California Department of Education

Executive Office

SBE-002 (REV. 11/2017)

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# **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** February 13, 2019

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

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

**SUBJECT:** Update on Program Activities Related to the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California.

## Summary of Key Issues

In May 2018, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted Initial English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) threshold scores established through an ELPAC standard setting workshop that took place in February 2018 with educators from throughout California. In addition, the California Department of Education (CDE) indicated it would conduct a threshold score review study to provide additional validity evidence for the Initial ELPAC 2018–19 threshold scores that had been approved.

The SBE-approved threshold scores were used for the 2018–19 operational Initial ELPAC administration. A sampling of student data from the 2018–19 administration was used as the basis for the Initial ELPAC Threshold Score Review Study Results Tables (Attachment 1). The purpose of the Initial ELPAC is to assess all students whose primary language is a language other than English to determine their English language acquisition status (ELAS): either English learner (EL) or initial fluent English proficient (IFEP).

### **Results of the Review Study**

The review study evaluated the degree to which the ELPAC threshold score between EL and IFEP accurately distinguished between the two classifications on the basis of educators’ judgments. To that extent, the threshold score review study collected additional validity evidence that can be taken into consideration when evaluating the threshold scores.

Approximately 1,900 California teachers provided ratings for more than 2,800 students, of whom the targeted percentage was 50 percent ELs and 50 percent IFEP, using the approved ELPAC general performance level descriptors to complete surveys on their own individual students. The survey asked these teachers whether they agreed or disagreed with the classification of each of their own students as either EL or IFEP. Testing contractor Educational Testing Service (ETS) conducted an analysis of the survey responses. The CDE then used the ETS analysis to inform a recommendation to either maintain or revise the 2019–20 Initial ELPAC threshold scores. In general, the review study strongly confirmed that the threshold scores approved by the SBE in May 2018 should not be revised.

Overall, the tables in Attachment 1 illustrate that the teachers participating in the study were in agreement with the classification indicated on the Initial ELPAC. Across kindergarten (K) through grade twelve, 94 percent of teachers indicated they either strongly agree or agree with the ELAS designated by the Initial ELPAC. The study sample was representative of the Initial ELPAC test taking population by geographic and local educational agency type in California and included a sufficient number of students to support CDE’s recommendation to maintain the Initial ELPAC threshold scores. The results have also been reviewed by members of the ELPAC Technical Advisory Group. Additionally, Californians Together, and the California Association for Bilingual Education were briefed on the results of the study, and expressed no major concerns.

## Next Steps

In March 2019, the *Initial English Language Proficiency Assessments for California Threshold Score Review Study Final Report* is posted under the heading “Technical Documents” on the CDE’s ELPAC web page located at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ep/>. ETS will replicate the Initial ELPAC threshold score study using the Initial ELPAC results from the 2020–21 computer-based assessment administration. In spring 2021, the CDE will provide the SBE with the results of the replication study and any recommendations for changes to the threshold scores following that review, as deemed necessary.

## Attachment(s)

* Attachment 1: Initial English Language Proficiency Assessments for California Threshold Score Review Study––Results Tables (6 pages)

**Initial English Language Proficiency Assessments for California Threshold Score Review Study—Results Tables**

**Table 1. Percent of Students by Geographic Region in Study Sample**

| **Region** | **Study Sample (%)** |
| --- | --- |
| North | 10 |
| Central | 30 |
| South | 60 |

N = 2,844

**Table 2. Number of Students Rated by Grade**

| **Grade** | **Number of Students** |
| --- | --- |
| K[[1]](#footnote-1) | 426 |
| 1 | 273 |
| 2 | 184 |
| 3 | 173 |
| 4 | 174 |
| 5 | 179 |
| 6 | 167 |
| 7 | 222 |
| 8 | 199 |
| 9 | 318 |
| 10 | 202 |
| 11 | 187 |
| 12 | 140 |
| Total | 2,844 |

**Table 3. Student Characteristics of Study Sample**

| **Overall** | **Study Sample** |
| --- | --- |
| Total sample | 2,844 |
| Students designated as IFEP[[2]](#footnote-2) | 38% |
| Students designated as EL | 62% |
| Male | 51% |
| Female | 49% |
| Home language: Spanish | 40% |
| Home language: Chinese (Cantonese + Mandarin) | 17% |
| Home language: Vietnamese | 2% |
| Home language: Arabic | 3% |
| Home language: Filipino | 3% |

**Table 4. English Language Acquisition Status—Teacher Agreement for TK/K/Combined Kindergarten**

| **Teacher Rating** | **EL (N)** | **EL (%)** | **IFEP (N)** | **IFEP (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TK[[3]](#footnote-3) Agree | 51 | 91 | 13 | 100 |
| TK Disagree | 5 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| TK Total | 56 | 100 | 13 | 100 |
| K Agree | 181 | 91 | 153 | 96 |
| K Disagree | 17 | 9 | 7 | 4 |
| K Total | 198 | 100 | 160 | 100 |
| TK/K Combined Agree | 232 | 91 | 166 | 96 |
| TK/K Combined Disagree | 22 | 9 | 7 | 4 |
| TK/K Combined Total | 254 | 100 | 173 | 100 |

**Table 5. English Language Acquisition Status—Teacher Agreement for Grade One**

| **Teacher Rating** | **EL (N)** | **EL (%)** | **IFEP (N)** | **IFEP (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | 159 | 95 | 102 | 96 |
| Disagree | 8 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 167 | 100 | 106 | 100 |

**Table 6. English Language Acquisition Status—Teacher Agreement for Grade Two**

| **Teacher Rating** | **EL (N)** | **EL (%)** | **IFEP (N)** | **IFEP (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | 123 | 97 | 56 | 98 |
| Disagree | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 127 | 100 | 57 | 100 |

**Table 7. English Language Acquisition Status—Teacher Agreement for Grades Three through Five**

| **Teacher Rating** | **EL (N)** | **EL (%)** | **IFEP (N)** | **IFEP (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | 338 | 93 | 146 | 91 |
| Disagree | 27 | 7 | 15 | 9 |
| Total | 365 | 100 | 161 | 100 |

**Table 8. English Language Acquisition Status—Teacher Agreement for Grades Six through Eight**

| **Teacher Rating** | **EL (N)** | **EL (%)** | **IFEP (N)** | **IFEP (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | 622 | 95 | 350 | 93 |
| Disagree | 34 | 5 | 26 | 7 |
| Total | 656 | 100 | 376 | 100 |

**Table 9. English Language Acquisition Status—Teacher Agreement for Grades Nine through Twelve**

| **Teacher Rating** | **EL (N)** | **EL (%)** | **IFEP (N)** | **IFEP (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | 853 | 98 | 623 | 92 |
| Disagree | 20 | 2 | 54 | 8 |
| Total | 873 | 100 | 677 | 100 |

**Table 10. English Language Acquisition Status—Teacher Agreement for Initial ELPAC Test Takers**

| **Teacher Rating** | **EL (N)** | **EL (%)** | **IFEP (N)** | **IFEP (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | 2327 | 95 | 1443 | 93 |
| Disagree | 115 | 5 | 107 | 7 |
| Total | 2442 | 100 | 1550 | 100 |

1. Data includes 69 transitional kindergarten students. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Initial Fluent English Proficient [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Transitional kindergarten (TK) is year one of a two-year kindergarten program. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)