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## **NEW STUDY CALLS FOR SYSTEMIC REFORMS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH LEARNER EDUCATION**

LOS ANGELES — Systemic issues in California's public education have created a majority of high school English Learners who despite many years in our schools are still not English proficient and have developed major academic deficits, according to a recent study authored by Californians Together and funded by the California Community Foundation.

The report, *Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's Long Term English Learners*, calls upon state policymakers and leaders to provide solutions and outlines basic principles and promising approaches for school districts to meet the needs of English Learners more effectively.

"Educating our youth is key to a successful society, and we are letting these kids down. We must invest in them, and find solutions to support students, teachers and school districts to encourage success for all students," said Antonia Hernández, president and CEO of the foundation. "This report highlights concrete issues and solutions that policymakers and school districts should take to heart."

"When these students started out, they looked like any other student who has succeeded in the system," said study author and researcher Laurie Olsen. "But school policies, programs and practices have not served them well. To make matters worse, most students and their families don't realize how underprepared for graduation and college they actually are."

Key findings and recommendations from the report include:

- 59 percent of California's high school English Learners are Long Term English Learners (defined as students in U.S. schools for six or more years who have not been able to achieve English proficiency), according to a survey of 40 school districts across California
- In some districts, Long Term English Learners make up 75 percent of all English Learners
- State policy should require the districts to collect data and monitor the progress of English learners to prevent the development of Long Term English learners
- Policymakers must commit to providing materials, program, professional development and curriculum support to help English Learners succeed and ensure that students do not become Long Term English Learners

While state policy provides no definitions for Long Term English Learners and little to no direction about this issue or how to address it, a number of school districts are stepping up to take responsibility. "In El Monte, this is a problem we refuse to ignore, said Nick Salerno, superintendent of the El Monte Union High School District. "We're mobilizing administrative, certificated, and classified staff and resources to promote success for these students. Through our work with Californians Together, we have an invaluable forum from which to learn, share ideas, and make real progress for our English learners."

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In addition to the survey upon which the report is based, Californians Together has convened interested school districts to deepen their understanding of these issues and how they might prevent the systemic issues that have caused high numbers of Long Term English Learners. Californians Together will also head efforts to mobilize legislators and policy makers, as well as convening future workshops, to provide leadership on how best to accelerate language and academic development for Long Term English learners.

**Read the report** at [www.californianstogether.org](http://www.californianstogether.org).

Californians Together is a statewide coalition of 22 parent, professional and civil rights organizations that mobilize communities to protect and promote the rights of 1.6 million English Learners, 25 percent of California's students. Californians Together has served for 11 years as a statewide voice on behalf of language minority students in California public schools. The coalition is committed to securing equal access to quality education for all children. Visit [californianstogether.org](http://californianstogether.org).

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