



MASKING THE FOCUS ON ENGLISH LEARNERS: The Consequences of California's Accountability System Dashboard Results on Year 4 Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the connection between California's two current accountability policy mechanisms--the Year 4 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the California Department of Education's (CDE) *Accountability Model* (Spring 2017 Dashboard). We found that the sample of 24 California school districts with high numbers and/or high percentages of English Learner students largely missed the mark in identifying research-based programs, actions and services for English Learners. The districts had an overall English Learner (English Learner Only – ELO + Reclassified Fluent English Proficient - RFEP), English Language Arts (ELA) Academic Performance Level of **Yellow** AND an ELO level of **Orange or Red** on the Spring 2017 Dashboard. Our focus on ELOs specifically was to examine whether the results of the state's new accountability system guided districts in identifying actions and services responsive to different types of ELs in their LCAPs. Our analyses led us to conclude the following:

KEY FINDINGS

California's current accountability system will diminish the urgency to address numerous educational needs of the ELO subgroup and thus further undermine the equity intent of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

- 92% (22 out of 24 LCAPs) had ratings of "weak" or "no evidence" in English Learner Student Outcomes and Academic Achievement.
- Over half of the districts had overall "weak" ratings in the following three areas: 1) English Language Development (n=13); 2) Professional Development (n=13); and 3) Programs and Course Access (n=12).
- No district (0 of the 24) had ratings of "good" or "exemplary" across all five focus areas.

Furthermore, analyses of the narrative sections of the LCAPs revealed the following:

- There were few examples of promising practices.
- Few examples were found that revealed asset-based approaches to English Learner education.
- Minimal mention of metrics and/or data analysis processes focused on diverse English Learner cohort outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Obscuring ELO results could have detrimental effects on districts' abilities to address LCAP goals, set growth targets, focus programs and services, and allocate supplemental and concentration funds for this targeted group of students. Accordingly, our past analyses have shown that the state's LCAP guidance and the LCAPs themselves have not sufficiently addressed the needs of ELs.^A

A. Olsen, L. Armas, E., & Lavadenz, M. (2016). *A review of year 2 LCAPs: A weak response to English Learners*. Long Beach, CA: Californians Together. Armas, E., Lavadenz, M., & Olsen, L. (2015). *Falling Short on the Promise of Increased or Improved Services for English Learners: A Report on Year One LCAPs*. Californians Together: CA.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

AT THE STATE LEVEL

- Discontinue the use of the aggregated EL subgroup in the Academic Indicator.
- Report ELO data separately from RFEP data in a revised indicator, so as not to mask the needs and successes of the current ELs and RFEPs so that gaps and challenges can be addressed.
- Require districts to complete the Year 4 (2017-2020) LCAPs based on the revised indicators on the Dashboards' Five by Five Placement Grid for continuous improvement.
- Develop a robust system and processes for EL technical assistance providers for identified districts and schools with personnel that have EL expertise and experience with EL programs, curriculum, and instruction.
- Embed the *English Learner Roadmap* into the System of Support process.
- Build the capacity of County Offices of Education by increasing both program and personnel resources with EL expertise who read, review and support the development of LCAPs and provide technical assistance.

AT THE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION LEVEL

- Increase and involve staff with expertise on ELs to conduct the LCAP reviews and serve as members of the System of Support teams.
- Develop a data analysis process and work with districts to dig deeper into their ELO data.
- Include the critical areas in this report as part of the technical assistance and review offered to the districts which would require enhancing *The LCAP Approval Manual* to address these issues.
- Develop and use tools aligned to the *English Learner Roadmap* and the LCFF priority areas when providing technical assistance to schools and districts.

AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

- Revise and update Year 4 (2017-2020) LCAPs using evidence from a self-analysis based on the research-aligned English Learner rubrics in Appendix B to identify areas of improvement.
- Identify specific outcomes for the different profiles of ELs with metrics that are sensitive to their language and academic development.
- Provide professional development for all educators on the implications of implementation of the *English Learner Roadmap* to build understanding and expertise about the needs of ELs and research-based practices.
- Ensure that professional learning for teachers of ELs addresses integrated and designated ELD as well as differentiation from generic standards-based instruction.