETS, conducted a threshold score validation study (see Attachment 1) to collect and analyze teacher input on student English language proficiency (ELP), via a contrasting groups method. Educators considered the performance of EL students in the classroom and provided expected performance levels for their students based on the Summative Alternate ELPAC performance level descriptors (Level 1 Novice EL, Level 2 Intermediate EL, and Level 3 Fluent English Proficient). A comparison of these expected performance levels with the levels for those students based on the threshold scores was conducted after the first year of Summative Alternate ELPAC operational field test administration in 2021–22.

The CDE, via a Training, Coaching, and Technical Support project with the Regional Education Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd, conducted supplementary empirical analyses (see Attachment 2) to examine the relationship between student performance on the first administration of the Summative Alternate ELPAC (an operational field test) relative to student performance on the California Alternate Assessment for English language arts/literacy.

Altogether, the goal of these studies was to evaluate whether to maintain the current interim threshold score of the Summative Alternate ELPAC Overall Performance Level 3 (Fluent English Proficient) for Criterion 1 (assessment of ELP). For more information on the reclassification process, including the four reclassification criteria, please visit the CDE Reclassification web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rd/>.

As part of the validation study process, the CDE engaged in communication with various education partners with interests in assessment, multilingual programs, and dually-identified learners who are eligible to take the Summative Alternate ELPAC.

### **Next Steps**

In May 2023, the CDE will provide the SBE with a recommendation for meeting the ELP criteria for reclassification applicable to those students administered the Summative Alternate ELPAC. If the SBE approves the recommended ELP performance threshold for EL reclassification decisions, the CDE will notify superintendents and charter school administrators of the policy decision regarding the Summative Alternate ELPAC and Criterion 1 for reclassification of EL students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

**Attachment(s)**

* Attachment 1: Summative Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessments for California Threshold Score Validation Study Report (14 pages)
* Attachment 2: Report on the Supplemental Empirical Analyses of the Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (29 pages)